

ABSTRACT

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: EXAMINING VISUAL METAPHORS OF CHRIS CHRISTIE IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

By

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May 2015

New Jersey governor Chris Christie has gained widespread media attention for his aggressive public persona, his involvement in the Bridgegate scandal, and for weighing almost 400 pounds at the beginning of his political career. In this thesis, I conduct a metaphor analysis on political cartoons featuring Christie. By alternately focusing on his weight and his Italian heritage, cartoons utilize body-centric attacks to transform Christie into monsters, inanimate objects, manual laborers, women, and other entities, inextricably tying Christie's politics to his physicality. I argue that Christie's body is heavily gendered throughout the cartoons, reinforcing the conservative masculinist script and hegemonic masculinity. Thus, I end this thesis by exploring how the denigration of Christie's body could prove damaging to Christie's career and aid in the construction of non-normative bodies in the public sphere.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: EXAMINING VISUAL METAPHORS
OF CHRIS CHRISTIE IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Communication Studies
California State University, Long Beach

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Communication Studies

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May, 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to my thesis committee for their unending support, enthusiasm, and commitment to this project. First and foremost, Dr. Amy Heyse, thank you for being the best thesis chair I could have ever asked for. You have been a great mentor and friend throughout one of the most mentally rigorous journeys I have ever embarked on. Thanks for calming me down when I was a frantic mess, editing chapters even when you were fighting your never-ending cold, and spending hours talking with me in your office about almost anything. I truly look up to you for all the roles you play in my life: professor, graduate advisor, thesis chair, fellow feminist, scholar, and friend. Thanks for always reminding me that a defense was just a conversation. I cannot imagine having gone through this experience without you.

Thank you also to Dr. Sharon Downey and Dr. Craig Smith. Dr. Downey, you have been an amazing source of support through my undergraduate and graduate career at CSULB. You are one of the most genuine, kind, and intelligent people I have ever had the pleasure of working with. You sparked my interest in rhetoric and gave me something to aspire to early in my college career when I was most unsure of my path, and for that I cannot thank you enough. Dr. Smith, thank you for your unbelievably fast edits on my chapters and your vast knowledge of pretty much everything. Your invaluable input on my work strengthened my thesis and allowed me to discover and explore new perspectives. You have all helped me grow as a student and as a scholar and I will never forget the lessons and kindness you have shared with me.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr. Ragan Fox. Having started this project in your graduate seminar, I owe much of the fundamental elements of this thesis to you. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to truly explore and develop my research interests in your class. Most importantly though, thank you for encouraging, supporting and believing in me even when I was not completely sure of myself. I would also like to thank the Communication Studies department at CSULB as a whole for the enriching educational experience I received both as an undergraduate and graduate student. CSULB will always feel like home to me.

I do not think I would have stayed sane throughout this project without my fabulous cohort. Your encouraging text messages, shots of espresso (Thuy), and mere presence in the office as I was working made the thesis experience more bearable. You all made grad school a transformative and unforgettable experience. I would like to extend a special thanks to David Rehm, my thesis buddy who made writing a thesis infinitely more fun and entertaining, and for making #thesisThursdays a thing.

Thank you to my family, who support me endlessly and without question. You are my rock. Thanks especially to my parents who have always encouraged me to put my education first. Dad, thanks for keeping me updated on all things Christie-related, reminding me to watch the news, but more importantly reminding me to relax and never failing to come up with new “Dad” jokes. Mom, thanks for praying for me (yeah...I said it), for your regular and much needed phone calls, and for reminding me to stay positive. Thanks for loving me and being the best parents ever. I am also eternally grateful to my extended family, all my cousins, aunts, uncles and grandmas, for checking on me with

either a simple phone call or a text message. Thanks for keeping me on your mind, you are all always on mine.

Finally, I would like to thank my sweet love, David Anis. Thanks for putting up with me during this hectic time, making sure I was fed, and being the most patient, supportive, and loving partner and friend. I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

POLITICAL CARTOONS, METAPHOR, AND INCORPORATION

“Are you stupid?” Chris Christie barks at a reporter. The room is filled with muffled laughter. While some are perturbed by this behavior, even more are excited to witness yet another fiery retort from the headline-grabbing New Jersey governor. From the moment he emerged onto the political scene in 2009, Governor Chris Christie has been anything but conventional. Often labeled as a “bully” and a “loud mouth” by the media, Christie has developed a reputation for speaking his mind candidly, and publicly attacking other politicians regardless of their political affiliations (E. Klein). His brash demeanor and centrist ideologies have drawn the ire of some GOP members, resulting in an obvious snub at the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference (Bouie). In spite of the split support from an already fragmented party, his popularity prevails, retaining the approval of the majority of his constituency, even in light of the recent “Bridgegate” scandal (Edwards-Levy). In just three and a half years as governor of New Jersey, Christie has been called a “rockstar among Republicans,” even becoming one of the top contenders for the Republican presidential ticket in 2016 (Edwards-Levy).

Aside from Christie’s outspoken tendencies and moderate beliefs, the New Jersey governor differs from modern Republican politicians in another way. At the beginning of his political career Christie weighed almost 400 pounds, which is quite atypical of the average male politician. Media outlets have called Christie everything from a “fat

nightmare” to “the secretary of cake” and have insinuated that his weight makes him unfit to hold office (McCalmont). The uproar over Christie’s weight was so severe that he was forced to release his personal health reports to reassure the public that he was in adequate physical shape to simply retain his position as governor. The criticism that Christie faces is not limited to major news publications or late night TV; he is also subjected to the biting satire of political cartoonists who have taken a body-centric approach in attacking Governor Christie. Christie’s weight, along with his Italian-American ethnicity, has been the primary focus of political cartoons that feature him. Jokes regarding Christie’s corporeality have permeated even seemingly unbiased channels, such as news broadcasts and articles, but no medium satirizes Christie’s weight and ethnicity more frequently than political cartoons.

Rhetorical Power of Political Cartoons

The decline of the newspaper industry has not affected the popularity of political cartoons as they remain a vital means of journalistic commentary in the technological age (Edwards and McDonald). Since the sixteenth century, political cartoons, also commonly referred to as editorial cartoons, have been considered one of the most powerful tools in the “journalistic armoury,” cementing the historical and cultural importance of these graphic images (Plumb 432). Editorial cartoons are representative of a medium that is easily understandable, accessible, and for some individuals, a main source of political awareness. The long-lasting popularity of the political cartoon is only augmented by its rhetorical power. Political cartoons in the United States have historically changed the political climate, expressing anxieties through satire. Prior to the Jacksonian era, United States politics was marked by deference to political leaders. The “economic-induced

panic” of the Jacksonian era encouraged cartoonists to become bolder with their visual criticisms, ushering a “sudden shift toward democracy in irony, satire, and allegory” (Inabinet 660). With the continued prevalence of editorial cartoons for over four centuries, it is no surprise that political cartoons serve as rhetorical texts which not only frame political discourse, but encourage democracy and symbolically construct national identities (Edwards and McDonald).

Scholars and cartoonists alike offer different definitions of what constitutes a political cartoon. Because much art has political or social undertones, the term “political cartoon” becomes nebulous (McMahon). McMahon argues that editorial cartoons are visual images that are designed to convey a political message. I offer an expanded definition of what comprises a political cartoon. As opposed to the simple single-panel illustration or the running series of strips to which we have become accustomed, I contend that digitally altered photographic images with a political message should also be considered editorial cartoons. In other words, political cartoons do not simply refer to the traditional formats that we see exemplified by the *Doonesbury* comic strip, but may also include Photoshopped images. The August 2009 cover of *TIME* magazine exemplifies how a digitally altered photograph can constitute a political cartoon. The cover features Barack Obama standing with his arms crossed over a white background. The president’s head has been transposed onto a body wearing a white doctor’s coat with a stethoscope around his neck. The text next to him reads, “Paging Dr. Obama,” with smaller text beneath it explaining how the content within the magazine discusses Obama’s plans to reform health care. Since Barack Obama is not a doctor, the text and the image are meant to humorously pair the President of the United States with an alternate occupation. Thus,

although the image is not a hand-drawn illustration, I maintain that the political content and the intent to evoke humor constitute a political cartoon.

Political cartoons occupy a unique space as both a satiric art form and a legitimate form of journalism. Medhurst and DeSousa pioneered the concept of political cartoons as distinct rhetorical artifacts that could be analyzed stylistically. They argue that rhetorical elements present in oral rhetoric such as style, invention, disposition, memory and delivery also help to structure the persuasive message of graphic discourse. However, Janis Edwards contends that the ability to persuade is not what lends the political cartoon its rhetorical power. She suggests that political cartoons are not a call to action, but are meant to frame and define issues and events.

Editorial cartoons are not intended to be literal interpretations of events, but instead, they create imagined realities which contribute to the collective consciousness, reflecting values of the culture at large (Edwards and Rong-Chen 369). The function of editorial cartoons is to both identify and maintain cultural consciousness; roles which function in tandem with one another to create meaning. We can see this exemplified in the Danish cartoon scandal, where the newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, urged cartoonists to submit illustrations of the Muslim prophet Mohammad as a challenge to the idea of self-imposed censorship. The Muslim community in Denmark protested against the images, and Muslim ambassadors expressed concern that the cartoons would propagate the “widespread anti-Muslim sentiments” that already existed in Denmark (Yilmaz 6). Yilmaz argues that the refusal to remove the cartoons re-established the perceived philosophical and cultural differences between Islam and the “West” (5). In January of 2015, the Islamic tension in Europe culminated in a terrorist attack on the headquarters of

French magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, after the magazine published controversial cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet, Muhammad (Bremner). Thus, the attacks raised questions regarding journalistic freedom, satire, and how political cartoons reinforce collective consciousness and function as world-making tools.

Aside from the cartoons' role in shaping political events, the purpose of editorial cartoons is simply to make the reader laugh and may function as an "inside joke" between the cartoonist and the reader (Vultee 161). Essentially, a good political cartoon should be "provocative and biting, and therefore capable of producing strong emotions" (Dougherty 258). While often controversial, the humor found in political cartoons is one reason they have remained a popular means of public address for centuries. Drawing on the writing of Kenneth Burke, Denise Bostdorff posits that the humor in political cartoons is achieved through two rhetorical strategies: perspective by incongruity and burlesque. The fusion of these approaches produces the biting humor that characterizes political cartoons.

Cartoonists utilize perspective by incongruity as a tool to arouse humor in their readers. Recognizable individuals undergo metaphoric transformations and are incongruously blended with objects that are completely different from themselves. Essentially, perspective by incongruity involves incompatible elements colliding together to form meaning, which according to Koestler, is the underlying strategy of all humor. Metaphors are the inevitable product of perspective by incongruity, and in political cartoons, we often see metaphors utilized to merge the familiar and the foreign. The amalgamation of two distinctly different images is meant not only to make the viewer laugh, but to "create a new and immediate perspective on a situation" (Edwards and

Rong-Chen 370). Through this process, an artist can creatively render a new reality where politicians become animals, objects, clowns, and anything that has the potential of framing them in meaningful way. While perspective by incongruity creates connections between polar opposites, burlesque takes what already exists to new levels of absurdity.

The humorous strategy of burlesque drives external characteristics to the extreme. Richard Nixon's nose and five o'clock shadow, George W. Bush's ears, and John F. Kennedy's hair have all been caricatured and made iconic through political cartoons. Cartoonists use burlesque to embellish whatever flaws or distinctive characteristics can be visually depicted in a manner motivated by cruelty and rejection (Bostdorff 46). Bostdorff comments that aggression is central to burlesque, with artists actively choosing to highlight negative aspects of an individual while corrupting positive traits. Kenneth Burke asserts that because the "deformities" of the characters in political cartoons are not accurate representations, the reader is allowed to "laugh at the victim's expense" (*Attitudes Toward History* 30). Political cartoonists use the veil of humor to expunge themselves of any negative flack they may receive, claiming that their exaggerated illustrations are subversive. However, instead of undermining power structures, cartoonists' caricatures often reinforce prejudiced societal values that privilege certain bodies over others.

Editorial cartoons are powerful in part for their ability to visually depict political events in a manner that is both humorous and widely understood. Major missteps or successes have the power to forever mark a politician in the eyes of the public (Plumb). Furthermore, political cartoons have been celebrated for "employing distortion to serve the cause of truth;" unfortunately, the "truths" that cartoons expose often rely on the

repetition of damaging stereotypes which serve to uphold racist, sexist, ableist, and homophobic ideologies (McDonald 7). Playing on stereotypical representations of minorities reaffirms the cultural values of the body politic and constructs a reality where non-normative bodies are considered deviant. Rhetorical scholars have analyzed how political cartoons utilize stereotypes to parody a politician's race (Rossing), gender (Edwards and Rong-Chen) and even physical disabilities (Vultee). While the merit of political cartoons has not been contested, scholars have agreed that political cartoonists often share "fundamental biases with the societies they critique," essentially upholding the power they attempt to subvert (Templin 20). In accordance with the framing function of political cartoons, cartoonists who utilize stereotypes construct a reality where ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexuality are viewed as qualities worth attacking.

Chris Christie and Political Cartoons

Although one might assume that Christie, a heterosexual, white male, would be immune to the stereotyping utilized by editorial cartoons, his atypical corporeality makes him a target of cartoonists' satire. Chris Christie's weight is a focus of political cartoonists, revealing the societal values which surround overweight individuals. With an increasing amount of pressure being placed on both men and women to achieve the hegemonic ideal body, cartoons that mock individuals who deviate from the norm endorse the cultural value that there is only one type of acceptable political body: one that is white, straight, male and physically fit. The cartoons are not only a comment on Christie; they are a comment on being overweight and existing as an overweight person.

Weight-centered criticisms have typically been aimed at women, with scholarship detailing the stereotypical depictions of women's bodies in political cartoons (Templin;

Edwards and McDonald; Yaqub). It is my contention, that the salience of Christie's weight in political cartoons results in the feminization of his overweight body and the hyper-masculinization of his ethnic identity. Despite his status as a straight male, the rendering of Christie's body as alternatively hyper-feminine and hyper-masculine through metaphor upholds hegemonic masculinity. It is undeniable that Christie has made political blunders worthy of ridicule in political cartoons. However, by exaggerating his body alongside his mistakes, cartoonists make the statement that his political missteps are in part due to his non-normative corpus, and that overweight bodies, ethnic bodies, and female bodies do not warrant a place in the political realm. The hyper-masculine stereotypes of Christie's ethnicity, and hyper-feminine portrayals of Christie's weight, can be seen through contradictory metaphors that are complex in their inconsistencies. Christie's body is not simply considered deviant in its difference; it is considered subordinate in the various ways it is gendered.

Cartoons that feature Christie are worthy of examination for several reasons. Christie's role as a popular and controversial governor and possible presidential candidate warrants analysis of texts which feature him. Beyond Christie's socio-political relevance, these cartoons warrant examination because they can extend research on political cartoons, metaphor criticism, and theory of incorporation. Scholarship has suggested that the incongruous nature of the metaphor is popular among cartoonists. While the act of transforming Christie's politics into his body is in itself worthy of rhetorical analysis, I argue that *what* the subject is transformed into reveals much about the cultural values of the body politic. Christie as animal, inanimate object, and thug are just some of the metaphors that are repeatedly found in cartoonists' depictions of him.

Editorial cartoons have consistently made female bodies salient (Templin); thus, it is vital that we explore this rare instance when a male politician receives negative attention related to his body and the subsequent gendering of his corporeality.

The metaphors prevalent in visual representations of Chris Christie raise two questions: how have political cartoonists utilized incorporation to render Chris Christie's weight as a salient political issue, and what are the ways in which cartoonists have similarly employed ethnic stereotypes as a body-focused criticism against Christie? In Christie, we find an anomaly: a straight, white, male, Republican politician whose body is scrutinized and marked as deviant. Given this unique rhetorical exigency, it is vital to question how examining depictions of the New Jersey governor serve to extend theory of incorporation and how metaphors are used to rhetorically construct individuals with non-normative body types.

The problem that emerges from these illustrations is clear. Cartoonists' proclivity for transforming Christie into various entities while grossly exaggerating his size could have unfortunate implications for Christie's political career as well as the potential success of other overweight politicians. By constructing Christie's body as the punch line of a political cartoon, shaming the body of a political figure becomes an acceptable and appropriate way to attack their politics. If Christie decides to run in the 2016 presidential elections, the way that cartoonists have constructed him could do irreparable damage to his campaign and his political future.

Review of Theory and Methodology

Metaphor Analysis

In order to understand how cartoonists portray the previously detailed political events, we must first examine the role that metaphor plays in rhetorically constructing political and social realities. In *The Art of Poetry*, Aristotle suggests that metaphors serve as devices which give charm and distinction to style. However, beyond their ornamental function, metaphors “create conventional understandings by connecting phenomena with familiar cultural assumptions and experiences” (Cisneros 570). Sonja K. Foss contends that the metaphor “is seen as a major way in which we constitute reality,” a role which metaphors share with political cartoons (300). While metaphors are constructed around situations that are re-imagined, they serve to define the individuals and events that they are depicting (Medhurst and DeSousa). Political scientists argue that metaphor plays an important role in shaping political thought (Drucker). Thus, in the political sphere, metaphor plays two roles: to arouse a strong emotional response in a listener and to “provide a framework within which to view issues” (Read, Cesa, Jones, and Collins 126). Written metaphors have been used as rhetorical tools for centuries, but the study of the visual metaphor has also begun to attract a significant amount of attention (Feng and O’Halloran).

