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The Role Of Candidate Gender And Political Support: An Experimental Approach To Understanding Voter Perceptions And Support For Female Presidential Candidates

Jenna Nichole Laurin

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THE ROLE OF CANDIDATE GENDER AND POLITICAL SUPPORT: AN
EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING VOTER PERCEPTIONS
AND SUPPORT FOR FEMALE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

by

Jenna Nichole Laurin
Bachelor of Science, University of North Dakota, 2018
Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2018

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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Name: Jenna N Laurin

Degree: Master of Arts

This document, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

DocuSigned by:
Heather Terrell
07D679C6CF8D4A0...

Heather Terrell

DocuSigned by:
Alison Kelly
3284FFC9F681488...

Alison Kelly

DocuSigned by:
Travis Clark
228E6B23E7B1488...

Travis Clark

This document is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

DocuSigned by:
Chris Nelson
2E0AF088C733403...

Chris Nelson
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

12/1/2020

Date

PERMISSION

Title The Role of Candidate Gender and Political Support: An Experimental Approach to Understanding Voter Perceptions and Support for Female Presidential Candidates

Department Psychology

Degree Master of Arts

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November 30, 2020

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Abstract

Female candidates are at a disadvantage in the political sphere, facing underrepresentation and stereotype hurdles at all levels of elected office. While female candidates have overcome some of these obstacles and won elections at the state and local levels, there has never been a female candidate elected President. The purpose of the current study was to determine whether female and male candidates are judged differently on measures of competence, warmth, traits, and willingness to vote. Employing a 2 (candidate gender) x 2 (participant gender) x 2 (candidate party) manipulation, 370 participants read a fictitious article about Presidential candidates and rated them on various factors. Factorial ANOVAs revealed no significant main or interaction effects. While the current study does not provide evidence for judgment differences in male and female candidates, historical United States election results oppose these findings, calling into question the data quality and manipulation strength of the current study.

**The Role of Candidate Gender and Political Support: An Experimental Approach
to Understanding Voter Perceptions and Support for Female Presidential
Candidates
Literature Review**

Stereotypes as a Factor in Support for Female Candidates

Research suggests that stereotypes play a role in the electability of women, as they suggest that women are better equipped to handle compassion issues but are incapable of handling the defense and big business issues typically associated with male leaders (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Stereotypes assert that women should be “warm, nurturing, and sensitive” (Bauer, 2015). Yet, these stereotypes directly contrast with what is expected of a candidate running for political office: to be “outspoken, decisive, and aggressive” (Bauer, 2015). Because these two stereotyped roles are at odds with each other, some researchers have proposed that this is why there are fewer females holding elected offices. Research shows that neither of these stereotypes are automatically applied to female candidates; female candidates are not inherently stereotyped as being traditionally feminine (Bauer, 2015), nor are they immediately seen as holding the traditionally masculine traits associated with leadership (Bauer, 2017).

Bauer (2015) proposes that the feminine stereotypes are especially harmful to women running for higher levels of office, such as Congress and the Presidency. This is due to the expectation that these particular positions require a candidate with agentic, or masculine, rather than communal, or feminine, traits. Because communal traits are more readily applied to females, these stereotypes help individuals make the assumption that

females are simply not as qualified for these positions. However, Bauer (2015) argues that this will only occur in cases where traditionally feminine stereotypes are activated by providing other information indicative of such stereotypes.

To test the effects of stereotype activation, Bauer (2015) conducted a number of tests within a study of fictitious male and female Senate and Presidential candidates. The results indicated that when stereotypes are not activated, that is, information eliciting stereotypical feminine traits is not included, participants do not use traditional feminine stereotypes to rate candidates. However, when traditional feminine stereotypes are activated for both male and female candidates, participants rate the candidates differently.

Compared to the condition without stereotype activation, female candidates are rated as significantly less qualified when feminine stereotypes are activated. On the other hand, male candidates were actually rated as more qualified when traditionally feminine stereotypes were activated, though this difference was insignificant. It therefore can be reasonably concluded that the activation of feminine stereotypes do hurt female candidates, but they can potentially help male candidates (Bauer, 2015).

These results were expanded upon in a follow-up study in which Bauer (2015) assessed the effect of feminine stereotypes employed in advertisements for Congressional House candidates. When feminine stereotypes were activated, support for female candidates decreased significantly while support for male candidates increased significantly. However, in conditions in which feminine stereotypes were not activated, support for female candidates was greater than support for male candidates. Bauer (2015)

concluded that feminine stereotypes do not play a role in candidate support unless activated, in which support for female candidates decreases while support for male candidates increases.

Counterstereotypic Gender Strategies

Across studies, it has been agreed upon that males are stereotyped as being “tough, aggressive, and assertive” (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993), while females are stereotyped as being “warm, gentle, kind, and passive” (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Due to these stereotypes, Presidential candidates are expected to act in this gendered way, but what happens when they don’t? Bauer investigated the concept of counterstereotypic behaviors in a 2017 study comparing male and female candidates of three conditions: stereotypic, counterstereotypic, and no stereotype.

The counterstereotypic female candidate received higher ratings on strong leadership and knowledge than the counterstereotypic male candidate, showing that stereotypical male traits are preferred over those of stereotypical females. Moreover, both the stereotypic and counterstereotypic male candidate received positive ratings on warmth whereas only the counterstereotypic female candidate received positive warmth ratings, while the stereotypic female received negative ratings on this trait. Bauer (2017) concluded that females are rated better when behaving counterstereotypically but male candidates have more freedom in choosing whether to adhere to traditional stereotypes or engage in counterstereotypic behaviors.

Within a similar vein, Hitchon and Chang (1995) studied how negative attack advertisements against political candidates affected participant recall and responses toward male and female candidates. The researchers concluded that there were more negative responses to male candidates attacking female candidates than to female candidates attacking male candidates. Advertisements in which female candidates were attacking their male opponent were also recalled more than the opposite condition. These results lead to a similar conclusion as that of Bauer's (2017) study; female candidates are better recalled and are received better when acting in a counterstereotypic way. That is to say that, in the case of female candidates, traditionally feminine stereotypes are not beneficial, thus female candidates must engage in specific, possibly even calculated, behaviors in order to remain a contender in political races (Hitchon & Chang, 1995). Women must focus more on how they present themselves and must tread lightly as to not introduce traditionally feminine stereotypes, as research has shown that they are not useful, and possibly even detrimental to female candidates' campaigns.

Likeability

Not only do female candidates need to be aware of activating or playing off of traditionally feminine stereotypes and prove they are agentic enough to do the work necessary of the office, they need to do so while remaining likeable. This is in part because some voters admit to voting based off of personal characteristics of the candidate, as opposed to the issues emphasized in their campaigns (McGinley, 2009). When women are seen as too domineering, they are also perceived as unlikeable. Such

was the case in Hillary Clinton's bid for the 2008 Democratic nomination. When emphasizing her dominance and masculinity, Clinton was not received well by the public. Yet, when showing a softer side, emphasizing more "feminine issues" such as economic impacts on families, she was seen as more likeable. Hillary Clinton's 2008 Presidential campaign exemplifies the difficulty female candidates face when needing to appear soft, but not too feminine. While qualification for the job is held in high regard by voters, so too is likeability, which is certainly nuanced in the case of female candidates (McGinley, 2009).

Assessing Behaviors in Female Candidates

A prevalent part of political campaigning includes television broadcasts and appearances. Advertisements, and in some cases, negative advertisements constitute a large portion of candidate portrayals, and perhaps most importantly, candidates are given the opportunity to have control over what is broadcast when releasing their own campaign advertisements. In relation to gender stereotypes, negative advertising falls into direct conflict with what is typically expected of females: to be kind, gentle, and sympathetic. The research is divided on whether negative advertisements help or hurt female candidates, however, Krupnikov and Bauer's (2014) study found that punishment for "going negative" may depend on the political party of both the participant and of the candidate. Additionally, perceptions of female candidates are influenced by whether the advertisement instigates negativity or is in response to negativity by the other candidate.