Rhetorical scholars have theorized about how metaphors have moved beyond the verbal and have come to encompass visual elements as well. In fact, Gombrich claims that while language is superior at conveying information, the visual image is “supreme” in its ability to evoke emotions (570). Thus, while one of the most basic functions of visual metaphors is to build commonplace understandings (Cisneros), the ability to

arouse sentiments makes the visual metaphor particularly powerful. Metaphor relies on the amalgamation of two unlike objects to create meaning that may not exist otherwise (Burke, “Four Master Tropes”). However, as society at large becomes accustomed to the metaphors used to describe a cultural subgroup, metaphors become less of a shock and more woven into the collective consciousness. Osborn argues that certain metaphors become so popular in rhetorical discourse that they become “inescapably salient in the human consciousness” (116). Lakoff and Johnson argue that the constant use of metaphors are so engrained in the human consciousness, that re-structuring the metaphors we use on a daily basis would completely alter our realities. Light-dark metaphors, for example, transcend time, embody human motivations, and have become rooted in the human experience (Osborn). Imagining a world where light is not associated with goodness and dark is not associated with badness is almost inconceivable. Politicians, political groups, events, and ideas become inextricably tied not only to the metaphors used to describe them, but to the values associated with the metaphor. Thus, metaphors influence how we formulate our hypotheses about how a group, individual, event, or idea “fits in” to society (Ellis and Wright 688).

Although visual metaphors are a useful method of creating meaning, they also have the ability to uphold hegemonic norms. This is especially true in political cartoons, where visceral responses of the public to a metaphor become a key way in which a reader interprets a politician’s message and policies (Olson and Olson). George Lakoff and Sam Ferguson claim that oftentimes, the metaphors used to interpret experiences are not neutral, and create comparisons based on prejudices and cultural anxiety. Numerous scholars have examined how political cartoons have used metaphor to situate Hillary

Clinton in a particular gendered reality for decades (Templin; Carlin and Winfrey; Edwards and Rong-Chen).

The metaphors used to depict Hillary Clinton in editorial cartoons clearly illustrate how a politician's message can become clouded by the metaphors used to describe them. Charlotte Templin argues that the First Lady of the United States is expected to act as a "virtuoso housekeeper" (22). Thus, Hillary Clinton's activity in the political sphere marked her as different from previous First Ladies. Because Clinton was not "doing gender right," she was punished by metaphoric representations in political cartoons and the media at large (Templin 22). One political cartoon which Templin analyzed featured Bill Clinton and a shark swimming through the ocean. The caption of the cartoon read, "Together...Hillary and Bill courageously continue their swim against the raging Whitewater current." Templin suggests that because Hillary does not conform to the feminine standard set by previous First Ladies, not only is she portrayed as masculine, but vicious, aggressive, and shark-like. Using metaphors to transform Hillary Clinton from a human to an animal attacks the former Secretary of State for not adhering to gender norms, upholding the gender binary and reinforcing hegemonic masculinity.

While artists attempt to justify their use of dehumanizing metaphors by calling their art "subversive," they continue to propagate damaging stereotypes which shape the values of the body politic (Edwards and Winkler 293). An example which showcases how cartoonists use metaphor to uphold hegemonic power structures can be found in the rhetorical understanding of the U.S. Presidency. Janis Edwards details how political cartoonists establish masculinity as a presidential requirement. Edwards examines a cartoon where 2000 presidential nominee Al Gore is up at bat "gesturing for a home run,

oblivious to the fact that the ball had already been pitched” (Edwards 250). Gore’s athletic failure implies physical and intellectual weakness. By holding Gore to an athletic standard, the cartoonist privileges athleticism as a political norm. Edwards categorizes sports references as one of the “president as warrior” metaphors. Referring to politics as a sport or a game to be won is frequently used in political cartoons, bolstering notions of hegemonic masculinity (Edwards 250). Thus, physical inability becomes one of the ways politicians are denigrated through metaphor. Caricatures of individuals often constitute a reality for the general public, highlighting the physical to embody traits that the audience is unable to see. Because emphasis is placed on the visual re-imaginings of an individual, focus becomes centered on the body of those depicted in political cartoons. The prominence of the corporeal form in political cartoons becomes so severe, that the body becomes the argument itself. Exploring how the physical form is exacerbated through incorporation is essential in understanding the persuasive power of metaphors in political cartoons.

Corporeal Rhetoric

The use of metaphors is strengthened through the concept of incorporation, a strategy used by scholars to study rhetorics of the body. Incorporation is defined by Michael Warner as a process by which “the physical body is rendered salient and meaningful” (414). In politics, the ability to abstract or disincorporate the body from an argument is of utmost importance because the audience is able to focus on the speaker’s message as opposed to the flesh which encapsulates it (Brouwer 414). Brouwer expands on the notion of incorporation through his analysis of the testimonies of military witnesses during hearings regarding the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy. Brouwer

explains that sexual excess and social disorganization have come to characterize the gay male body. Thus, by simply existing in a gay or lesbian body, the testimonies of gay and lesbian witnesses are shaped by their corporeal existence. Campbell and Jamieson claim that disincorporation is an “unequally available resource” that creates a power imbalance which privileges straight, white, male bodies (9). Ethnic minorities, women, and sexual minorities are often reduced to their corporeal forms, diminishing their ability to separate themselves from the constructs which discipline them.

The way in which incorporation manifests itself in political cartoons is through enactment. Enactment is a specific mode of incorporation where “the specificities of the speaker’s corporeal features double or exemplify his or her verbal message” (Brouwer 415). While incorporation is the rendering of the body as salient and meaningful, enactment occurs when the body becomes the actual argument. Similar to how visual metaphors transform one image into something else, enactment transforms an individual into their policies and ideas. Thus, individuals do not simply become marked as “deviant” for having differing body types; their arguments and beliefs become inseparable from their physical flesh. The hegemonic standard becomes invisible, and those who deviate from the norm send a message simply by existing in a body that is atypical. The negative portrayal of an individual’s policies or actions is commonplace in political cartoons. Through enactment, bad policies are visualized through the body; thus, any perceived physical flaw becomes a critique of the body which encapsulates it (Kiewe 89).

Metaphoric Representations of Deviant Bodies in Political Cartoons

The examination of metaphoric representations of various marked bodies in political cartoons is critical in understanding how Christie is similarly portrayed. One way in which political cartoons have rendered certain bodies salient is through the objectification of women. Weight-focused criticisms in mass media and entertainment, including political cartoons, typically critique the bodies of women (Goodman). An extension of the literature regarding cartoonists' transformation of Hillary Clinton's body can be seen through the metaphoric representations of both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin (Edwards and McDonald). Both politicians are objectified and feminized through metaphors that are similar to the ones used to define Christie. Clinton and Palin are metaphorically transformed into beauty queens, hostesses, pioneer women, and puppets, and are both subjected to the same metaphors despite their ideological and personal differences. Edwards and McDonald highlight how the gendered tropes found in political cartoons inextricably link Palin and Clinton to negative stereotypes attributed solely to the fact that they are both women.

While gendered tropes are the focus for Edwards and McDonald, they exemplify how physical representations of both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin are considered more significant than their political views. Similarly, rhetorical analysts Diana Carlin and Kelly Winfrey assert that Clinton and Palin have been recreated through the use of metaphors which relegate them to subordinate roles such as, "Palin as mother" and "Clinton as iron maiden" (332-337). Thus, in political cartoons, metaphors regarding a politician are not simply comparisons: they become the way that we situate the individual in a particular gendered reality.

While there has been an increasing amount of scholarly attention paid to how the media rewards men for having strong, masculine bodies, there is little attention paid to the men who do not fit this mold. Body image and weight have been described by scholars as a largely feminist issue, with men being seen as “positively reveling in their fatness” (Inthorn and Boyce 85). With the recent popularity of overweight and unkempt male celebrities, such as Seth Rogen and Jonah Hill, society is often seen celebrating men for the very thing that women are vilified for. While this double standard has been explored by numerous scholars (Templin; Edwards and Rong-Chen; Edwards and McDonald), Christie seems to be one of the exception to this societal rule. Many are then left to wonder, what separates Christie from the other men that Goodman claims are “allowed” to be fat? Christie is not alone in his subjugation, as the bodies of certain men receive more media scrutiny than others. Thus, while some may argue that Christie’s status as a public figure is enough to subject him to excessive scrutiny (Edwards and Winkler), I contend that his location within the political sphere is the main factor that disciplines his body.

As a member of the Republican Party, Christie is constrained by the conservative masculinist script which prizes the masculine and demonizes the feminine (Hanke 232). Hegemonic masculinity is defined by Connell as “the culturally idealized form of masculine character” (83). Because masculinity is “widely accepted,” it has become privileged as a societal norm (Trujillo 290). The celebration of hegemonic values has led some Republicans, to adopt a “femiphobic” style of rhetoric which rejects the feminine (Ducat 208). It would be irresponsible to argue that all Republicans adhere to the conservative masculinist script, or that Democrats do not also engage in rhetoric which

upholds hegemonic masculinity. However, as Gibson and Heyse argue, “discourses of conservatism tend to follow the scripts of hegemonic masculinity more closely than the discourses of liberalism;” and as a member of the Republican Party, the pressure to conform to hegemonic standards of masculinity is even greater for Christie (237). Christie’s body differs from the strong, athletic ideal that is represented through metaphors such as “the soldier” or “the cowboy.” Leaked images of Republican Paul Ryan lifting weights, and shirtless photos of Republican Senator Scott Brown, reinforce the conservative ideal of hyper-masculinity. Even Republican women can uphold the conservative masculinist script, as is evidenced by Sarah Palin’s rhetorical strategy of using rhetoric that “celebrated” hegemonic masculinity during her 2008 vice presidential run (Gibson and Heyse 235).

However, Christie is not the first straight, male politician to face the obstacles of disincorporation regarding his physical form. Kiewe’s analysis of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s polio-stricken body during the 1932 election revealed some of the same obstacles that Christie faces. Roosevelt was made to prove that his body was physically fit for the presidency, which in turn suggested that he was intellectually able to run the country. Although some political cartoonists avoided highlighting Roosevelt’s body out of respect for the president, many cartoonists did not hesitate to intertwine FDR’s body with his politics through metaphors such as “FDR as baby” (Vultee 68). There is, however, a key difference between Roosevelt suffering from polio and Christie’s physical form. Being obese or overweight is often constructed as being a choice attributable to self-control (Holliday). Being overweight becomes a “chosen identity” in the eyes of the public, while disabilities, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality are not.

Importantly, the flaws that are associated with being overweight are also stereotypes that are heavily gendered (Murray). First, the inability to exert self-control has long been considered a feminine trait, correlating with the feminized bodies of overweight individuals (Chrisler 608). Second, being overweight comes with the stigma of low willpower and laziness which further distances the male body from its hegemonic ideal. And finally, social expectations dictate that women are smaller, thinner, and generally take up less space than men (Gagne and McGaughey 829). However, as I illustrate in the analysis chapters of this thesis, these same three gendered expectations have been applied to Christie, with cartoonists arguing through visual metaphor that he will be a more qualified candidate once his body fits hegemonic ideals of what a man should look like.

Christie is not only unable to disincorporate from his body weight, he is also subject to body-focused criticisms aimed at his ethnicity. Christie's Italian-American identity is heavily emphasized by political cartoonists. Defining a politician's body through ethnicity is more common than relying on weight, which is evident through depictions of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama as "militants" and "terrorists" in political cartoons (Rossing 428). Rhetorical scholars have also examined how political cartoons have depicted Obama as a chimp, which presents a clear, racial derogation under the pretense of humor, in spite of the fact that this humor would be widely scorned outside of the context of the political cartoon (Apel). Because race is a contentious subject, cartoonists regularly emphasize a politician's ethnic identity as a means of subversive humor.

Unlike Obama, Christie's ethnic background has not received much media attention. However, the way that Christie's ethnic descent is portrayed in political cartoons also relies on stereotypical representations of Italian-Americans. The way in which Christie's Italian-American identity is scrutinized by political cartoonists is more akin to how John Kerry was villainized during the 2004 elections for being of French descent. Fahey's analysis of media discourses illuminates the emphasis on Kerry's "Frenchness" which was used to feminize him and deem him unsuitable for the presidency. While Fahey's analysis shares similarities with Christie's weight-centered depictions, the stereotypes associated with Italian-Americans differ greatly from the feminization of French culture. Political cartoons that highlight Christie's ethnicity emphasize hyper-masculine qualities associated with stereotypes of Italian mobsters and thugs. In stark contrast to the weight metaphors which feminize him, the metaphors focusing on Christie's ethnicity portray him as hyper-masculine; constructing a complex gendered representation of Christie's body.

In order to examine how cartoonists metaphorically transform Chris Christie's body, we must critically examine the cartoons which feature him. I have selected cartoons and digitally altered photographs from the top twenty-five newspapers and the top twenty-five magazines in the United States as compiled by the Alliance for Audited Media, a "non-profit organization that is a leading source of cross-media verification and information services, providing standards, audit services and data for the advertising and publishing industries" ("About AAM"). Due to the breadth of political cartoons featuring Chris Christie, I focus on thirty-one cartoons published from September of 2011, the year

following Christie's election as governor of New Jersey, to the time this chapter was drafted in January of 2015.

Now that I have introduced the study, reviewed the literature on political cartoons, and provided a detailed account of the metaphor methodology featuring incorporation and enactment I now contextualize this study by providing a profile of Chris Christie's relevant personal background and political career, and the historical context that situates his public presence. Significant events that are referenced in the political cartoons themselves, such as Hurricane Sandy and the Bridgegate scandal, will be detailed. In order to adequately interpret the reimaginings that cartoonists create, it is important to obtain a full understanding of Christie's political career and the political context which surrounds him.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUALIZING THE CHRISTIE PHENOMENON: AN OVERVIEW OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, AND CHRIS CHRISTIE

From his earliest emergence into politics, Christie's career has been defined by difference. Christie has been both praised and condemned for being a "political moderate," which, along with a highly publicized scandal, has left some members of his own party hesitant to associate with the popular governor (Cillizza and Sullivan). Exploring the political context which surrounds Governor Christie will clarify why his centrist beliefs have become so contentious and why the political cartoons which denigrate him could potentially threaten his political future.

The Republican Party in Decline

Despite making comebacks in the midterm elections of 2010 and 2014, the Republican Party has been fractured since 2006 when George W. Bush's approval ratings dropped abruptly. The ensuing battle for the Republican nomination opened cleavages between social conservatives and economic or libertarian conservatives that contributed to the loss of the presidential elections in 2008 and 2012. By 2006 Bush had become one of the most disliked presidents in American history (Mershon); Bush's presidency was defined by two wars that became globally unpopular, an inadequate reaction to Hurricane Katrina, and an increase in poverty rates (Rosenfeld). Thus, the 2008 election presented

an opportunity for Republicans to distance themselves from the air of discontent that lingered from the Bush administration.

It seemed as though the GOP would indeed be able to put the previous presidency behind them, with McCain and Palin ahead in the polls until September 15, 2008. However, when the economy collapsed, support for McCain and Palin collapsed with it. Democratic senator Barack Obama's landslide win against Republican senator John McCain clearly evidenced the shift to the left for many voters, including 80 percent of nonwhite voters, 56 percent of women, 52 percent of independents, and an unprecedented 66 percent of young voters voting for Barack Obama ("Local Exit Polls - Election Center 2008"). Despite a Republican comeback in the mid-term elections of 2010, Obama easily won a second term in 2012 when Republicans failed provide a unified front behind their nominee Mitt Romney, with Romney running 350,000 votes behind McCain's numbers in 2008 (Griffin).

In both presidential elections, the disconnect between the Republican nominee and the American people was evident. Senator McCain's uncertainty regarding how many houses he owned and Romney's garage with elevators, his disparagement of the 47% of Americans who don't pay taxes, and his initial refusal to release his tax returns reinforced the perception of conservative affluence during a time of recession. Additionally, researchers have found that each successive generation is "more politically independent; more religiously independent; less likely to self-identify as patriotic; less opposed to gay rights" and as a whole, more socially liberal (Drum). Issues such as women's health, same-sex marriage, and immigration emerged in the 2012 election, with Republicans

maintaining their conservative stances on these social concerns. It appeared that the Republican nominee had fallen out of touch with the average American.

Despite the overwhelming support for the new president in 2008, not every American was pleased with the election of Barack Obama. Shortly after he was voted into office, resistance to the new president emerged in the form of the Tea Party movement. Initially referring to themselves as a grassroots political group, the Tea Party became a faction of the Republican Party known for conservative views regarding economic issues. Glenn Beck, Sarah Palin, and other notable figures in the Republican Party aligned themselves with the Tea Party, advocating for the overarching goal of smaller government. As the Tea Party gained strength and members, it began to challenge party incumbents that it believed were too moderate. Many blamed the Tea Party candidates for squandering winnable races in Nevada, Delaware, Missouri, and Indiana during the 2012 Senate election (Cassata). In 2014, for example, Tea Party members defeated the Republican House whip in his Virginia congressional district, but Tea Party members were defeated in Kansas, Utah, Kentucky, and Mississippi senate primaries, allowing mainstream Republicans to take the upper hand once again in terms of controlling the Republican Party. As public dislike for the Tea Party grew, in-party fighting and intra-party division came to characterize the Republican Party, with media reports stating that the GOP was “literally tearing itself apart” (Rosenfeld).

Despite numerous attempts to redefine the ideological purpose of their party, the GOP has simply not been able to ameliorate the discord between the “ideologically pure” yet moderate conservative and the right. Thus, the party has begun to seek a “true Republican” who consistently represents traditional conservative ideals. Unfortunately

for the GOP, the man who would become one of the most popular Republican representatives wasn't as "truly conservative" as some on the right had hoped.

Chris Christie: Red Governor in a Blue State

The current ideological polarization in the Republican Party has made life as a conservative politician difficult. During a time when Republicans struggle to negotiate between the stances taken by the Tea Party and less extreme ideological positions, Christie's moderation has made Republicans on both sides of the political rift hesitant to support him. With a conservative father and a left-leaning mother, Christie was exposed to a wide array of political opinions early in his life (Martin). Christie's position on gun control, the environment, and immigration represented the departure from traditional conservative beliefs that marked his early political career ("Chris Christie on the Issues"). Currently, Christie's moderate stance in the Republican Party has defined his political career, and along with his weight and aggressive demeanor, is heavily featured in political cartoons. To explain why Christie has become a political anomaly one need only look to his cooperation with Barack Obama during Hurricane Sandy, his antagonistic public demeanor, weight-related controversies, and the Fort Lee bridge closure scandal.

Christie's attempts to enter the world of politics were not initially successful. After losing races for a seat in the New Jersey General Assembly in 1995 and a post as the Morris County freeholder in 1998, Christie did not hold office until he was appointed the position of U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey by George W. Bush in 2001 ("Timeline: Chris Christie"). Christie's early career as New Jersey's attorney was marked by aggressive investigations of corrupt public officials in an effort

to combat the stereotype of crookedness typically associated with New Jersey politics. Through the conviction of 130 public officials, Christie proved himself to be an “ethical commonman” who held the interests of his constituency over political affiliations (“Christopher James Christie Biography”). His reputation for being firm, but moral, easily won him the governorship of New Jersey in 2009, striking the match that would later flair into the “Chris Christie phenomenon” (Greenblatt). As Republican governor in a blue state, Christie adopted many liberal policies, and even ran for the office of governor on a bi-partisan platform. For example, Christie was pro-choice until 1996, when he began advocating a centrist position on the topic of abortion (“Chris Christie on the Issues”). While Christie did not identify as strictly pro-choice, he believed that abortions in the case of rape, incest, or endangerment of the mother should be permissible. With Republicans such as Rick Santorum claiming that women who have been raped should “accept the gift God has given them” and “make the best out of a bad situation” Christie’s views on a woman’s right to choose were more moderate than his Republican counterparts (Washington Post Staff).

His position as a moderate Republican was reinforced by his actions during Hurricane Sandy, which became one of the defining moments of Christie’s political career (Sullivan). The “superstorm,” which affected the entire eastern seaboard, hit New Jersey on October 29, 2013. The storm killed 37 individuals in the state of New Jersey alone, with damages costing about 36.8 million dollars (“Superstorm Sandy Blamed For At Least 11 U.S. Deaths As It Slams East Coast”). The damages included a 50-foot piece of the Atlantic City boardwalk washing away and half the city of Hoboken being flooded (Zezenia and McClam). During the hurricane, Christie united with President Barack

Obama in order to minimize Sandy's effects on New Jersey citizens; he effusively praised the President's assistance during and after the hurricane (Allen and Vandehei). Along with commending the Democratic President, Christie slammed House Republicans, including House majority leader John Boehner, for initially refusing to pass a Sandy relief package 66 days after the storm devastated the state of New Jersey. Christie's image as a centrist was cemented in a single hug between himself and Obama after Hurricane Sandy, a photograph which left Republicans feeling as though Christie was becoming too friendly with their Democratic rival, especially during a time when the Republican Party was attempting to send a cohesive conservative message and win a presidential election.

This simple instance of cooperation with the president cost Christie several political opportunities. Mitt Romney's consideration of Christie as his running man in the 2012 elections was reevaluated, resulting in his decision to run alongside Wisconsin House representative, Paul Ryan (Allen and Vandehei). His temporary alliance with Obama also cost him an invitation to the 2013 Conservative Political Action Committee (Bouie). In explaining why Christie was not asked to speak at the convention, the head of the American Conservative Union, Al Cardenas stated, "We felt that the governor's tone and attitude did not justify an invitation to the conservative conference and we took a pass this year" (Rudin). Florida GOP operative Rick Wilson agreed that although Christie was a popular governor who had done "some fine work in New Jersey," that he had "handled relationships with the base with what a lot of conservatives view as contempt" (Rudin).

While the Republican National Party was displeased with Christie, the citizens of New Jersey were overwhelmingly in favor of their governor. Christie had a 67 percent approval rating among registered New Jersey voters after Hurricane Sandy, leaving his constituents feeling as though he was “less ideological” and “more caring” than his conservative counterparts (Allen and Vandehei). Christie’s willingness to confront his own party established him as a “force to be reckoned with” and what the New Jersey public thought of as a “true leader” (Cillizza).

Christie’s Public Persona

Christie’s reputation as an honest, bi-partisan representative was augmented by his up-front demeanor during public addresses. His sharp comebacks and aggressive personality won over New Jersey citizens with many feeling that in spite of his hostile attitude, that he truly understood and represented the people of the Garden State. Calling reporters, and even his constituents, “idiots,” and threatening them with comments such as, “you should really see me when I’m pissed,” cemented Christie’s reputation as an in-your-face enforcer who was unafraid of speaking the truth (Liebelson). Youtube videos of Christie at press conferences generated millions of views, even becoming more popular than public addresses by other Republican presidential contenders who have spent more time in the political limelight (Perez-Pena). The governor’s aggression was not reserved for public addresses and press conferences. Christie even verbally retaliated to a heckler on the boardwalk of the Jersey Shore, which ended with the critical citizen walking away as Christie’s bodyguards attempted to pull the heated governor away from the situation (Capehart). Christie’s public behaviors did not deter his constituents but instead made him more popular than ever. Citizens of New Jersey were proud to call

Christie their governor and he was frequently thought of as “honest” and “distinctly New Jerseyan” (Katz).

The aggressive demeanor that his constituents love is, according to Christie, a result of his Italian-American descent. The trope of the hyper-masculine Italian male elucidated in the previous chapter is present beyond political cartoons. In May of 2010, Christie told an audience of senior citizens, “I have an Irish father, and I had--before she passed away six years ago--a Sicilian mother. For those of you who have been exposed to the combination of Irish and Sicilian, it has made me not unfamiliar with conflict” (Perez-Pena). While Christie jokes about his ethnic identity, racially stereotyping Christie has become a common way that he is attacked by his detractors. The news media regularly compares Christie to Tony Soprano of the popular HBO series, *The Sopranos* (Siegel), and Vito Corleone of *The Godfather* book and movie (Podhoretz), both fictional Italian mob bosses renowned for their violence and corruption. Emphasizing his ethnicity has become one of the usual ways that Christie is criticized, associating his aggression with stereotypes of the Italian Mafia. Alternatively, some organizations, like the Italic Institute of America, blame the New Jersey governor for propagating racist stereotypes at the expense of the Italian American community. The organization that presents itself as “guardians of the Italian heritage” suggests that because Christie himself attributes his aggression to his ethnicity, he is upholding the same racist aggressions that are used to attack him (Iaconis). The author goes on to note that while Christie would publically take offense to stereotyping early in his career, he now seems to “revel in the corpulent capo persona.” But whether he is seen as the victim or the purveyor of stereotypes, it is undeniable that Christie’s ethnic identity is a salient

aspect of his political existence. The stereotypes attributed to, and sometimes promoted by Chris Christie, encourage the racial stereotyping of Italian Americans.

While Christie's brashness and Italian descent attracted public notice, it was not his only characteristic that garnered media's attention. Christie's weight became a nationwide point of interest. While Christie never gave an exact number as to how much he weighed, physicians once estimated that it was close to 400 pounds (Siegel). Christie's corpulence became a national obsession, from physicians expressing concern to comedians mercilessly ridiculing the governor. Late night talk show host David Letterman quipped that not only was Chris Christie unfit for office, he was "also unfit for his pants." Physicians, on the other hand, released statements that could have seriously jeopardized Christie's career as a politician. Former White House physician Connie Mariano commented, "I'm seriously afraid of this man dying in office" (Wing). Despite Christie releasing full health reports insisting that he was in sound physical shape, the New Jersey governor elected to undergo lap-band surgery in February 2013. While the rest of the nation continued to question whether Christie was "fit enough to run" for reelection, 64 percent of New Jersey said they were content with an overweight governor and 21 percent claimed to be uncomfortable with Christie's weight (Lee). With the overwhelming support of his constituents, the chances of Christie winning reelection in the 2013 gubernatorial race were very promising.

Bridgeway: Traffic Problems in Fort Lee

As one of the most popular politicians in the nation, Christie was emerging as a potential GOP hopeful for the 2016 election. However, one needs only to remember the political scandals of Anthony Weiner, Rod Blagojevich, or Richard Nixon to know that

nothing can alter political plans like a public scandal. In September of 2013, the Director of Interstate Capital Projects, David Wildstein, ordered the closing of two toll lanes on the George Washington Bridge under the pretense of conducting a traffic study (Strunsky). The George Washington Bridge is the “busiest motor-vehicle bridge in the world;” thus its partial closing led to massive gridlock that was detrimental to citizens of Fort Lee, New Jersey (Woodruff). The closing of this bridge would typically warrant the cooperation of local government officials and law enforcement, yet the George Washington Bridge manager was directed not to disclose that the study was being conducted for fear that it would “impact the study” (Boburg). During the four days that the bridge was partially closed, traffic was so impacted that it was faster for emergency responders to address emergencies on foot rather than in an ambulance. Eventually, the executive director of the Port Authority sent an email ordering senior Port Authority officials to reopen the bridge, calling the closing “hasty and ill-advised,” and requested that a statement be released regarding the closing (“PA Chief Patrick Foye’s Email on George Washington Bridge Lane Closure Scandal”). Due to the legal and practical implications of shutting the bridge down, reporters were adamant on investigating whether the Port Authority was *really* willing to commit a federal crime in order to conduct a traffic study. On October 2, 2013, New Jersey Assemblyman John Wisniewski, the Democratic chairman of the Assembly Transportation, Public Works and Independent Authorities Committee, said he would hold hearings to determine the motivation behind the lane closures. In addition to Wisniewski’s investigation, the Port Authority announced that it would undertake their own investigation to determine “why the lanes were closed and whether or not proper procedures were followed” (Baxter).

In spite of the incessant attention that the bridge closing was receiving, it seemed as though Christie-appointed officials within the Port Authority were successfully keeping the public at bay. In spite of the closings, Christie's bid for reelection was going extremely well. When questioned regarding the scandal, he responded in typical Chris Christie fashion, sarcastically stating, "I worked the cones. Unbeknownst to everybody I was actually the guy out there, in overalls and a hat" (Katz). With the bridge debacle seemingly behind him, Christie won the gubernatorial election by an overwhelming 66 percent over Democratic candidate, Barbara Buono.

While Christie no longer seemed concerned regarding the scandal, the investigation of Port Authority officials continued throughout the end of 2013. In the month of December alone, Christie appointees Bill Baroni and David Wildstein resigned, as Wisniewski issued seven more subpoenas to obtain communications and documents from Port Authority officials (Baxter). In January of 2014, Christie lost the ability to dismiss the bridge scandal. Hundreds of pages worth of emails and transcripts were released which revealed that members of his administration were involved with the bridge closing. Amongst thousands of incriminating emails, the most highly publicized was one written by Bridget Kelly, Christie's Deputy Chief of Staff, to Wildstein months before the bridge closing which read, "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," to which he replied, "Got it."

Hours after the transcripts were released, Christie issued a statement maintaining that he knew nothing about what was now being referred to as "Bridgegate" and that he was misled by individuals within his administration. That same day, Christie told reporters that not only was he apologetic to the people of New Jersey, but also that he had

fired Bridget Kelly for “lying to him” (“Timeline: New Jersey’s George Washington Bridge Scandal”). Christie went on to assure his constituents in his State of the State address that he would cooperate with all appropriate inquiries during the investigation. Later that week, the Christie administration announced that New York attorney, Randy Mastro, would be leading an internal review into the bridge scandal and to “help the administration respond to ongoing investigations” (Baxter). Mastro’s connection with political allies of Christie’s led many to question the legitimacy of the investigation. Not surprisingly, the results of Mastro’s investigation completely exonerated Christie.

Investigators soon discovered that the released emails not only revealed the Christie administration’s involvement in the scandal, but also confirmed what many had speculated was the motive for the closing: the obstruction of the George Washington Bridge was intended as an attack on the Democratic mayor of Fort Lee, Mark Sokolich. Sokolich did not support Christie in the 2013 gubernatorial election, despite being heavily “courted” by members of Christie’s administration (Kelly). During the bridge closing, Sokolich had texted Baroni begging for the bridge to open so that school busses would not be delayed. Bridget Kelly intercepted the text message and emailed David Wildstein, “Is it wrong that I’m smiling right now?” “No,” he replied, reminding her that the children stuck in the busses were “the children of Buono voters” (Boburg, Koloff and Akin). Although Christie had been “absolved” of any possible culpability, his probable involvement in the Bridgegate scandal significantly affected his public approval.

Christie, who was once lauded for his role as an enforcer, was now seen as a bully by the very individuals who voted him into office. While some political journalists claim that this scandal will be considered a non-issue by the time Christie would run for president,

Christie's popularity suffered greatly from the Bridgegate scandal (Macaray). The governor's approval ratings dropped from 65 to 50 percent after the email transcripts were released (Hirschhorn). While he still boasts the approval of the majority of his constituency, political scholars argue that pre-Bridgegate approval ratings will be difficult, but not impossible, to achieve (Katz).

During the relatively short amount of time that Christie has been politically active, this scandal along with his centrist politics and aggressive behavior, have provided much fodder for political cartoonists. While Christie's weight has also garnered significant coverage by the media, the attention that cartoonists place on his body is staggering. Artists who depict him choose to emphasize his weight over the other actions and traits that characterize him. The interplay between Christie's body and his political actions has widespread implications for women and individuals with non-normative bodies.

To examine the ways in which Christie's body is gendered and made salient, in the next chapter I use metaphor criticism to analyze how illustration and text work in tandem to construct new political realities. The next chapter will focus on five political cartoons from major news publications which feature Chris Christie at various stages of his political career. The analysis in Chapter Three will concentrate on the tropes used to render Christie's weight salient. The cartoons will be organized according to the following metaphors: Christie as animal, Christie as monster, Christie as inanimate object, Christie as child, and Christie as woman.

CHAPTER 3

METAPHORIC REPRESENTATIONS OF CHRISTIE'S WEIGHT

Metaphoric representations of Christie's weight are the first way cartoonists emphasize his corporeality. Christie's political actions are mirrored in the negative representation and exaggeration of his physical form. A thorough examination of the 18 cartoons over the span of three years revealed that weight is the primary way in which cartoonists emphasize Chris Christie's corporeality. From my metaphoric analysis, five distinct metaphors emerged as salient in cartoons featuring Christie: Christie as women, as animals, as monsters, as inanimate objects, and as children. I argue that all five of these metaphors can operate as tools to feminize Christie, gendering his body by exaggerating his corporeality.

Christie as Woman

The most blatant feminization of Christie can be found in the cartoons which transform Christie into a woman. While cartoons that portray Christie as animals, monsters, inanimate objects, and children feminize Christie indirectly, cartoons that portray him as actual women blatantly associate his body with the female form. Christie's temporary occupation of a female body leaves him vulnerable to stereotypes that are regularly associated with women, and becomes the target of the "femiphobic" rhetoric which attempts to regulate women's bodies in, and outside of, the public sphere. While members of both sexes can be overweight, some feminist scholars argue that being

“fat” should be considered a feminist issue (Chrisler). Chrisler goes on to argue that overweight women face challenges unique to those of overweight men. In the following cartoons, Christie is not simply transformed into a woman, he is transformed into an *overweight* woman, and thus, is treated to the body prejudiced to which overweight women are regularly subjected. In the following illustrations, we see clear examples of how Christie is ostracized by cartoonists, calling to mind conservative, masculinist rhetoric that has deemed Christie’s body feminine and worthy of ridicule. Not only does portraying Christie as a woman suggest that his body is not deemed suitable to be that of a man’s, but that his bad policies are a result of his femininity, upholding sexist stereotypes that heavily guide the political realm.

Stereotypical markers of femininity are utilized by cartoonists who transform Christie into women. The sexual objectification of Christie when he is female governs his metaphorical body, his literal body, and his politics. By constructing an image of Christie modeled after the trope of the hyper-sexual woman, cartoonists subject him to the same gendered denigrations used to govern women’s sexuality. In a cartoon published by the *Washington Examiner* in June of 2011 (Figure 1), Christie wears a white dress and stands above an open vent, similar to iconic image of Marilyn Monroe from the film, “The Seven Year Itch.” Christie is, again, magnified to many times his actual size and is drawn with full breasts. His eyes are closed but his face is clearly full of joy, presenting one of the only cartoons where Christie displays emotion. Written across his legs are the words, “No seriously...I’m not running for prez,” and his speech bubble reads, “Get the picture yet, boys?” This is one of the clearest ways in which Christie’s body becomes his argument, with the words of his message written on his physical form.

Women's legs are often sexually objectified and are frequently subjected to the male gaze (Edwards and McDonald). With the message he is conveying in the cartoon written up the length of his leg, Christie's message is reduced to the worth attributed to his body. Christie's portrayal calls to mind the stereotype of women teasing men by lifting their skirt, which only further devalues his claim that he is not running for president. Christie's statement in the cartoon addresses the audience as "boys," implying that he himself is unlike the "boys" which he addresses. This also suggests that those who would be running against him would be predominantly male, completely obscuring the possibility of female contenders such as Hillary Clinton, a frontrunner for the Democratic Party in the 2016 election. Thus, when Christie's political decisions are coming from a female body, they are considered playful, whimsical, and not to be taken seriously.