Using fictional candidates in a Congressional campaign, Krupnikov and Bauer (2014) manipulated a newspaper article to suggest that a candidate is releasing a negative advertisement towards their competitor. In one condition, this is the first negative advertisement of the race while in the other condition, this is in response to an already launched negative advertisement by the candidate's opponent. The researchers concluded that female candidates of the opposite party of the participant who instigated the negative attacks were significantly more likely to be punished by participants than any other candidates. Though these results are mediated by political party and the instigation condition, they still suggest that female candidates are disproportionately punished for engaging in the same behavior as male candidates during a campaign.

Another important aspect of being viewed by voters includes presenting recorded speeches. Everitt, Best, and Gaudet (2016) suggest that nonverbal behavior plays a large part in how candidates are evaluated by voters. By using silenced debate footage of actual candidates giving actual speeches, the researchers were able to capture natural, unchoreographed, nonverbal movements portrayed by candidates. Participants were shown video clips of the speeches in which a single candidate was engaging in either dominating (agonic) or no physical movement. In all videos, the sound was silenced to control for political message bias.

Everitt, Best, and Gaudet (2016) used Likert scales to measure attitudes toward the candidates. Both male and female candidates were assessed on agentic and communal qualities. The researchers concluded that female candidates were rated as having fewer

leadership qualities when they were expressing agonistic movements, whereas male candidates were rated as less agentic when they were conveying minimal physical movements. Women were seen as possessing the qualities associated with being a strong leader when constraining their movements, but not when showing dominance during their speeches.

Willingness to Vote

Krupnikov and Bauer (2014) assessed willingness to vote for candidates by asking which candidate the participant would be likely to vote for. However, a major limitation of this method is that the participant's willingness to vote relies on the comparison of the two candidates. This makes it difficult to assess if there is an effect of gender or if the participants instead just prefer particular advertising behaviors over others. Nevertheless, Krupnikov and Bauer (2014) measured willingness to vote by asking participants if there were any reason not to vote for the candidate in question.

Again, the results suggest that female candidates are disproportionately punished for engaging in the same behaviors as male candidates. Participants were 23% more likely to give a reason for voting against female candidates of the opposite party who instigated the negative advertisements. This effect occurred when compared to the baseline condition, in which no negative advertisements were mentioned. In comparison, participants were only 9% more likely to give a reason to vote against male candidates of the opposing party who instigated the negativity (Krupnikov & Bauer, 2014).

Everitt, Best, and Gaudet (2016) asked participants to rate, on a scale of 1-10, how likely they would be to vote for the candidate presented to them. Because the researchers used existing candidates, predetermined attitudes held by the participants had the potential to bias the study at this point. Nonetheless, the results still suggested that participants were less likely to vote for female candidates when they displayed agonic movements when compared to the candidates who displayed minimal movement. Interestingly, the opposite is the case for male candidates; male candidates who displayed agonic movements were more likely to receive votes from the participants than the male candidates who engaged in little movement.

Perhaps of more importance was how voting behaviors were broken down by participant gender; both male and female participants were more likely to vote for male candidates who displayed agonic movements, but male participants were significantly less likely to vote for female candidates also displaying agonic movements. The results of this study also support the concept that, in the case of male participants, female candidates are punished more than male candidates when engaging in the same behavior.

The Role of Political Party in Candidate Ratings

While Bauer's (2017) study showed that counterstereotypic female candidates were often rewarded with positive ratings for both communal and agentic traits, this same effect does not hold for female candidates of the opposite party of the participant. In this case, stereotype backlash occurs as participants are more critical of counterstereotypic females on communal traits including warmth. Even so, counterstereotypic female

candidates are still given higher ratings on agentic traits than stereotypic females, showing that traditionally male stereotypic traits are preferred in political candidates of either gender (Bauer, 2017).

Additionally, as was mentioned previously, the opposing party affected how candidates were rated in Krupnikov and Bauer's (2014) research. Female candidates of the opposite party from that of the participant were much more likely to be negatively punished for engaging in negative advertisements. This effect exceeded any effect found for any other candidate gender and political party combination. Again, it is clear throughout the literature that female candidates are generally punished or viewed more critically than male candidates, even when engaging in the same behaviors.

Stereotype Content Model

Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) proposed the stereotype content model to describe how in-groups perceive members of varying outgroups based on ratings of competence and warmth. Fiske and colleagues hypothesized that most individuals would be ranked on opposite ends of the scales for warmth and competence; the majority of individuals will either be rated as having high scores on warmth and low scores of competence, or the opposite in which they are ranked with low scores on warmth but high scores on competence. However, the researchers felt that few out-groups fit into the low warmth, low competence cluster. Additionally, Fiske and colleagues hypothesized that in-group individuals would be rated as having high scores on both warmth and competence.

The researchers compiled a list of various groups that participants deemed as being placed into distinct subgroups by society as a whole. Included in the list of subgroups, and most relevant to the current study, were feminists and businesswomen. Both of these subgroups were placed in the cluster defined by relatively high scores on competence and relatively low scores on warmth, also referred to as the envy cluster. In fact, for both feminists and businesswomen, the ratings of competence were significantly higher than the ratings of warmth.

Fiske and colleagues named the envy cluster as such because individuals placing subgroups in this cluster stereotyped the groups as being successful, accounting for the high ratings in competence, but only concerned with their success and furthering their goals, accounting for the low warmth ratings. These stereotypes against the subgroups in the envy cluster contribute to the social out-casting and resentment of such groups.

Though the stereotype content model provides a good explanation for rankings among out-groups in relation to warmth and competence, the subgroups selected do not represent all subgroups, and in particular, do not represent the subgroups relevant to the current study. Fiske and colleagues did not include politicians of any sort in their original study detailing the stereotype content model. Where the current study seeks to further this research, is by introducing these measures of competence and warmth to these new subgroups. Specifically, the purpose of the current study is to measure and compare ratings of warmth and competence of both male and female presidential candidates. The stereotype content model provides a good theoretical framework for the current study. In

addition, the current study can assess relationships between competence and warmth and novel subgroups, furthering the information gained from and implications of both studies.

Integrating the Stereotype Content Model into the Gendered Political Arena

Fiske and colleagues (2002) propose that in-group members will be rated as high in both competence and warmth, whereas out-group members will be rated with one of the other three variations of the two characteristics. For over 200 years, up until the 2016 election, all major political party Presidential candidates have been male. Because male candidates are therefore seen as the norm, these candidates are likely perceived as members of the in-group. Female candidates, on the other hand, are much less common. In fact, as there has only been one female Presidential candidate for a major political party in American history, female candidates may be perceived as threatening the long-standing norm. As such, female candidates could be perceived as members of the out-group. It is then hypothesized that male candidates, being seen as in-group members, will be rated as high on measures of both competence and warmth, whereas female candidates will be rated high on competence but low on warmth, mimicking the ratings of businesswomen in the original study (Fiske et al., 2002).

The Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to assess the relationship between gender and politics, specifically, whether ratings of and willingness to vote for female candidates differed significantly from those of male candidates. The study was designed to answer four main questions; firstly, how do ratings of traits differ between male and female

candidates? Secondly, do ratings of competence and warmth differ among male and female candidates, and thirdly, are participants significantly more likely to vote for one candidate over the other? Finally, the current study was also conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in voting behavior and attitudes towards political candidates by participant gender.

Due to the success of the method in previous studies (Bauer, 2015), and their ability to be easily manipulated, fictitious articles were used to convey information about the candidates to participants. The articles describe an event hosted by the candidate in which the candidate's platform was briefly discussed. The articles for both the male and female candidate used the same information, the only differences between the articles were the candidate's name, and consequently their pronouns, in addition to the candidate's political party affiliation.