Similarly, a cartoon published by the *Star-Ledger* in January of 2015 (Figure 2) also transforms Christie into a hyper-sexualized woman. In the cartoon, Christie wears a Dallas Cowboys cheerleading outfit and is seen shaking pom-poms as he asks the reader, "How 'bout them cowboys?" Below the cartoon is the caption, "Christie does Dallas," a play on the title of the pornographic movie, "Debbie Does Dallas." This cartoon is a result of Christie's highly publicized support of the Dallas Cowboys in the beginning of 2015. It was speculated that Christie's sudden affinity for the football team was part of a strategy to gain potential Texas voters for the 2016 presidential election. Christie's outfit reveals his stomach, thighs, and buttocks which are magnified and drawn as exceptionally round and soft. The sexual connotation behind the cartoon's caption along with Christie's revealing costume suggests that Christie is manipulating voters using his body, reinforcing stereotypes of the dangers of "sexually deviant" women. While sexual

liberation and empowerment have been reclaimed as empowering tools in contemporary feminism, the hegemonic regulation of the female body which is prevalent in politics is used to reject women who appear sexually provocative, and thus, Christie's revealing outfits are used to render him a "bad woman" according to hegemonic standards which deem certain women "good" and others "bad." However, Christie is also confined by the social rules which govern the bodies of overweight women. Overweight women in America are socially constructed as "asexual," maintaining the construction of thinness as the ideal sexual body (Gremillion 17). Thus, portraying Christie as a fat woman mocks him in his attempt to use sexuality to his advantage, a privilege that is usually reserved for thin, straight, White, and heterosexual women.

Alternatively, cartoonists also portray Christie as a traditionally feminine woman, reinforcing the virgin/whore dichotomy which is used to compartmentalize women's sexual experiences. A cartoon also published by the *Star-Ledger* (Figure 3) depicts Christie in a wedding dress, linking arms with an elephant. Christie wears a full wedding dress, complete with a veil and a bouquet of roses. Beneath the illustration, Christie is quoted as saying, "Gay marriage should be left up to the voters. I support traditional marriage roles. In fact, I'm engaged myself," he says in reference to his marriage to the elephant beside him. Christie's social conservatism is mocked by representing him as the ideal in traditional conservative femininity and suggesting that he is marrying the Republican Party. Another cartoon also posted by the *Star-Ledger* (Figure 4) depicts Christie as Marie Antoinette. Wearing a billowing, pink ball gown, Christie looks to the reader with an apathetic facial expression and exclaims, "I'm tired of talking about the minimum wage...let them eat \$8.25 an hour." Like the cartoons which denigrate Christie

by portraying him as hyper-sexual, cartoonists use stereotypes associated with femininity to suggest that the governor is too fiscally conservative and out of touch with his constituents. Christie encounters the same double-bind that proves an obstacle for women, with cartoons representing him as simultaneously too sexual and too prudish. All of the outfits featured in the cartoons--the Marilyn Monroe dress, the cheerleading uniform, the ball gown, and the wedding dress--represent an exaggerated version of femininity. This hyper-feminization serves to weaken Christie's character and criticize his policies while simultaneously reinforcing notions of hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, the juxtaposition between Christie's female body and masculine features in all of the cartoons which portray him as a woman employ perspective by incongruity to further denigrate Christie. Christie is clearly not meant to be a sexual woman. The sexual positions and clothes he wears are meant to mock him, thus denying him any sexual capital. All of the cartoons which featured Christie as a woman drew him with hair on his arms, chest and stomach. While Christie is being portrayed as a woman, cartoonists attempt to make him the most unappealing woman according to hegemonic standards of beauty. Thus, Christie's transformation into a woman does not empower him, but instead calls attention to how Christie's policies are as repugnant as his non-normative body.

Christie's portrayal as a woman is not only meant to reduce his worth, but also reinforces the idea that there is something intrinsically wrong with being a woman. This denigration of the feminine reinforces the gender binary that has come to dominate the public sphere. In a similar vein, cartoons which construct Christie as an elephant use values that are inherent to animals to discipline Christie's corporeality.

Christie as Animal

Another way in which cartoonists discipline Christie's body is by metaphorically associating him with non-human creatures, which marks his body as monstrous or beastly and robs him of his personhood. By comparing Christie to monsters and animals, cartoonists suggest he is irrational, undisciplined, and subordinate to other "human" politicians. The use of animalistic pejoratives has been part of discourse for centuries. Humans have been constructed as "superior and naturally entitled to dominate," and associating certain individuals with animals "assists in their oppression" (Dunayer 11). Comparisons to animals also reinforce the stereotype that individuals who are overweight, like animals, are unintelligent, unattractive, and uncultured (Palmatier 7, 172). The comparison of women to animals has especially been used throughout history. Ruth Todasco, feminist scholar and writer, identified the trope, "woman as animal" as one of the primary ways that women are linguistically denigrated (27). Thus, by transforming Chris Christie's body into that of an animal, he is not only constructed as irrational, but he is also confined through the same animal metaphors used to describe women.

Portraying Christie as an elephant is the primary animal metaphor used by cartoonists. As the mascot for the Republican Party, transforming Christie into an elephant is often defended by cartoonists as simply a comment on his political affiliation. However, because of Christie's corporeal existence as an overweight individual, the transformation from man to elephant carries with it unique implications. All of the cartoons which feature Christie as an elephant reference a possible run for the presidency, and the public statements he has made concerning whether or not he will run in 2016.

Thus, the anxieties associated with a non-normative body occupying the most powerful position in United States government are manifested through his corporeal transformation. Cartoons which portray Christie as an elephant rely on several tactics: the minimalization of Christie's human features, the exaggeration of his corpus, and the privilege of speech.

The erasure of Christie's facial features is one of the ways cartoonists artistically dehumanize Christie. One of the most prominent and widely circulated examples of Christie's body being associated with a non-human beast is the cover of the November 2013 issue of *TIME Magazine* (Figure 5). The magazine cover depicts Christie's face in profile with his mouth gaping open. There is a dark blue wash over Christie's face, completely obscuring his facial features with outline of his silhouette being the main focal point. His open mouth suggests hunger, calling to mind an animal waiting to be fed. The dark filter over the image is lighter over his mouth than the entirety of his face. Instead of revealing the eyes which indicate humanity, editors chose to focus on the mouth, emphasizing the only part of his face with a direct connection to his weight. The fact that Christie is silhouetted is reminiscent of the silhouette of a woman's hourglass figure that has become a trope in mainstream media (Overstreet, Quinn, and Agocha 93). However, as opposed to emphasizing sexuality, the silhouette emphasizes the softness of his face, objectifying him through the same strategies typically employed to objectify women.

While *TIME Magazine* obstructed Christie's facial features, cartoonists who utilize the "Christie as elephant" metaphor often find other ways to minimize the parts of Christie which are indicative of his humanity. A cartoon published by the *U.S. News and*

World Report in March of 2014 (Figure 6) features Christie on a carnival ride called “Tunnel of Love.” An elephant sits next to him on the ride with his arm around Christie. Christie’s back is turned from the reader, and thus his face is not visible. The other two cartoons which feature the governor as an elephant erase his humanity by depicting his facial features (especially his eyes) as exceptionally small when compared with the detail in which they draw his body. While incorporation suggests that the body is emphasized, the lack of emphasis on Christie’s face is also noteworthy. By removing attention from the part of Christie which emphasizes his humanity, cartoonists highlight what is considered wrong with his body. Similar to how women’s bodies in advertisements are dissected and objectified (Zimmerman and Dahlberg), Christie’s body is fragmented and put on display for the heteronormative male gaze. However, as opposed to highlighting his body for sexual pleasure, the cartoons emphasize Christie’s corporeality to mock a body that is considered non-normative; both of which assign power to the dominant group.

Aside from altering Christie’s facial features, cartoons which compare Christie to an elephant distort his body so that it more resembles the animal--greatly exaggerating his weight. Every cartoon that utilizes the “Christie as elephant” metaphor depicts the governor as the largest entity in the illustration, regardless of what other people/animals are featured. A cartoon published by *The Plain Dealer* in September of 2011 (Figure 7) portrays Christie as an elephant and features other significantly smaller elephants following Christie. In spite of the fact that they are all the same species of animal, Christie is by far the largest. On the *TIME* Magazine cover, Christie’s silhouette fills nearly the entire space of the magazine, as if his body is so large that it could not also be

included in the image. This represents another example of Christie's body being absent, leaving readers to construct their own, possibly more extreme, depiction of Christie's body. The production of Christie's perceived enormity is also evident in a cartoon by the *Washington Post* published in November of 2013 (Figure 8) which shows Christie trying on an elephant costume. Here Christie is the sole entity featured in the cartoon, although it can be seen through shading by the artist that he is inside of a room. Like the cartoons which portray him as a woman, Christie's physical body emerges as the dominant aspect of the cartoon. By depicting Christie's body as the main focal point of the cartoon, to the point where he cannot even share a space with anything else, his corporeality is highlighted, and rendered overbearing, and dominating. However, this should not be mistaken for power. While his body is portrayed as dominant, his verbal exclamation included in the cartoon undermines whatever power may be attributed to his corporeality. The way that text and speech is used to denigrate Christie is also significant to his portrayal as an animal.

Finally, the designation of who is able to speak is also used to render Christie as an animal. When Christie is granted speech in political cartoons, it typically serves to demean him. In the *Washington Post* cartoon where Christie is trying on an elephant costume, he has a speech bubble which exclaims, "It fits!" Christie's surprise that the elephant costume fits suggests that his body is so large, that even his ability to transform into an elephant is surprising. In the cartoon, Christie has managed to fit into the body of the elephant costume, but the head of the costume lies on the floor below him. At the bottom right corner of the cartoon, the cartoonist responds to Christie's "It fits!" with, "Maybe not your head." This comment plays on the elephant's status as the

mascot for the Republican party, and suggests that while Christie's body may resemble that of an elephant (the animal), his mentality and his ego does not correlate with that of an elephant (the Republican Party). The cartoon's pink background and the feminine associations with trying on clothing also serve to feminize Christie. The cartoon posted by *The Plain Dealer* features Christie as an elephant being ridden by a small man. The cartoon features Christie telling the man who is riding him, "I'm not ready to be president," to which the man responds, "That didn't stop them," in reference to politicians such as Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Rick Perry, and Michele Bachman who are represented as smaller elephants following Christie. Christie's concerns over being unprepared to run for the presidency are undermined by the person riding him. Despite the miniaturization of the man riding Christie, he is still directing Christie both literally and metaphorically. Christie's position as serving a human male in the cartoon, as well as the interaction between himself and the man riding him, suggest that he is simply an unthinking tool; an elephant in his political affiliation, as well as his willingness to serve his party regardless of his personal opinions.

Conversely, the majority of the cartoons which suggest Christie is an elephant also deny Christie the ability to speak altogether. The absence of speech is often more revealing of attitudes towards Christie than cartoons which allow him to speak. A defining characteristic which differentiates humans from animals is the ability to speak, and thus, revoking that ability from Christie also revokes his humanity. Two of the cartoons which featured a mute Christie were the *TIME* magazine cover, and the Tunnel of Love cartoon. In the center-right section of the *TIME* cover, the words "ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM" are presented in a font second in size only to the title of the publication.

The words “elephant in the room” represent Christie’s Republican affiliation, and also compare him to an animal. This comparison to an elephant represents the iconic Republican mascot, while simultaneously suggesting that his body resembles the enormity of an elephant. The link between Christie and elephants, as well as the meaning behind the colloquial phrase, “elephant in the room,” suggest that Christie is an entity that is present but one that people wish to avoid; reinforcing more blatant suggestions of his inferiority. The silhouetted image featured on *TIME Magazine* is reminiscent of an elephant raising its trunk and crying, associating Christie speaking with the animalistic trumpeting sound made by elephants. Here, the magazine represents an entity that is given the privilege to “speak” and construct the way that Christie is represented, yet does not offer Christie the same opportunity. Similarly, the Tunnel of Love cartoon has Christie entering the ride with an elephant who has his arm wrapped around Christie. The elephant tells Christie, “Please don’t tell me you’ve got a problem with this tunnel project too,” as they ride on a boat labeled “Christie for President.” Again, Christie is silent in the cartoon, and his political decisions are determined by someone other than himself. In this cartoon however, another elephant directs Christie’s political future, suggesting that even animals have more power and rationality than Christie. Thus, Christie’s lack of speech robs him of his political agency, similar to the ways that women are denied the ability to be heard in the political realm. Kenneth Burke comments that metaphor is essential in the discovery and description of our world (“Four Master Tropes” 421). As Christie transitions from governor to potential presidential candidate, the metaphors in the “Christie as elephant” cartoons inextricably associate his potential run with the lack of reason, control, and power.

However, Christie's transformation into elephants is not the only way in which cartoonists render him non-human. The ad hominem attack Christie faces when compared to animals is magnified as cartoonists transform him into various fictional monsters.

Christie as Monster

Christie's comparison to monsters is similar to his transformation into elephants with the connection between his body and deviance becoming much more explicit. While Christie's association with elephants dominates in the realm of animal metaphors, the ways in which Christie is transformed into a monster takes on several variations. Christie as King Kong, Godzilla, and troll are all representations that emerge within the discourse. While these monsters are not inherently feminine, the specific body parts that cartoonists emphasize, and how Christie is portrayed in comparison to other characters in the cartoons results in some instances where "Christie as monster" constructs a feminized Christie. The size of the fictional beasts that Christie is compared to is paramount to understanding how his body is disciplined. Christie is only compared to monsters that are known for their enormity, thus inextricably tying his size to treachery and deviance. Monster metaphors not only signify subservience to their "human" counterparts, but also primitiveness and distrust. In a similar vein as the animal metaphors, cartoonist representations of Christie as monsters not only suggest that he is subhuman, but also construct him through the same tactics often used to discipline the female body. Calafell notes how women have been historically compared to monsters such as werewolves and vampires, and thus, framed as inferior. Clearly, not all cartoons which portray Christie as a monster intentionally feminize him. However, the many

feminine qualities of the “Christie as monster” cartoons are compelling and worthy of exploration.

Although transforming Christie into a fictional creature suggests that he is essentially more powerful and more dangerous than his human counterparts, cartoons that distort Christie’s body into that of a monster construct him as dangerous through his weaknesses. A cartoon published by the *NY Daily News* in January of 2014 (Figure 9) depicts a completely naked Christie under a bridge next to a troll-like creature. Christie’s body is made big enough to barely fit under said bridge, his bodily features such as his thighs, chest, stomach and arms are graphically emphasized. In the cartoon, Christie asks the troll, “Wanna be my running mate in 2016?” A sign can be seen above them that reads, “E-Z Pass: Trolls.” By portraying Christie as a monster, his body and his politics are established as deviant, and consistent with the troll metaphor, designates his body as worthless (Fox). Christie is given a monstrous form, while the cartoonist simultaneously suggests that Christie is corrupt and unethical for considering a troll as a running mate. The features that the artist chose to emphasize correlate with what we are meant to consider wrong or grotesque about the human body. In this instance, the magnification of Christie’s body is used to establish him as a massive, sub-human force. Similarly, a different cartoon which portrayed Christie as a troll was published by *NBC Philadelphia* in January of 2014 (Figure 10). Christie is seen hiding beneath the George Washington Bridge and blocking the flow of traffic with a giant club. With a devious smile on his face he says, “Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee,” in reference to the infamous threats in the emails between his advisors during the George Washington Bridge closure. Christie’s attempt to hide beneath the bridge is futile, as he is blown up to proportions so

enormous that his body doesn't even fit within the frame of the cartoon. As much as Christie may attempt to hide beneath bridges in the cartoons, his corpus and his corruption are made salient and exposed. His enormity allows him to block traffic with ease, suggesting that Christie's underhanded political actions are facilitated in the cartoon simply due to his immense size.

Cartoonists who depict Christie as monsters also suggest that his body is dangerously undisciplined and that he must be restrained by more rational humans. *The Star-Ledger* published a cartoon of Chris Christie as the giant fictional gorilla, King Kong, in June of 2012 (Figure 11). In the cartoon, Christie is depicted as a giant entity straddling the Empire State Building and shaking his fist as planes surrounding him. His shirt reads "Christie Kong," and he is seen screaming, "The democrats in New Jersey are like vampires!!!" The idea of humans taming Christie and giving him the control that he supposedly lacks reinforces the idea that overweight individuals lack self-control, a stereotype that is also attributed to the bodies of women. The eponymous movies featuring King Kong always end with the death of the giant gorilla. As readers narratize events beyond what occurs in the cartoon, Christie will eventually face his demise, succumbing to the power of humans despite his corporeal size and strength. Thus, the audience is given closure knowing that the giant monster with the non-normative body will cease to exist and cease to exert influence on the "humans" both within and outside of the cartoon.

While the power and strength associated with an unbridled beast may appear masculine, the emergence of the monstrous woman has been said to reflect modern post-feminist anxieties (Calafell). The ad hominem attacks in the "Christie as monster"

cartoons construct a Christie who is monstrous in his femininity. An example of this can be found in the largeness of Christie's thighs and arms, the roundness of his stomach and chin, and the addition by the cartoonist of breasts in *NY Daily News* cartoon which portrayed him as a troll. Christie is constructed as a monster, which is usually considered menacing and powerful, but his body is also made to appear very soft and feminine. While the other cartoon which depicted him as a troll did not reveal his full body, the artist still emphasized the roundness of his face and chin over any other feature that he drew on Christie. Emphasizing these features reinforces hegemonic norms that are usually used to discipline women. Similar to the Christie as elephant metaphor, his facial features are almost non-existent, with his eyes again being completely obscured from the picture. This suggests that the focus should not be on the qualities which render him human, but on the over-emphasized attributes that establish him as inferior, deviant and grotesque. Additionally, the fact that he is completely nude in the illustration suggests that he is vulnerable and delicate, attributing his political mistakes to weakness, incompetence, and frailty. In contrast to the hairy, almost muscular, troll that accompanies Christie below the bridge, not only is Christie's body monstrous, but it is inferior to the monster sitting beside him. By juxtaposing the apparent weakness of Christie with strength of the monster placed next to him, the cartoonist establishes Christie as monstrous as a troll but also inferior to the creature. By feminizing his body, Christie and his political values are rendered deviant and "soft," qualities which are not valued in politics. Cartoonists imply that Christie's politics appear threatening, but are as soft and delicate as his body is in the cartoon. Christie is once again rendered non-

threatening, constituting yet another breach in the conservative masculinist script which disciplines him.