This research was conducted specifically using Presidential candidates due to the fact that there have not been any female Presidents, whereas there have been female senators, representatives in Congress, and leaders at the local level. Further, the research was conducted using a 2 (candidate gender) x 2 (candidate political affiliation) x 2 (participant gender) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four candidate conditions: female Republican candidate, female Democratic candidate, male Republican candidate, male Democratic candidate. The political party affiliation of the candidate was not necessarily a variable of interest, but was included to avoid

ambiguity so that half of the participants were assigned to the Republican condition and the other half were assigned to the Democratic condition.

Hypotheses

Based on Fiske and colleagues' research regarding in-group and out-group attitudes, in addition to historically male-dominated Presidential elections, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The male candidate would be rated high on both competence and warmth, whereas the female candidate would be rated high on competence but low on warmth.

A large portion of the research literature regarding candidate gender and their respective ratings show that female candidates are rated differently than male candidates engaging in the same behaviors (Bauer, 2015; Everitt, Best, & Gaudet, 2016). Further, some research has also concluded that male candidates have more freedom, a choice, in presenting themselves in accordance with traditional male or female stereotypes.

However, female candidates are not often granted these same choices, but are instead viewed negatively for adhering to traditionally feminine stereotypes (Bauer, 2017). The compilation of these findings from previous research lead to the formulation of hypothesis 2:

H2: The female candidate would receive significantly higher ratings on negative traits than the male candidate.

In accordance with the conclusions of Krupnikov and Bauer's (2014) and Everitt, Best, and Gaudet's (2016) research on candidate gender and willingness to vote, hypothesis 3 was formulated:

H3: Participants would be significantly less likely to vote for the female candidate than the male candidate.

Based on the findings of Everitt, Best, and Gaudet's 2016 study, male participants are less likely to vote for female candidates even when female candidates are engaging in the same behaviors as the male participants. However, this effect does not hold true for female participants. In congruence with these results, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H4: Female participants would be significantly more willing to vote for the female candidate than male participants.

Within the willingness to vote measurement, the main effect of most interest was candidate gender. It was expected that participants would be less likely to vote for female candidates overall. The interaction effect of primary interest was candidate gender and participant gender, such that it was hypothesized that the effect of candidate gender on willingness to vote depended on participant gender. It was expected that male participants would be significantly less likely than female participants to vote for female candidates.

Regarding the measurement of positive and negative traits, a main effect of candidate gender was anticipated such that female candidates would have been rated higher on negative traits than male candidates overall. An interaction effect for candidate

gender and participant gender was also expected. It was anticipated that male participants would have rated female candidates higher on negative traits than female participants would. Additionally, male participants would rate the female candidates more negatively than the male candidates.

A main effect for ratings of competence and warmth by candidate gender was also expected. It was anticipated that female candidates would have been rated lower on warmth than male candidates. However, there was not an expected difference on ratings of competence between the male and female candidates.

No significant three-way interactions involving candidate political party were predicted because this variable was included essentially as a control variable. Although it was not anticipated that candidate party would have an effect on the results, the factorial ANOVAs included this variable as part of the analyses.

Method

Participants

The sample of participants for the study was gathered nationally using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk sampling was the preferred method for the current study as it could obtain data from participants across multiple regions nationally. In addition, MTurk could gather a sample more representative of the national population in both age and political party affiliation than would be possible from a sample gathered from the midwestern University at which the study was conducted.

Data were collected from 610 participants who were paid \$0.50 for their participation using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Participants who completed less than 83% of the total survey were removed from the final analysis. In addition, data from any participant who failed the manipulation check by providing the wrong answer or answering "unsure" was removed. In total, data from 370 participants was used in the final analysis for the current study; all subsequent statistics are based on this sample.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 70 years ($M = 36.76$). The sample consisted of 142 females, 227 males, and one participant who did not disclose their gender. 75.9% of the sample identified as Caucasian or white, 12.2% as African American, 10% as Hispanic, 6.3% as Asian, 5.1% as Native American or American Indian, and 2.2% as another ethnicity. Participants were asked if they had voted in the 2016 Presidential election; 85.9% of participants voted, 13.2% of participants did not vote, and .8% of participants preferred not to respond. Self-identified political affiliations are listed in Table 1. Table 2 includes participants' education levels. Participants' past voting behavior is listed in Table 3.

Materials

Three measures garnered from previous research regarding gender and politics were used in the study. Since they were used in previous studies, the measures have already set a precedent that they are appropriate to assess the variables of interest in the current study. By utilizing three separate measures to gain information about a number of

variables, there was the potential to conclude if an inherent bias against female Presidential candidates exists.

Candidate Descriptions

Fictitious articles were created as an unbiased way to present the candidate descriptions to the participants. The name given to the female candidate was Susan Smith and male candidate was referred to as Steven Smith. The first names were selected because they were common names but were not the names of any recent Presidents or prominent Presidential candidates from either the Democratic or Republican party. Furthermore, the issues on the candidates' platforms were left intentionally vague as to fit with the overall platforms for each major party. The mention of a previously held rally was identified as taking place in Iowa, as this state hosts the first Presidential caucus for each election and is historically a 'swing state.' The articles also included a balance of behaviors fitting into both traditionally masculine (raising their voice) and feminine (becoming choked up) stereotypes, as not to make the candidates inherently possess mostly agentic or communal traits. The full articles for each candidate can be found in Appendix A.

Competence and Warmth

Competence and warmth were measured using the same descriptors used by Fiske and colleagues (2002) in the original study researching the stereotype content model. Using a seven-point Likert-type scale, participants rated the candidates on competence and warmth from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely), using a variety of traits that were

collapsed to measure overall warmth and competence. The complete list of these traits can be found in Appendix B. Though the original study utilized a five-point Likert-type scale, the current study employed a seven-point scale to better assess the goodness of fit to which participants felt these traits described the candidate with more specificity.

Candidate Traits

A study conducted on media descriptions of candidates elicited a list of traits that can be applied to the current study (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). A total of 37 traits were included in the original study, however some of these traits were removed as they overlap with those included in Fiske and colleagues' research design. Additionally, Kittilson and Fridkin (2008) did not assign these traits a positive or negative connotation, however for the current study, it was important to understand if negative traits were applied to female candidates more than male candidates. Because of this, independent coders rated each the traits as either negative or positive. One of the 34 traits included in the analysis was rated as positive and negative by an equal number of independent coders, so that trait was removed from the final analysis. In total, 33 of the original traits were included in the measurement of candidate traits for the current study, which can be found in Appendix C. After participants rated the candidates on these traits using a seven-point Likert-type scale, the positive and negative traits were collapsed to total positive and negative means. These means were then compared to assess if there was a significant difference in the ratings of positive and negative traits as applied to male and female candidates.

Willingness to Vote

Willingness to vote was the final, important measure to study the impact of gender on ratings of Presidential candidates. Following the same method used by Everitt, Best, and Gaudet (2016), participants were asked to rate their willingness to vote for the candidate in the article on a scale of 1 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely).

Data Preparation

Data were analyzed with a series of four 2 x 2 x 2 factorial ANOVAs, with ratings of competence, warmth, negative traits, and positive traits assessed as four different dependent variables of interest. Composite variables for each dependent variable were created based on multiple questions in the survey. The dependent variable for competence was created by computing the mean of the six competence items ($\alpha = .878$). The composite variable for warmth was computed by calculating the mean of the six items that measured warmth ($\alpha = .898$).