Despite the visual power of seeing Christie as various monsters, his presence is not necessary in his transformation. A cartoon published by *The New Yorker* in January of 2014 (Figure 12) features a large reptilian monster destroying the George Washington Bridge. At the bottom of the cartoon is the statement, “I heard he used to work for Christie.” Although Christie’s body is not present in the cartoon, his body is still rendered salient. Similar to the previously mentioned *TIME* magazine cartoon, the absence of Christie’s body allows the reader to narratize the image of Christie for themselves. If Christie is able to control a giant Godzilla-like creature, than the readers must imagine a Christie that is larger, more dangerous, and more destructive than what is shown in the cartoon. However, the suggestion that Christie is still not able, or willing, to enact his own policies is also present in the cartoons which transform Christie into monsters.

The choice to use the monster metaphor in cartoons describing the Bridgegate scandal reveals how the scandal is being constructed. According to metaphor scholars Lakoff and Johnson, one of the functions of metaphor is to allow us to comprehend an intangible or unstructured subject matter in more concrete terms. Because of the confusion and speculation regarding the scandal, transforming Christie into monsters constructs Bridgegate in black and white terms, with a clear villain in the form of Chris Christie. Christie simultaneously hides and causes chaos in the cartoons, which shapes the collective consciousness regarding the scandal. However, Christie is not simply made into a villain for his potential involvement in the scandal, but for occupying a non-

normative body. Christie's metaphorical transformation is not limited to other living creatures. Cartoons that portray Christie as inanimate and unthinking further associate Christie with ineptitude.

Christie as Inanimate Object

Aside from Christie's portrayal as animals and monsters, cartoonists also transform Christie into inanimate objects. Similar to the elephant metaphors, inanimate object metaphors do not simply rob Christie of his humanity, but also render Christie completely devoid of life. Cartoonists exaggerate the stereotype that overweight individuals are lethargic by not only suggesting that Christie is unwilling to move, but by constructing a Christie that is *unable* to move. The objectification of women is evident throughout contemporary media, with women's bodies often being treated as replaceable and disposable. Women are often reduced to body parts, with their worth being inextricably tied to the inanimate. Similarly, Christie is transformed into a lifeless object and reduced to the visual markers which define him. By suggesting that Christie's political inaction is a result of his physical form, cartoonists continue to metaphorically degrade Christie.

The recent Bridgegate scandal has inspired numerous cartoons that pose Christie as objects in relation to the George Washington Bridge. A cartoon posted by *NY Daily News* in January of 2014 (Figure 13) utilized the metaphor, "Chris Christie as roadblock." Christie's body is magnified several times its actual size and is large enough to span the width of a bridge and completely block any vehicles attempting to pass. Cars are lined up on the bridge in front of Christie with a sign reading, "Governor throwing his weight around: expect delays." Exclamation points and question marks are drawn above the

cars signaling confusion and frustration of the people inside. Christie's vacant expression and sheer size in this cartoon give him an inanimate, objectified visual depiction. His arms and legs are drawn so that they are too short to realistically allow him to move. Christie is once again depicted as inhuman through the concealment of his facial expressions and is also denied the humanizing characteristic of speech. His unspeaking, unmoving role in this cartoon establishes him as little more than a physical object. Even the cars, which are non-living entities, are given a form of communication through question marks and exclamation points to signal their drivers' feelings of frustration. Christie straddles the bridge the cartoonist placed him on; his legs spread in a position that feminizes his body. Thus, Christie becomes the roadblock for which he has become infamous, highlighting the hegemonic preconception that "bad" bodies are inextricably associated with "bad" policies, arguments, and ideas.

While the cartoons that portray Christie as a roadblock clearly objectify him, the *Washington Post* ran a cartoon in September of 2011 (Figure 14) that provided a more subtle statement of Christie as inanimate through the metaphor "Christie as visual aid." The illustration features President Barack Obama standing at a podium gesturing to Christie and saying, "Excuse me - this is the guy who's going to cut the fat out of the government?" An elephant in a suit is seen standing up in the audience saying, "But he's got fire in the belly!" Christie is seen at Obama's side, his body is again magnified to several times its actual size. The exaggeration of Christie's dimensions, and the disproportional size of his arms and legs, suggests that he is immovable and lifeless. Obama is seen gesturing towards him, almost as if Christie is a visual aid or an object on display, which is reminiscent of how women are often displayed and gazed upon for the

pleasure of men. His facial expression, again, is vacant and the size of his facial features are disproportionately smaller than his body. His crossed eyes signal a lack of intelligence, suggesting that his brain is inactive. Christie is the only “person” featured in this political cartoon that does not speak. Even the elephant in the audience, a non-human being, is seen standing and given a speech bubble while Christie remains speechless and stationary. Thus, Christie is rendered an object whose sole purpose is to serve the “humans” in the cartoon. The elephant, an animal which is much larger than Christie in real life, is drawn significantly smaller than the governor. The other two characters in the cartoon speak to each other as if Christie were not there, further establishing him as an unhearing, unfeeling object. The question posed by the illustration of Obama suggests that we cannot trust a man to cut the fat out of government who is fat himself, suggesting that deviance of the flesh translates to political ability. The statement made by the elephant is in support of Christie, but still attracts attention to his weight, almost attempting to excuse Christie’s body by saying that his weight was representative of his passion or zeal for political success. The elephant’s exclamation is meant to suggest that there is something human within Christie, but the lifelessness in the artist’s illustration makes it clear that the elephant’s statement is the butt of the cartoon’s joke.

While cartoons transform Christie into non-human entities are damaging, cartoonists’ penchant for depicting Christie as other humans have the potential of being just as harmful. The metaphor “Christie as child” is used to relegate Christie to a subservient role.

Christie as Child

Cartoons that construct Chris Christie as a child operate under the assumption that children are less knowledgeable than adults. Ageism, or prejudice due to the age of an individual, is considered “as virulent as racism and as pervasive as sexism,” especially when youth are being discriminated against (Westman 237). Westman goes on to note that children are socially constructed as hyper-dependent, less intelligent, and less able to make competent decisions than adults. Similar to the previous metaphors, the making of Christie into a child in the following cartoons is strikingly similar to how women are “overtly trivialized, infantilized, and sexualized” (Messner, Duncan, and Jensen 123). Linguistically constructing women as girls renders them less powerful than their adult male counterparts. Christie faces the same linguistic and visual denigrations in the cartoons that transform him into a child. A series of cartoons by Drew Sheneman of the *Star-Ledger* reduces Christie’s gubernatorial duties to childhood activities such as playing baseball or doing homework. Cartoons that depict Christie as a child infantilize his politics while simultaneously highlighting his weight.

Many of the cartoons featuring Christie as a child depict him being disciplined by someone who is older, rendering him incapable of making his own political decisions. A cartoon by the *Star-Ledger* in March of 2014 (Figure 15) features Christie being dragged away from a box of fireworks that are labeled “tax cuts.” The individual dragging Christie away is an older woman wearing a sweater which reads “reality.” The suggestion that Christie’s desire for tax cuts is not only unrealistic but dangerous is augmented by the fact that someone who is older and more mature than Christie is necessary to force him away from a possible bad political decision. The tantrum that

Christie throws in the cartoon reinforces the recurrent theme of Christie lacking control, again implying that Christie is not capable of governing his own unruly body. In 2012, the *Los Angeles Times* (Figure 16) published a cartoon featuring an altercation between Jerry Brown and Chris Christie. Brown stands above Christie who is sitting on a picnic bench. Brown states, “You called me an old retread?! Okay punk, I challenge you to a three mile race and a push up and chin up contest.” Christie looks up at Brown from a plate full of donuts and replies, “Naw, let’s just see who can eat the most fritters!” Christie is dressed like a child, with a short sleeve red and white striped polo and yellow checkered shorts. Although Brown is constructed as older in this cartoon, he wears exercise clothing and is drawn as more physically fit than Christie. Christie’s reluctance to engage physically with Brown suggests that he is not physically able, and possibly not intellectually able, to compete with Brown. Unlike the previous cartoon, Christie avoids confrontation, lacking the confidence and experience to challenge Brown. The disciplining of Christie suggests that Christie is both physically and mentally inferior to the adults featured in the cartoon, and thus, less capable of leadership.

Cartoons which transform Christie from man to boy also depict him attempting, and failing, to get an upper hand on the adults in the illustrations. Another cartoon in the series by the *Star-Ledger* (Figure 17) shows Christie completing a math problem on a classroom chalkboard. The equation written on the board reads, “Today’s Lesson: Budget Math. $2+2=\$800,000,000$.” Christie looks up at an angry female teacher and says, “I blame the federal government.” Another cartoon by the *Star-Ledger* (Figure 18) depicts Christie standing in front of a broken window holding a bat. He says, “As you can see from this internal investigation conducted by my counsel at the cost of 1 dozen

gummy bears, I've been cleared of all wrongdoing.” Another child stands next to him holding a bag of candy in one hand and holding up a “thumbs up” sign with the other. Both cartoons involve Christie making a mistake and unsuccessfully attempting to absolve himself of blame. Christie’s young, overweight body becomes unreliable and irresponsible. While an element of distrust is fostered through both the child and monster metaphors, the “Christie as child” cartoons suggest that excessive bodily *weaknesses* are the source of cultural anxiety surrounding Christie. The unsuccessful attempts to fool those who discipline him conflate his political mistakes with childhood ignorance. Comparing Christie’s political actions to the antics of young boy infantilize his politics and render him incompetent.

Whether Christie is being disciplined or rebellious in the cartoons which portray him as a child, his body remains the primary focus. Although he is depicted as shorter than the adults in the comics, Christie is still drawn as drastically overweight. Stereotypes of overweight children as friendless, unintelligent bullies cultivate negative attitudes towards them in other children and are reinforced in cartoons where Christie is transformed into a child (Hill and Silver). Christie’s body is seen in several of the cartoons as hanging out of his clothes, rendering his corporeal deviance as uncontainable and overwhelming. The soft jowls, cheeks, arms and stomach continue to be highlighted as feminine and non-normative by cartoonists. Unlike the previous cartoons, Christie is drawn without body hair reinforcing the construction of Christie’s body (and subsequently his politics) as inexperienced and immature. Cartoonists also render Christie inferior in the positioning of his body. In all the cartoons juxtaposing Christie with an adult, Christie is shorter, and thus visually lower than the other characters in the

cartoon. This evokes orientational metaphors which organizes a system of metaphors with respect to one another (Lakoff and Johnson). By positioning Christie below the other people in the cartoons, he becomes associated with “down” metaphors, which connote lack of control, low status, and lack of rationality. However, Christie’s transformation into a child is intentionally incomplete. In the cartoon series by the *Star-Ledger*, the way that Christie’s face and head are illustrated is identical to the cartoons by the same artist who draws him as an adult. Thus, Christie’s mistakes are not attributed entirely to the perceived innocence of children, preserving his adult abilities to intentionally deceive. While all the cartoons that portrayed Christie as a child placed excessive focus on his corporeality, the one published by *The LA Times* was most direct. Christie’s position over a giant plate of donuts and round, overly-defined facial and body features offered a burlesque image of the stereotypical overweight child. Thus, mocking the rendering of Christie’s overweight, uncouth, and immature body becomes not only acceptable, but encouraged.

Whether Christie is being compared to a woman, an elephant, a troll, or a child, cartoons that exaggerate Christie’s weight designate his body as different and inappropriate for the public sphere. By using many of the denigrations typically reserved for women, Christie’s body is feminized and rendered subordinate by the conservative masculine script. Alternatively, cartoons which highlight Christie’s Italian-American identity construct him as hyper-masculine, offering a quite different representation of Christie. However, Christie’s brand of masculinity is not valued, and the political cartoons which render his ethnicity salient suggest that he is criminal, corrupt, and violent. Thus, the fourth chapter of this thesis will focus exclusively on political cartoons

that highlight Christie's Italian-American identity. Metaphors such as Christie as mob boss, Christie as thug, Christie as menial laborer, and Christie as guido will be used to structure this section of the analysis.

CHAPTER 4

METAPHORIC REPRESENTATIONS OF CHRISTIE'S ETHNICITY

Examining the way that the ethnic body is constructed is a key way in which incorporation functions. Brouwer argues that the bodies of marginalized groups are the primary site of incorporation. He cites ethnic bodies specifically as ones that are difficult to disincorporate or abstract from. Metaphors have also been used to disparage ethnic minorities, specifically through the linguistic association with diseased organisms, animals, natural disasters, and invaders (O'Brien 33).

Along with honing in on Christie's weight, cartoonists have also brought attention to his ethnic background, utilizing his Italian ethnicity as another way to define him according to his body. While cartoons regarding Christie's weight feminize him, the comics that focus on his ethnicity differ in how they deem Christie inferior; that is, as either hyper-masculine and dangerous, or as weakly masculine bordering on feminine. Stereotypes of Christie's Italian background in political cartoons manifest themselves through four metaphors: Christie as mob boss, Christie as thug, Christie as manual laborer, and Christie as guido. While the first two metaphors may seem similar, their differences lie in whether Christie takes a dominant (mob boss) or a subordinate (thug) role in the cartoon.

Christie as Mob Boss

Since the 1930's, Italian-Americans have been subjected to stereotypes of corruption, most notably through associations with the Mafia. Fictional mob bosses such as Vito Corleone from the *The Godfather* and Tony Soprano from *The Sopranos* have cemented the trope of the hyper-masculine and criminal Italian male in contemporary popular culture. In their analysis of the history of Italians and Italian-American stereotypes in film, Cavallero and Plasketes pay close attention to the trope of the Mafioso. In the early twentieth century, the portrayal of Italian immigrants as criminals represented them as responsible for the failure of the American Dream myth during the Great Depression. Italian-Americans were constructed as dangerous, dishonest, and most importantly, foreigners who corrupted American values through illegal activity. While the authors argue that the prejudices Italian-Americans face has lessened over time, stereotypes related to the Italian Mafia have retained popularity and are still prevalent in modern popular culture. Speaking to the popularity of the stereotype, more cartoons depict Christie as a mob boss than any other ethnic stereotype detailed in this chapter. Constructing an image of Christie through the use of mob boss stereotypes suggest that his failures as a politician are due to his being an ethnic outsider in a position of power.

Cartoons which depict Christie as a mob boss evoke the metaphor visually and textually with Christie embodying a dangerous brand of masculinity. One way in which cartoons transform Christie into a mob boss is by portraying him as devoid of emotion. Unlike the cartoons that emphasize Christie's weight by obscuring his facial features, the cartoons which masculinize him clearly reveal his visage. However, while the cartoons humanize Christie by showing more of his face, his expression remains stoic, unfriendly,

and potentially threatening. Before *TIME* magazine published the “Elephant in the Room” cover mocking Christie’s weight, the publication featured Christie on the cover in January of 2013 (Figure 19), highlighting Christie’s ethnic identity. The cover features a close-up of Christie’s face which had been tinted gray. The picture is reminiscent of a mug shot, with Christie’s unsmiling face looking directly at the reader. Christie’s emotionless face along with the gray tint of the picture gives him a menacing, almost threatening, appearance. The composition of the image is clearly digitally altered, with a high definition focus on Christie’s face, which appears gritty and darker than his normal complexion. The grainy filter over Christie’s face evokes the masculinist ideal of working with dirt or soil, but also calls to mind stereotypes of ethnic minorities being reduced to “objects of labor” (O’Brien 40).

Christie is not portrayed as the masculine hero that is normally prized in the political realm. Instead, his masculinity is seen as threatening and corrupt, reinforcing hegemonic ideals of race that villainize men of color for strength but celebrate White men for the same features. On the *TIME* magazine cover, Christie’s head is layered in front of most of the text on the cover, even in front of the magazine’s title, further emphasizing his dominance over every other aspect of the cover. However, the power associated with the metaphor of the “cowboy” or the “soldier” typically used to reinforce the conservative masculinist script is not utilized (Gibson and Heyse 250). Contrarily, Christie’s masculinity is used to criminalize him, as is evident by the only text on the cover that is positioned in front of him, which reads “The Boss,” reinforcing the trope of the unemotional, criminal Italian mob boss.

Other cartoons that utilize the mob boss metaphor also depict Christie brazenly showing his face, oftentimes staring directly at the reader, suggesting a confidence in his criminality. Another cartoon published by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* in January of 2014 (Figure 20) features Christie sitting behind a desk surrounded by henchmen. Again, his face is the most prominent aspect of the image, but unlike the other cartoons, his eyes are completely obscured by a dark shadow. The obstruction of his eyes reveals a theme that is prominent throughout the mob boss cartoons. While Christie's emotionless expression renders him threatening and masculine, it also serves to disguise his true intentions. Hiding Christie's eyes omits the part of the face most associated with detecting deception. Christie's visage may suggest that he is proud of his criminality, but only because he will not be held accountable for his crimes. This cartoon, as well as the other cartoons which depict Christie as a mob boss, suggest that he revels in his criminality, and is able to do so because of the network of thugs he has constructed around him. Considering that a significant proportion of the mob boss cartoons revolve around the Bridgegate scandal, cartoonists inextricably tie Christie's handling of the scandal with his ethnicity which masculinizes him.

While an emphasis on Christie's stern demeanor is central to the mob boss cartoon, a cartoon published by *The Star-Ledger* in December of 2013 (Figure 21) omits not only Christie's face, but the entirety of his body. Similar to the Christie as monster cartoons featured in the previous chapter, a rendering of Christie's literal body is not depicted by the cartoonist. In the cartoon, two large henchmen surround a significantly smaller man with a nervous expression on his face. The larger men are wearing sunglasses, smoking cigars, and cracking their knuckles. One of the men says, "I'd

consider it a personal favor if you gave Governor Christie your endorsement. I'd hate to see your town become the subject of a...traffic study.” Part of the fear attributed to fictional mob bosses is their ability to be omnipresent; to preemptively assess threats and commit crimes without being physically present. Thus, Christie is embodied by his henchmen whose size implies that their boss (Christie) must be larger, more powerful, and more threatening. Similarly, the *TIME* cover's overemphasis on Christie's face and omission of his body leaves readers to construct Christie's body for themselves with only his intimidating gaze to guide them. Therefore, even when Christie's body is not physically represented in the cartoon, he is still unable to disincorporate from the stereotypes attributed to his corpus.

Cartoons which utilize the mob boss metaphor also suggest that behind Christie's composed demeanor is the threat of possible violence. It is important to note that neither Christie nor any of the other characters in the cartoons are ever shown explicitly engaging in violence. However, the subtext of possible hostility suggests an indefinite potential for violence lying beneath Christie's stoicism. Cartoonists often portray Christie surrounded by, or involved with, other mobsters or henchmen. Some of the men associated with Christie in the mob boss cartoons wear sunglasses, others smoke cigars, but most stare menacingly and unwaveringly at the reader. Thus, Christie's influence is not concentrated solely on himself, meaning that his potential for violence is not only limitless, but unknown. The inclusion of henchmen suggests that Christie's corruption is not solely concentrated within himself, but spreads like an infection to the people around him. Similar to the “Christie as monster” metaphors, Christie's body is constructed as out of control, so entrenched in illegality that it spreads to those around him. The

henchmen can even pose a threat *for* Christie when he is not physically present, as is exemplified in the aforementioned *Star-Ledger* cartoon. Christie's dangerous masculinity spreads to his henchmen like a disease, reinforcing stereotypes that immigrants spread their un-American values like an infection. However, while cartoonists construct Christie as a threat, they also use perspective by incongruity to undermine his power. An example of this can be found in the cartoon by the *Star-Ledger*, where Christie's physically powerful henchmen use a traffic study as a threat, despite the physical damage that they could potentially do. While humorous, their threats not only suggest pettiness in Christie's politics, but insinuate that the threat could be exponentially worse, leaving the reader to imagine what other potential punishments Christie and his administration could impose. Thus, Christie's Italian-American body is simultaneously constructed as infectiously violent, but also deserving of ridicule.

Finally, the mob boss metaphor depicts a version of Christie that is motivated solely by self-interest, reinforcing the stereotype that Italian-Americans are willing to engage in violence in order to achieve capital gain. The *New York Times Syndicate* published a cartoon in December of 2013 (Figure 22) which features Christie being carried on a litter, a platform used to transport the wealthy, which is carried and powered by humans. The litter that Christie rides on is being carried by four men all dressed identically in black suits, fedoras and sunglasses. Behind Christie is a slew of cars positioned haphazardly, clearly unable to move. Christie yells to the cars, "Hey, hey! What're you lookin' [sic] at? You lookin' [sic] at me? Huh? Hey!" Christie's exclamation is reminiscent of Robert DeNiro's character in the film *Taxi Driver*, where DeNiro famously asks, "Who are you talkin' [sic] to? Are you talkin' [sic] to me?" This

constitutes yet another reference to a film featuring a hyper-masculine Italian male attempting to use his masculinity as a means of intimidation. This establishes a power differential where Italian-Americans are represented as embodying power that is undeserved. Similarly, a frequent Italian-American stereotype that is reproduced in popular culture is the achievement of wealth and success through the corruption of the American Dream myth. In the cartoon, Christie is seen prioritizing his personal comfort over the needs of his constituents and at the same time, aggressively berating them. Christie's body becomes one that is corrupted by success, rendering him out of touch with the American people, as well as American values.

Christie's selfishness in the cartoons where he is a mob boss even reaches a point where he is willing to deceive, endanger others, and even feign ignorance in order to protect himself. In the cartoon published by the *Northeast Ohio Media Group* in January of 2014 (Figure 23), Christie makes the statement, "I'm not a bully or a micromanager. The only bridge I knows [sic] about is the card game." The intentional spelling error mimics the speaking style of Italian gangsters in popular media and also suggests a lack of command over the English language. The cartoon published by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in January of 2014 also shows him feigning ignorance to protect himself. Sitting behind a desk with an entourage of mobsters behind him, Christie asks, "One of my associates placed a horses [sic] head in somebody's bed???" Christie's blatant lies in both cartoons are references to the Bridgegate scandal creating yet another instance where Christie's political mistakes are seen as consequence of his body. Cartoons construct a Christie that is clearly willing to lie to the people he is intending to protect, prioritizing his comfort over the well-being of the citizens of New Jersey. Thus,

Christie's criminal body in the cartoons is depicted as incongruous with his position as governor as well as with the American vision of success, suggesting that the success he has accrued is due to the corruption and violence of his ethnic body.

While Christie is surrounded by henchmen in the cartoons which feature him as a mob boss, other cartoons feature him in the supporting role of the mobster or thug. While both the mob boss and the mobster occupy the same realm, the difference in their roles within organized crime constructs a different version of Christie that is worthy of exploration.

Christie as Mobster

Similar to the mob boss metaphor, cartoonists that portray Christie as a thug indelibly attribute criminality and corruption to his Italian-American ethnicity. However, cartoonists that transform Christie into a mobster are more blatant with the suggestion of Christie's inferiority. In their previously mentioned analysis, Cavallero and Plasketes identify the *fesso*, or fool, who operates adjacent to the mob boss. While the fool is often also involved with the Mafia, he is seen as ignorant and weak, with some movies actively questioning the sexual orientation of the *fesso*. The emasculation of the ethnic male has been used to relegate ethnic minorities as subordinate to straight white males (McKeown, Robertson, Habte-Mariam, and Stowell-Smith 17). By portraying Christie as simultaneously weak and criminal, cartoonists create a juxtaposition that suggests that Christie's Italian-American body can be violent, but cannot be powerful. Thus, Christie's subordinate role constructs him as complicit to corruption in his political activities as well as in cartoons. Unlike the cartoons in the previous chapter, one of the main themes that emerged in cartoons which portrayed Christie as a thug was, surprisingly, his

diminutive portrayal. The “Christie as thug” cartoons often portrayed him as similar to his true size and some even rendered him smaller. The corporeal minimization of Chris Christie utilizes perspective by incongruity to make his smallness humorous, and also to suggest that he is not powerful enough to be an effective leader, thus, reaffirming his role as the secondary mobster.

Cartoons which portray Christie as a thug often imply that Christie is incapable of accomplishing tasks on his own, emasculating him and his politics. In a cartoon published by *US News* (Figure 24), Christie stands in a small room, surrounded by mobsters carrying baseball bats, knives and chains. Christie is seen at their side and the caption reads, “Better idea! Let’s obstruct traffic in the guy’s neighborhood and make his morning commute difficult!” Christie is the shortest of all the other men illustrated in the cartoon, and he is the only one not wearing sunglasses or a fedora. He has a nervous facial expression, and his hands are clasped in front of him. Although all the characters in the cartoon are mobsters, there is a clear distinction between the masculine and powerful characters, and the weak and emasculated Christie. Christie is clearly the one who wants to punish the mayor of Fort Lee in this cartoon, yet he puts the onus on other mobsters. By enlisting the help of outside sources, and resisting a violent resolution, Christie is portrayed as weak and unable to solve his own problems. The power differential between Christie and the other mobsters suggest that he has lost control and that his political decisions are in the hands of violent ethnic others. The presence of the hyper-masculine mobsters juxtaposed with Christie’s weakness and uncertainty is meant to evoke humor, ridiculing Christie’s political decisions through ethnic stereotypes. Both

mobsters represent a threat, but Christie is constructed as simultaneously subordinate *and* violent, which is projected onto his political decisions.

Cartoonists depicting Christie as a thug also suggest that he is foolish and unintelligent. The role of the *fesso* in film is to be simultaneous imbecilic and arrogant, reaffirming feelings of “intelligence and supremacy” in non-Italian Americans (Cavallero and Plasketes 57). Unlike the cunning mob boss, the thug is violent but lacks the boss’ calculating intellect. A cartoon published by the *New York Times* in November of 2013 (Figure 25) titled, “The Jersey Hustler,” shows Christie playing billiards, or pool, by himself. In the four-frame cartoon, he is seen describing to the viewer how to get the perfect first shot in billiards. In the first two frames he tells the reader, “you want a lot of power, [to] increase the possibilities.” In the third frame Christie lunges towards the table in an attempt to take the shot, failing and scratching the table. The fourth frame shows a seemingly unfazed Christie saying, “Then you take a look, sink ‘em one by one...Rick Perry in the corner pocket.” Christie’s attempt to teach the reader how to play billiards is undermined by the third frame, which highlights Christie’s failure. The term “hustler” refers to “an expert gambler or game player who seeks out challengers, especially unsuspecting amateur ones, in order to win money from them” (“Hustler”). Thus, Christie’s apparent inexperience at billiards makes his designation as the “Jersey Hustler” ironic. In this cartoon, Christie is not being attacked for his deception, but for his *failure* to successfully deceive. Christie is truly transformed into the foolish and arrogant *fesso*, defined simultaneously by illegality and idiocy. The aforementioned cartoon by the *U.S. News* also emphasizes Christie’s foolishness by portraying him as excessively naive. In this cartoon, Christie enlists the assistance of other mobsters, yet

balks at their suggestions of violence. The dangerous combination of simplicity and corruption transform the Governor of New Jersey into a bumbling fool; emasculating him through strategies that have been used to govern the bodies of ethnic males for centuries.

By not only transforming Christie himself, but also the environment that Christie exists in, cartoonists suggest that the literal and figurative space that Christie occupies is criminal. Because Christie takes a subordinate role as the mobsters, the environment in which his body exists serves to dominate and define his corporeal existence. In the cartoon published by *The Onion* in November of 2013 (Figure 26) titled, “The Road to the White House Runs Through Jersey,” Christie walks through the artist’s construction of New Jersey. This cartoon is the only one which is not published by one of the top 25 newspapers or magazines, however I contend that its publication in one of the most influential satirical news outlets in the United States warrants the cartoon’s inclusion. Christie walks down a road followed by a team of mobsters wearing suits, hats and sunglasses. He is seen walking on a paved road, with broken bottles and trash littering the ground, and smoke stacks emitting pollution into the air in the background. Christie looks up to the top right corner of the cartoon where an image of James Gandolfini looks down on him from a cloud wearing a shirt that reads, “Heaven’s Boss.” With a tear falling from his eye, Christie’s speech bubble reads, “Thanks Tone!” This amalgamation of ethnic stereotypes is one of the most blatant reductions of Christie’s politics to stereotypes of his Italian heritage. Orientational metaphors are used in this cartoon to subjugate Christie and emphasize the dominance of the space around him. Christie, a politician, looks upward for approval from James Gandolfini who played a fictional mob

boss on the television show, *The Sopranos*. Gandolfini's position, which is not only above, but ahead of Christie, creates a hierarchy of space within the cartoon.

Christie and the other mobsters occupy a low space, signifying low status, depravity, and controllability, looking forward to the values of a fictional character infamous for corruption. In the cartoon published by the *U.S. News*, Christie is also seen in a small dimly lit room with boarded windows and doors and a leaking gas bucket in the corner. The dismal, deteriorating surroundings in both cartoons suggest that the space Christie occupies, specifically the state of New Jersey, is suffering because of Christie's embodiment of a subservient role. Thus, not only is Christie himself transformed, but the very world that he inhabits is constructed as worse because of Christie's involvement in it. In accordance with the "world-making" function of metaphors, cartoonists suggest that a world where Christie, a subservient mobster, is in power will have devastating effects on the state of New Jersey and potentially the United States as a whole.

Stereotypes originating from the Italian Mafia are not the only ethnic stereotypes used to attack Christie in political cartoons. The metaphor "Christie as menial laborer" relies on racist and classist assumptions regarding Italian immigrants, immigrants in general, and the work that they engage in.

Christie as Manual Laborer

Beyond the blatant cartoons that transform Christie into a Mafioso, cartoonists' portrayals of Christie as a laborer make more subtle suggestions regarding his ethnicity. Early stereotypes regarding Italian-Americans centered on the fear of immigrants competing with Americans for job opportunities during a time when the country was in an economic depression (Cavallero and Plasketes 53). However, modern stereotypes

regarding ethnic minorities often either dictate *what* jobs minorities are expected to do, or devalue the work of “unskilled” ethnic laborers. Thus, the space that is considered appropriate for minorities is limited to work that does not require education, reinforcing ideas that ethnic minorities do not need to be educated. This also serves to negatively masculinize Christie, with his worth being reduced to the brute strength that is required for menial labor. When Christie is transformed into a menial laborer, the worth of his body becomes inextricably tied to the job he is performing. A series of cartoons published by the *New York Daily News* relied on metaphoric representations portraying Christie as a menial laborer, with metaphors such as Christie as deli employee, Christie as house painter, and Christie as cook emerging from the discourse.

Similar to the cartoons that transform Christie into a mobster, cartoons that depict Christie as a menial laborer construct Christie as unintelligent. A cartoon published by the *NY Daily News* in March of 2014 (Figure 27) features Christie as a house painter. Christie stands behind a counter wearing overalls, a work cap, and holding a paintbrush. Behind the man at the counter is a sign which reads, “Mastro’s Paint Store” which hangs over rows of paint cans, each with the words “white washed” written on them. He tells the man behind the counter, “I need something for the White House.” This cartoon is a direct reference to the events following the Bridgegate scandal, where Christie hired Randy Mastro from the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher to investigate his involvement in the scandal (Barrett). Christie was criticized for hiring Mastro, a civil defense lawyer with ties to Rudy Giuliani, a long time ally of Christie’s. Christie’s assumption that Mastro can simply “white wash” over the problems he faces in connection to the scandal suggest a simplicity in Christie and a desire for an easy solution to a complex problem.

The term “white wash” has a dual meaning in this cartoon, possibly suggesting that he wishes to “white wash” or erase his Italian-American identity in order to better fit hegemonic standards of what constitutes a “good” politician. Again, Christie is seen as unable to solve his own problems, this time seeking the help of a member of the dominant group to assist him in fixing the problems committed by his ethnic body. Christie’s facial expression even has a tinge of simplicity, with his mouth open staring curiously up at the paint cans, a theme that is replicated throughout cartoons which use the “menial laborer” metaphor. The dull but happy expression on Christie’s face implies that he is content with his position. The mere visual of Christie comfortably occupying a space that is more hegemonically appropriate for his ethnic body constrains him and renders him unfit for his position as governor and possible position as president.

In spite of the fact that the jobs themselves don’t involve violence, cartoonists who transform Christie into a menial laborer often connote that Christie is potentially threatening. Another cartoon published by the *New York Daily News* in January of 2014 (Figure 28) depicts a big rig truck filled with dismembered horse heads. Workers emerge from the back of the truck carrying the horse heads as Christie stands to the side wearing an apron and holding a clipboard. Christie points to the right and says, “One in the Hoboken mayor’s bed, one in the Jersey City...” This cartoon is a reference to the film, *The Godfather*, where mob boss Vito Corleone has one of his henchmen put a horse’s head in the bed of one of his enemies as an act of vengeance. Part of the scene’s infamy lies in that it reveals the lengths to which the Corleone family will go to enact revenge. Christie’s role is hence to do the grunt work necessary to enable violence. He directs the men who carry the horse’s heads unthinkingly, making his adoption of unethical and “un-

American” values seem inherent. Christie is also seemingly indiscriminate in who he targets in the cartoon, suggesting that incurring Christie’s revenge is not only easy, but it is literally part of his job.

Similarly, the metaphor “Christie as deli worker” constructs violence as inherent to the work Christie performs. This metaphor was used in another cartoon published in January of 2014 by the *New York Daily News* (Figure 29). Christie is seen behind a service counter slicing a hunk of meat. An elderly woman on the other side of the counter asks Christie, “What happened to that nice Bridget girl who used to work here?” Behind Christie are rows of meat hanging, and among the meat slabs are two women’s legs with high heeled shoes on. This disturbing and graphic visual normalizes violence as part of Christie’s occupation. Christie engages in these violent acts with nothing to suggest his remorse. Christie becomes the feared ethnic other, potentially present as the truck driver or deli worker, and more than willing to corrupt American values. However, the metaphor Christie as laborer does not only serve to denigrate Christie, but also corrupts and devalues manual labor. Associating the jobs with the dark side of hyper-masculinity, corruption, and violence has classist and sexist implications that affect Italian-Americans as well as all those who engage in manual labor. In a similar vein to the *Time* magazine cartoon that featured Christie as a mob boss, the insinuation that Christie engages in hard labor emphasizes the negative aspects of his masculinity, denying him the respect that non-ethnic men receive. Again, Christie’s role as the governor of New Jersey is compromised, inseparable from Christie’s deviant form.

As was evident in the cartoon that featured Christie as a deli worker, Christie’s transformation into a menial laborer often places him in an occupation related to food.

Communication scholar, Davide Girardelli, argues that the mass phenomenon of Italian food has “mummified” Italian-Americans in an identity that they have “no voice in defining” (322). Stereotypes that ardently tie Italian-Americans with food reinforce a hegemonically constructed ideal of Italian-Americans and Italian food. The fact that Christie is overweight adds another dimension to the metaphors that cannot be ignored. Thus, a connection to food plays a dual role in Christie’s corporeal existence; in his identity as an overweight man and as an Italian-American individual.

In depiction of Christie as a deli worker, he is portrayed as excessively large and licking his lips as he looks at the woman across the counter. With the implication that Bridget Kelly is hanging from the meat racks in the background, Christie is depicted as hungry, not only for food, but for blood and violence. The cartoon also shows a sign behind Christie listing all the meats that are available for purchase. The only meat listed is “baloney,” which refers to a slang term for nonsense or lies. However, using the same pronunciation, the word “bologna” refers to an Italian deli meat. Thus, the food which has been associated with Italian-Americans is laced with undertones of deception and deviance. Christie’s food and his work become an extension of himself, reducing Christie’s body to the meat which has become stereotypically representative of his culture.

Another cartoon published by the *Star-Ledger* in December of 2014 (Figure 30) features Christie in a chef’s outfit holding a platter with a burnt turkey that has the words “NJ Credit Rating” written on it. With a smirk, Christie says “Bon appetit.” In this case, Christie embodies a stereotypical Italian-American role but fails to meet the expectations set by hegemonic standards. While this cartoon has the possibility of undermining

stereotypes, the subversive potential of this cartoon is undermined by the smirk on Christie's face. Christie's facial expression suggests that burning the turkey was intentional, reinforcing suggestions of Christie's deceit and corruption. Both cartoons relegate Christie to occupations centered on food, propagating stereotypes that reduce Italian-Americans to a commodifiable, disposable food source and limiting the work their bodies are allowed to perform.

While cartoonists did not exaggerate Christie's weight as much in the mob boss and thug cartoons, they do over-emphasize his body in the "Christie as menial laborer" cartoons. In nearly every cartoon that depicts him as a laborer, Christie's body is magnified and the graphic details of his body emphasized. Cartoonists highlight the softness of Christie's body and the excess rolls of flesh while portraying his limbs as short and useless. Many of the stereotypes surrounding ethnic minorities, and especially immigrants, revolve around cultural anxieties that are paradoxical in nature. Thus, ethnic minorities often represent the threat of "stealing" jobs from Americans while also being constructed as freeloaders that unduly profit off of the American economic system. Cartoons which depict Christie as a laborer reflect both anxieties and also undermine any positive values associated with Christie's work ethic through the deviance of his corporeality. Again, Christie is masculinized through his work, but established as the wrong type of man through the over-exaggerated rendering of his body. Christie's body once again takes an unruly form, consistently failing to uphold the American Dream myth.

Cartoons which portray Christie as a manual laborer rely on stereotypes that have been used to denigrate Italian-American immigrants, and immigrants in general, for

centuries. A stereotype of Italian-Americans that has recently experienced a resurgence, through shows such as *The Jersey Shore* and *Jerseylicious*, is the stereotype of the guido. The final metaphor in this chapter, Christie as guido, uses modern stereotypes regarding Italian-American youths to emphasize Christie's ethnic body.

Christie as Guido

The ascription of certain minorities as “good” and others as “bad” is an act that affirms disciplinary acts of hegemonic masculinity. The popular television show *Jersey Shore* drew ire from Italian-Americans as well as the public at large for promoting stereotypical representations of Italian-Americans. The show depicted young Italian-Americans who identified as “guidos” engaging in drinking, casual sex, and general debauchery (Tricarico 41). Similar to the *fesso* stereotype, guidos are considered not very intelligent and obsessed with material wealth and physical appearance. While only one cartoon using the “Christie as guido” metaphor was found when exploring the discourse, exploring the blatant reinforcement of ethnic stereotypes in the cartoon warranted its inclusion in this section. By depicting Christie as associating with the cast of *Jersey Shore*, political cartoonists suggest that they both are representative of “bad” Italian-Americans.

Cartoonists capitalize on the recent popularity in guido culture by portraying Christie alongside *Jersey Shore* cast members. In a cartoon published in March of 2013 by *US News* (Figure 31), Christie is depicted alongside some of the cast of the reality television show. Christie is seen wearing a tank top with an image of the state of New Jersey. He is making statements such as “Come at me bro,” and “Just keep walkin’ punk.” He wears a tilted baseball cap with his name on it and two necklaces, one with

the state of New Jersey attached to it and the other with a dollar sign. The cast of *Jersey Shore* stands to the side watching Christie, and one of them says, “At this point, I think Romney’s VP slot is a longshot.” The association is clear: Christie is one of the guidos. The statements he is making are aggressive and off-putting, which are representative of his real-life behavior, but cartoonists continue to associate the aggression with stereotypes regarding his ethnicity. The characters of *Jersey Shore*, individuals who are generally not respected, make critical remarks regarding Christie’s behavior. By doing this, the cartoonist does two things. First, he establishes popular culture figures that are famous for their debauchery and lack of intelligence doubting Christie’s political ability, which in this instance suggests that he is unfit for the role of Vice President. The cartoon also pits an ethnic group against its own members. In-group conflict is fostered, relegating both Christie and the other guidos to subservient positions while continuing to uphold hegemonic norms. In actuality, Christie has been quite adamant regarding his distaste for the show *The Jersey Shore*, claiming that it promotes damaging stereotypes of Italian Americans and the residents of New Jersey. This argument, however, is not evident in the cartoon, insinuating that Christie’s ethnic identity is rendered more salient than his actual beliefs.

Exploring the gendering, subjugation, and transformation of Christie’s body through various illustrations raises various concerns and implications. The rendering of Christie’s weight and ethnicity as salient in political cartoons has continued throughout his political career and shows no signs of slowing down. Thus, the potential implications of these cartoons on Christie’s career and representation of overweight and ethnic individuals is worthy of exploration. The final chapter will explore the possible

implications that the aforementioned cartoons have on the political realm. I will also consider the implications the cartoons have on advancing the theory of incorporation and metaphor.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After undergoing weight-loss surgery in February of 2013, media outlets speculated that Christie's presidential prospects would increase as his weight decreased (Cillizza and Sullivan). Almost two years and 100 pounds later, people are still asking whether Christie is too fat to run for the presidency (John). In the same month that I finalized this project, the cartoon featuring Christie as a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader was printed in the *Star-Ledger* speaking to the sustained relevance of Christie's body in political cartoons. The prominence of Christie's body and his alternating masculine and feminine representations offer a complex construction of his corpus, one which consistently degrades him through the transformative power of metaphor. Given the uniqueness of Christie's subjugation, it is vital to analyze how depictions of the New Jersey governor prove to be one of the few instances where the body of a straight male is gendered and disciplined.

In order to fully elucidate cartoonists' representations of Christie, I conclude this project by considering how overweight individuals and Italian-Americans may be negatively impacted by the political cartoons described in the previous chapters. Next, I explore the possible theoretical implications of this study, specifically, the extension of the literature surrounding political cartoons, metaphor, and theory of incorporation.

Finally, I consider potential implications that these cartoons hold for Chris Christie's political future, the Republican Party, and the political realm as a whole.

Impact on Marginalized Individuals

The visual denigration of Chris Christie's weight has damaging implications for overweight Americans. Obese and overweight individuals continue to be one of the most marginalized groups in the United States, yet few advocate for the rights of those who deviate from the corporeal norm (Barrow). While weight-based discrimination has become normalized, not all overweight Americans are subjected to the same body-centric criticism. "Fatness" is often gendered as feminine, with social critic Susie Orbach arguing that "fat is a feminist issue" (1). It is widely accepted that the lived experiences of fat men and fat women are categorically different from one another (Bell and McNaughton 109). Women's bodies are scrutinized by their physicians, prospective employers, and most prevalently the media, which obsessively tracks the weight fluctuations of female celebrities. Prejudicial attitudes towards overweight individuals are typically seen as directly resulting from patriarchal power structures with society deeming that it is acceptable for men to be fat but unacceptable for women. Thus, fat discrimination has emerged as a salient issue for contemporary feminists, with celebrities, bloggers, and even advertisers advocating for body positivity in women. Thus, social movements such as the "fat acceptance movement" have emerged to contest repression of overweight individuals in general, but have focused their efforts primarily on advocating for the rights of fat women (Willett).

The lack of attention paid to how the overweight male body is rhetorically constructed raises several concerns that negatively impact both men and women. First,

the suggestion that “being fat is a more meaning-laden issue for women than for men” erases the experiences of men with bodies that do not adhere to hegemonic standards of beauty (Millman 233). The assumption that men are not concerned about body image causes men to internalize feelings of insecurity, as is evidenced by a testimony by scholar Richard Klein:

[As] a man, I’m not supposed to be as preoccupied about fat as women. Women are obliged to consider thin as a precondition for success. A man of course doesn’t feel the same pressure, but the pressure is there and it’s internalized. Not only does the world mostly hate his fat, he hates it most himself. (36)

The myth that men do not suffer from corporeal insecurity leads to their underrepresentation in body positivity movements, and consequently, their subjection to blatant and frequent weight-centric attacks. Cultural anthropologists, Kirsten Bell and Darlene McNaughton, challenge previous scholar’s symbolic erasure of overweight men, arguing that understanding the fat male experience is essential in fully understanding body-shaming through a feminist lens. At the very least, cartoons that focus on Christie’s weight affirm Bell and McNaughton’s claims that overweight men face social scrutiny, legitimizing the plight of the “invisible fat man” (107). However, because of the connection between fatness and femininity, portrayals of overweight men are sometimes feminized, emasculating the men they are portraying. This propagates the idea that men’s fatness is a gendered deviance, simultaneously reinforcing gender binaries and hegemonic standards of attractiveness.

Additionally, while the assertion that obesity is inherently female is a clear trivialization of the fat male experience, the notion also functions as a subjugation of

women's bodies. Bell and McNaughton argue that making men and masculinity invisible establishes men as the dominant gender. Just as Whiteness is often mistaken for the absence of race, maleness is typically considered the absence of gender. In accordance with the theory of incorporation, corporeal invisibility, or the ability to "disincorporate" from one's body, is considered an "unequally available resource" (Brouwer 414). Because men are not typically reduced to their physical appearance, they are denigrated by highlighting the aspects of their corpus that are most like women. Thus, the implications of Christie's emasculation do not exist simply because Christie's body is feminized, but because of the negative connotations surrounding femininity.

The argument that overweight men are weak, subordinate, lazy, and overly-emotional *because* they are feminine is problematic, reinforcing the idea that there is something inherently wrong about the female body. Thus, understanding how fat male bodies are constructed, especially when they are feminized, is essential in changing the discourse surrounding overweight men. I agree with Orbach's assertion that "fat is a feminist issue," but to truly understand it as one we must take into account the corporeal subjugation of all genders. By unpacking how the body of Chris Christie, a straight male, can be disciplined and mocked, it becomes clear that issues of gender are salient even when not explicit. The gendering of fat has been described as "complicated and contradictory," necessitating further exploration into the dynamic between corporeality and gender identity (Bell and McNaughton 126). Even more troubling is the thought of political cartoons featuring Chris Christie serving as public declarations to the millions of overweight American males that their bodies are deviant and worthy of ridicule. Thus,

shedding light on the rarely examined experience of the overweight male is a necessary step in critical gender studies.

While the majority of Christie's feminization is subtextual, the cartoons that explicitly transform Christie into a woman have damaging effects on individuals who don't fit into the gender binary. Transforming Christie into a woman trivializes the transformation that transgender individuals undergo when transitioning from male to female. Cartoons which utilized the "Christie as woman" metaphor use perspective by incongruity to ironically pair Christie's large, hairy body with a traditionally feminine form. Christie's body is feminized, but he is portrayed as awkwardly attempting to embody traditional feminine roles. Thus, the punchline of the joke is the fact that Christie is feminine, but not feminine enough to realistically "pass" as a woman. Cartoonists are not simply suggesting that Christie is "not doing gender right," but also trivializing the exploration of gender identities (Butler 92). Thus, the way that cartoonists transform Christie into a woman upholds transphobia and discourages deviance from the gender binary.

The excessive emphasis on Christie's body in political cartoons could also have damaging consequences for the Italian-American community. Unlike the lack of indignation surrounding the representation of overweight males, organizations such as the National Italian American Foundation regularly fight against ethnic defamation. These organizations frequently question representation in popular culture, publicly criticizing stereotypical representations of Italian-Americans, such as the television show *Jersey Shore* and the *TIME* magazine cover mentioned in the previous chapter. However, in spite of vocalized discontent from the Italian-American community, blatant stereotypical

representations of Italian-Americans continue with few repercussions. Similar to the invisibility of overweight men, the conflation of Italian-American identity and Whiteness connotes the absence of race, trivializing the ethnic derogations they experience.

When Italians immigrated to the United States in the early twentieth century they faced prejudices akin to those faced by immigrants today. However, while Italian immigrants were refused some privileges, they were considered “White upon arrival,” meaning that they instantly had the ability to vote, own land, and other rights that were reserved for White Americans (Guglielmo and Salerno 11). However, xenophobia and growing economic unrest cultivated negative representations of Italian-Americans, in spite of their newly attained Whiteness. Negative depictions of Italian-Americans in film suggested that they may be White, but they certainly were not American. In fact, Italian-Americans were often blamed for the Great Depression, accused of corrupting the American Dream myth through involvement with organized crime (Cavallero and Plasketes). Thus, while Italian-Americans are categorized as White, unlike most White Americans, they are subjected to stereotypical caricatures of their culture that are steeped in historical prejudices. The construction of Italian-Americans as simultaneously “White” and “foreign,” creates a dichotomy which is riddled with complexity. Christie has ardently defended himself against Italian-American stereotypes, but also “tolerated and sometimes encouraged anti-Italian American caricatures” in order to augment his tough political persona (Iaconis). His complex relationship with his own ethnic identity only adds to the intricate way Italian-Americans are socially constructed.

While the implications of propagating ethnic stereotypes may seem obvious, the subjugation of Italian-Americans raises unique concerns. It is unarguable that the lived experience of Italian-Americans differs from those of “non-White” ethnic minorities. However, the ethnic denigrations propagated by political cartoons have dangerous implications for the Italian-American community as well as for Chris Christie’s political future. Cavallero and Plasketes argue that because the cultural anxieties surrounding Italian-Americans have disappeared, Italian-American stereotypes do not have the same disparaging effects that they did in the past (60). However, I argue that diminishing the impact of Italian-American stereotypes justifies their use and could have damaging repercussions for new generations of Italian-Americans. As is evidenced by the previously mentioned cartoons, Italian-Americans are portrayed as hyper-masculine, excessively corrupt, and unapologetically violent. When an Italian-American exists in the public sphere, like Christie, those derogations become inextricable from their public persona. The emphasis on hyper-masculinity stands in stark contrast to the weight-centric attacks which feminize him. Thus, the construction of Chris Christie becomes more convoluted, evoking contradictory messages while maintaining that his body is worthy of ridicule.

Additionally, muting the experience of an ethnic group simply because they are phenotypically White has racist implications that deserve further exploration. Similar to the plight of the overweight male, Italian-Americans exist in a complex social space where they are simultaneously constructed as the majority and as the other. This suggests that the repetition of Italian-Americans caricatures and stereotypes is not only frequent, but socially acceptable. Thus, conflating all White Americans holds the potential danger

of erasing culture, traditions, and differences while encouraging assimilation.

Accordingly, Christie is constructed as White, but not fully White, just as he is represented as male, but not fully male.

Extending Theory

By including digitally altered photographs in my analysis of political cartoons, I hope to expand the notions of what constitutes a political cartoon in the digital age. The growing popularity of digital art has led to the majority of editorial cartoons being published solely online. The immensity of the internet allows for political cartoons to reach a vast amount of people, a feat which has been facilitated by the technological advancements of the past several decades. However, the internet's immensity also increases the breadth of political cartoons and makes defining what constitutes a political cartoon nebulous. Thus, through an exploration of visual images featuring Chris Christie, I discovered that digitally altered photographs of the New Jersey governor functioned in an almost identical way to political cartoons. The photographs utilized burlesque, perspective by incongruity, satire, and the juxtaposition of image and text to digitally create a humorous depiction of Christie. While I have extolled the power of political cartoons in Chapter 1, the potential impact of digitally altered photographs as political cartoons could have even greater influence over how politicians are socially constructed. Because the images are digital alterations of actual photographs, these new political cartoons blur the lines between reality and fiction, making the denigration of politicians even more explicit. Thus, I contend that as the world becomes increasingly digitized, expanding the definition of political cartoons is essential in understanding the political climate and how the masses are consuming visual satire.

In examining the artifacts for this project, other metaphors emerged that emphasize neither Christie's weight nor his ethnicity. "Christie as president" was a recurrent metaphors. Several cartoons depict Christie as former presidents such as Howard Taft, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan. Associating Christie and Taft has clear implications based on their similar corporealities. Because President Taft is one of the most notable overweight individuals in political history, his comparison to Christie is not surprising. However, the depictions of Christie as Reagan and as Nixon use nostalgia to repackage Christie and have fascinating implications worthy of further study. Cartoons that depict Christie as Ronald Reagan celebrate him for embodying the iconic conservative ideals that Reagan has been lionized for. These cartoons are some of the few which depict Christie in a positive light, allowing Christie to disincorporate from his physical body and transform into one of the most influential presidents in American history. Conversely, the metaphor "Christie as Nixon" gained prominence after the Bridgegate scandal, comparing the two politicians based on their involvement in career-changing public indignities. While the metaphors differ greatly, their potential implications for the Republican Party are vast. These appeals to the past construct Christie as either the nostalgic hero or the villain and are certainly deserving of critical examination.

Cartoons also criticize Christie's weight without using metaphor to transform his body. Numerous cartoons feature Christie as himself, attempting to exercise or eating junk food, or they simply portray him as excessively large. The emphasis on Christie's body is constructed in ways that exist beyond metaphoric associations, making the implications of cartoonists' denigrations even more far-reaching. Recently, cartoons

featuring Christie have also begun to mock him for undergoing weight loss surgery. Unlike former Arkansas governor, Mike Huckabee, who very publically lost over 100 pounds by adhering to a strict diet and exercise plan, Christie chose to lose weight in a way that is typically considered more feminine. This raises the question as to whether Christie will ever be able to disincorporate from the constraints of his physical body. Additionally, if Christie continues to lose weight, a critical analysis of cartoons before, during, and after his weight loss would be an important addition to rhetorics of the body and gender studies.

The political cartoons featuring Chris Christie reveal new insights into the theory of incorporation and corporeal rhetoric. Several cartoons that emerge from the discourse involve Christie but do not feature a rendering of Christie's physical body. Using metaphors to understand discourse relies on the transformation of an entity so that it takes on a different form. However, several cartoons refer to Christie as a mob boss or as a monster but do not physically render his transformation. I argue that although Christie's body is not physically present in some cartoons, it is still rendered salient. I contend that the absence of a corporeal representation may even make it more difficult for Christie to abstract from his corporeality as readers can narratize their own constructions of Christie with only his salient markers to guide them. Additionally, the re-constitution of Christie's body transforms him into elephants, monsters, women, and children. In the weight-centered cartoons especially, Christie's body exists in a non-human form. This raises the question, can Christie's body be rendered salient in cartoons where he is drawn with a different body? Again, I argue that because the aspects of his body that connote his subordination, in this case his weight, remains emphasized throughout the cartoons,

Christie's body is rendered salient through the embodiment of another entity. Thus, I maintain that using metaphor in tandem with theory of incorporation expands our understanding of how marginalized bodies are constructed.

Political Implications

Finally, it is essential to discuss the potential implications that visual renderings of Christie hold within the context of the modern political climate. The cartoons that degrade Christie's body have widespread implications that could hinder his nomination for the presidency. The preoccupation with Christie's weight in newspapers and magazines has dwindled since his initial emergence into politics. However, because political cartoons rely so heavily on the power of visual images and caricatures, they continually maintain an emphasis on Christie's weight, reinforcing an image of Christie that Christie himself is desperately trying to abandon. Republicans and Democrats alike have speculated for over three years whether Christie will run for the presidency in 2016. The question remains as to whether his negative representation in political cartoons will hurt his chances of a possible presidential run. I argue that if Christie does indeed run, the cartoons could possibly impede whether he is even chosen as the Republican presidential nominee. In an election which could result in the first Republican president in eight years, taking a risk on a candidate who does not embody ideals of traditional masculinity would betray the conservative masculinist script that underlies traditional conservatism. Christie does not represent the "hegemonic values that are deeply woven into our political culture," a fact which is replicated on a weekly basis by political cartoonists (Gibson and Heyse 237). With contenders such as Jeb Bush and Rand Paul,

whose appeal is both ideologically and aesthetically conservative, Christie's nomination for the Republican ticket could prove to be a long shot.

Considering that Christie's involvement in the Bridgegate scandal is still being investigated nearly a year after the incident suggests that it could pose a significant obstacle if Christie runs for the presidency. The immense amount of cartoons forging a connection between stereotypes of the Italian mob and the Bridgegate scandal could seriously impede Christie's prospects in 2016. The image of the mob boss is so distinct, and has been associated so closely with the scandal, that detaching the association between Christie and the mob could prove nearly impossible. As investigations into Christie's involvement in the scandal continue as this chapter is being drafted, the transformation from politician to mobster becomes more ingrained in the American psyche. Regardless of whether Bridgegate emerges as a salient issue in the 2016 presidential election, the connection between corruption and Christie has been established in the minds of the American public, constructing Christie as indistinguishable from the stereotypes that deride him. *New York Times* columnist, Mike Cillizza, comments that the vote for president is "heavily aspirational" and that the presidency is a symbolic position, one that represents "the best that we hope to be." It seems as though cartoonists strive to establish Christie as the opposite of the ideal presidential prospect, emphasizing the deviance of his politics through the subjugation of his corpus. Thus, while Christie is represented as not quite White, and not quite masculine, he is consistently portrayed as unfit for the presidency.

However, if Christie does indeed run and wins the spot on the Republican presidential ticket, his run could have compelling implications for fat male visibility.

Christie could prove that one can emerge triumphant in a non-normative body, even when that body is under constant attack. Additionally, Christie could potentially run against Hillary Clinton, one of the top contenders for the Democratic presidential ticket. Like Christie, Clinton is also subjected to gendered attacks by political cartoonists for being “too masculine” (Templin 24). The discourse that could emerge from two candidates who do not “perform gender” according to hegemonic standards of masculinity and femininity could provide invaluable insight into how gender and non-normative bodies function politically. Unfortunately, the more public exposure Christie gets, the more scathing the political cartoons are likely to become. Cartoonists’ attacks are meant to subvert the supremacy of individuals in positions of power. Thus, the higher Christie climbs on the political ladder, the harder cartoonists will likely work to use his non-normative body to tear him back down.

Finally, it is important to address the significance of Christie’s choice to undergo weight loss surgery. In the previous paragraph, I mentioned that Christie’s presidential run could empower overweight Americans and increase the visibility of non-normative bodies in the public sphere. However, Christie’s yearning to disassociate himself from the gendered derogations attributed to his overweight body is apparent in his choice to receive the lap-band surgery. Despite being one of the few instances of an overweight man in the political sphere, Christie does *not* present himself as an advocate for body positivity. In fact, Christie is taking active steps to literally shed his non-normative body. Here we are reminded of the power Christie has in spite of being constantly disciplined by the media. Christie has the privilege of receiving a surgery that the majority of overweight Americans may not be able to afford, and thus, the privilege to decide that he

does not want the body that individuals in “fat communities” take pride in. In turn, it becomes apparent that Christie can separate himself from his corporeality by rejecting the body which renders him non-normative. Although Christie is visibly losing weight, he still does not embody the traditionally prized hegemonic male form. In the upcoming years, Christie’s weight loss journey will continue to unfold. Only time will tell whether Christie can ever truly disincorporate from his body.

Since very early in his career, Christie has been labeled a bully. However, the constant attacks on his corpus by political cartoonists and the media at large were so scathing that he was pressured into making a drastic, life-changing decision for the sake of his career. Prior to receiving the gastric lap-band surgery, Christie had undergone a physical examination which reportedly gave him a clean bill of health, essentially rendering a weight loss surgery unnecessary. Social pressures, not medical concerns, presumably dictated his decision to abandon his fat male body. While the inferiority Christie likely felt cannot be attributed directly to the political cartoons which denigrated him, it reveals to some extent the power media has in determining which bodies are acceptable and which are not. Templin describes the intense scrutiny and attention that Hillary Clinton experiences as a result of being a woman in politics as “quasi-pornographic” (21). I contend that the way Christie’s body is objectified, dissected, and demeaned through political cartoons is, in many ways, also pornographic. Thus, the spectacle of the non-normative body continues to govern the public sphere, limiting and constraining politics through a rigid gender binary.

APPENDIX
POLITICAL CARTOONS



FIGURE 1. First cartoon of Christie as woman.

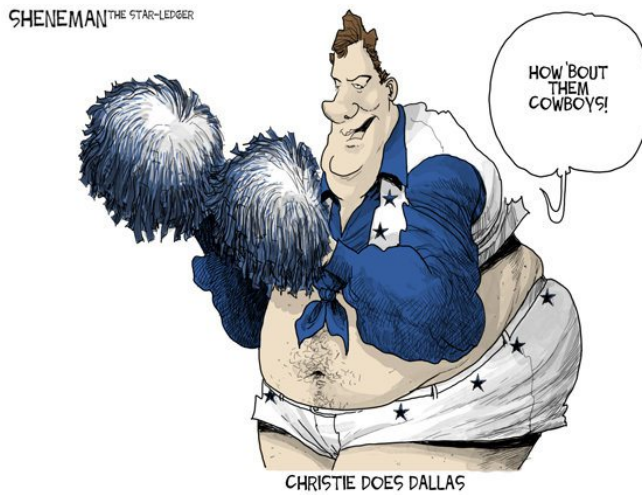


FIGURE 2. Second cartoon of Christie as woman.



FIGURE 3. Third cartoon of Christie as woman.



FIGURE 4. Fourth cartoon of Christie as woman.



FIGURE 5. First cartoon of Christie as animal.

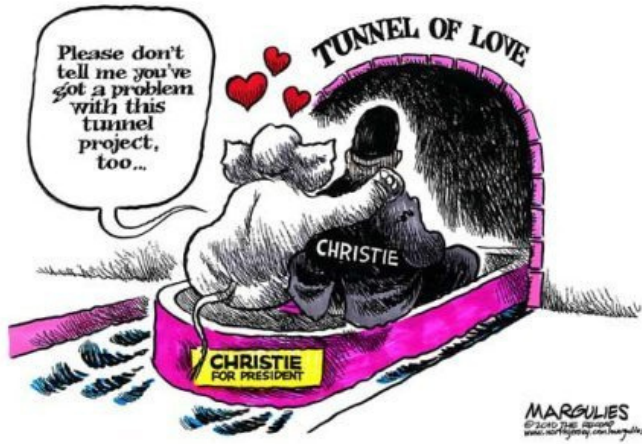


FIGURE 6. Second cartoon of Christie as animal.

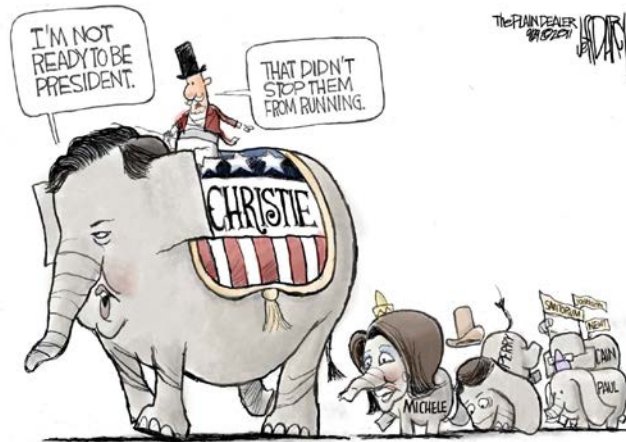


FIGURE 7. Third cartoon of Christie as animal.



FIGURE 8. Fourth cartoon of Christie as animal.



FIGURE 9. First cartoon of Christie as monster.

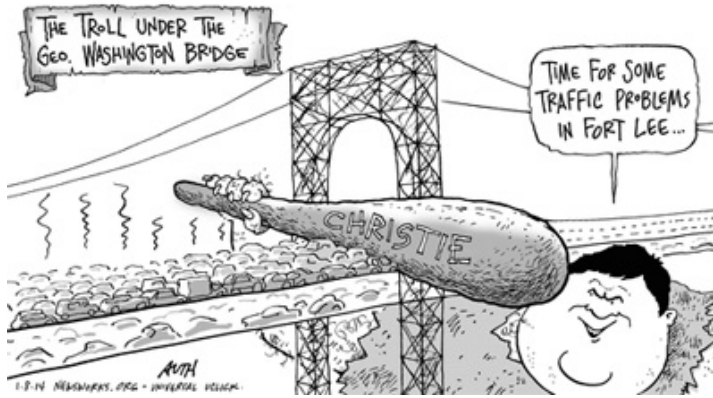


FIGURE 10. Second cartoon of Christie as monster.



FIGURE 11. Third cartoon of Christie as monster.



"I heard he used to work for Christie."

FIGURE 12. Fourth cartoon of Christie as monster.



FIGURE 13. First cartoon of Christie as inanimate object.



FIGURE 14. Second cartoon of Christie as inanimate object.



FIGURE 15. First cartoon of Christie as child.



FIGURE 16. Second cartoon of Christie as child.



FIGURE 17. Third cartoon of Christie as child.

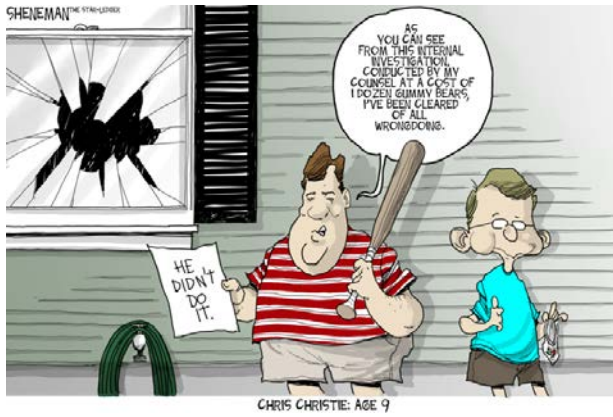


FIGURE 18. Fourth cartoon of Christie as child.



FIGURE 19. First cartoon of Christie as mob boss.

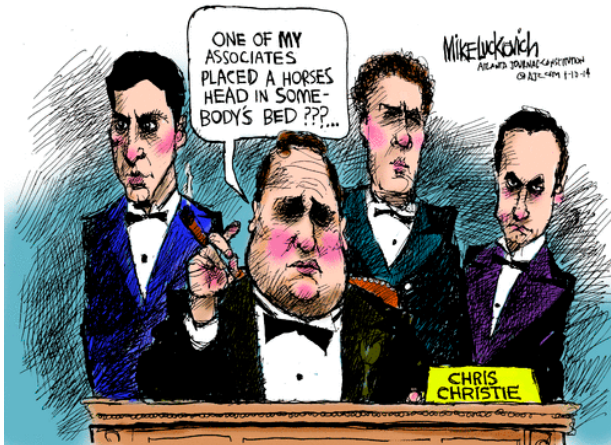


FIGURE 20. Second cartoon of Christie as mob boss.



"I'D CONSIDER IT A PERSONAL FAVOR IF YOU GAVE GOVERNOR CHRISTIE YOUR ENDORSEMENT. I'D HATE TO SEE YOUR TOWN BECOME THE SUBJECT OF A...TRAFFIC STUDY."

FIGURE 21. Third cartoon of Christie as mob boss.

Oh, No! Big Traffic Jam from Jersey to the George Washington Bridge. Some are Blaming...



FIGURE 22. Fourth cartoon of Christie as mob boss.



FIGURE 23. Fifth cartoon of Christie as mob boss.



"Better idea! Let's obstruct traffic in the guy's neighborhood and make his morning commute difficult!"

FIGURE 24. First cartoon of Christie as mobster.



FIGURE 25. Second cartoon of Christie as mobster.

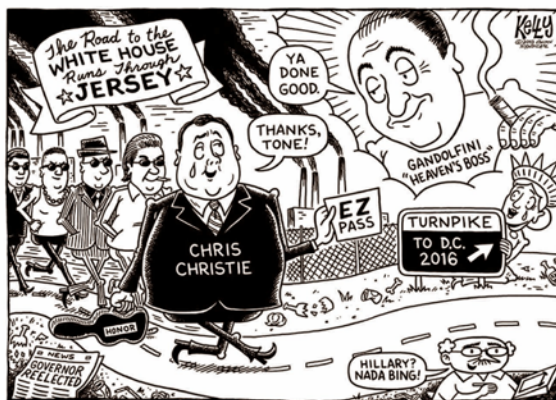


FIGURE 26. Third cartoon of Christie as mobster.



FIGURE 27. First cartoon of Christie as manual laborer.

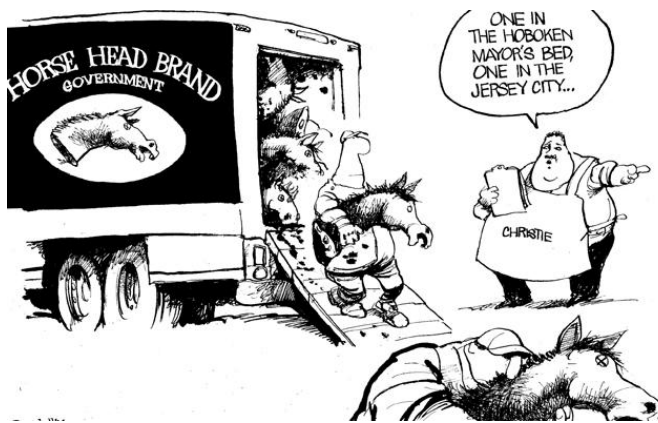


FIGURE 28. Second cartoon of Christie as manual laborer.



FIGURE 29. Third cartoon of Christie as manual laborer.

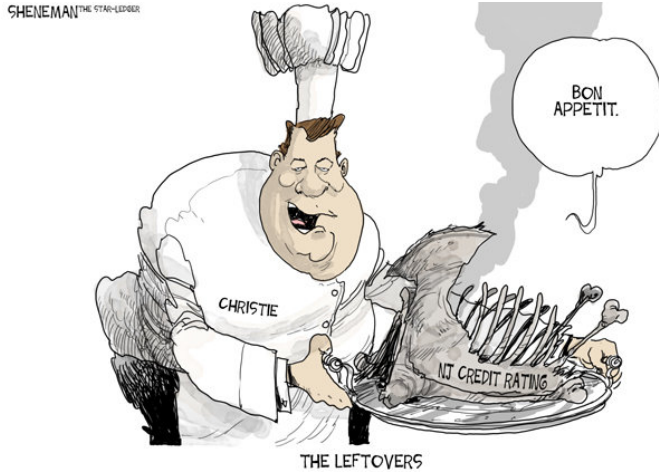


FIGURE 30. Fourth cartoon of Christie as manual laborer.

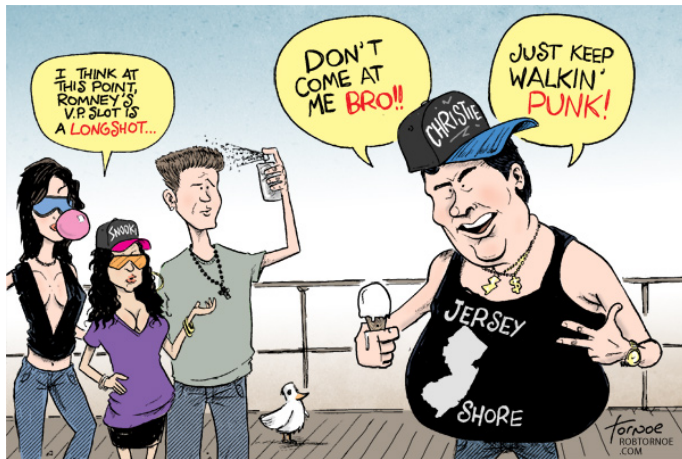


FIGURE 31. First cartoon of Christie as guide.

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