In order to create composite variables for negative and positive traits, 28 undergraduate students served as independent raters for the 34 trait characteristics, rating them as either positive or negative in connotation. One trait was independently rated as equally positive and negative and was therefore removed from the final analysis. The remaining 33 variables were used to create a composite variable for positive traits (17 traits; $\alpha = .941$) and a composite variable for negative traits (16 traits; $\alpha = .947$).

The current study also included a manipulation check for the independent variable candidate's political party. After reading through the fictitious article and answering majority of the questions in the survey, participants were asked what political party the

candidate they had read about was affiliated with. The manipulation check was a multiple-choice question with three answer choices – Democrat, Republican, and unsure.

Results

Perceptions of Competence

The 2 (candidate gender) x 2 (participant gender) x 2 (candidate party) factorial ANOVA revealed no significant main effects or interactions in perceptions of competence. It was hypothesized that both the male ($M = 5.11$) and female ($M = 5.12$) candidate would be rated high on competence. Both candidates were rated relatively high on competence and the ANOVA indicated no significant difference in competence ratings based on candidate gender ($F(1, 361) = 0.004, p = .947$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported as both candidates were rated high on perceived competence. The means and standard deviations for perceptions of competence are included in Table 4.

Perceptions of Warmth

It was also hypothesized that male candidates would be rated higher on perceived warmth compared to female candidates. Both the male ($M = 5.12$) and female ($M = 5.08$) candidate were rated relatively high on warmth. However, the ANOVA results indicated no significant difference in perceived warmth based on candidate gender ($F(1, 361) = 0.08, p = .784$). Because there was not a significant difference in perceived warmth, Hypothesis 1 was only partially supported. The means and standard deviations for perceptions of warmth are included in Table 5.

Negative Trait Ratings

Hypothesis 2 stated that the female candidate would receive significantly higher ratings on negative traits than the male candidate. Both the male ($M = 3.80$) and female ($M = 3.60$) candidate were rated close to the midpoint of the scale for negative traits. The results did not indicate a significant difference in negative trait ratings based on candidate gender ($F(1, 361) = 1.23, p = .257$). Additionally, there was no evidence of an interaction effect between candidate and participant gender ($F(1, 361) = 2.20, p = .139$), indicating that male and female candidates were not perceived differently based on participant gender. Thus, no support was found for Hypothesis 2. The means and standard deviations for negative trait ratings are included in Table 6.

Positive Trait Ratings

No predictions were made with regard to differences in positive trait ratings based on candidate or participant gender. The 2 x 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA revealed no evidence for a main effect of candidate gender on positive trait ratings ($F(1, 361) = 0.05, p = .820$), nor candidate party ($F(1, 361) = 0.54, p = .463$), nor participant gender ($F(1, 361) = 0.05, p = .828$). The means and standard deviations for positive trait ratings are included in Table 7.

Willingness to Vote

The 2 (candidate gender) x 2 (participant gender) x 2 (candidate party) factorial ANOVA revealed no significant main or interaction effects for the dependent variable of willingness to vote. Based on the results of previous studies, it had been hypothesized that participants would be significantly less willing to vote for female candidates.

However, the results indicated no significant difference in willingness to vote for either a male ($M = 6.69$) or female ($M = 6.43$) candidate ($F(1, 361) = 0.34, p = .560$). Willingness to vote also did not differ based on the candidate's party affiliation ($F(1, 361) = 1.53, p = .217$) or the participant's gender ($F(1, 361) = 0.68, p = .411$).

Based on the literature, it was also hypothesized that female participants would be significantly more willing to vote for a female candidate than male participants.

However, the results of the current study detected no interaction between candidate and participant gender ($F(1, 361) = 0.07, p = .797$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 is not supported. The means and standard deviations for willingness to vote are included in Table 8.

Discussion

The results from the current study did not provide evidence for differences in ratings of positive and negative traits, perceptions of competence and warmth, or voters' willingness to vote for male versus female Presidential candidates. While the results suggest that male and female candidates may be judged the same in Presidential elections, American history indicates otherwise, as there has never been a woman elected to occupy the Presidential office.

Women are still widely under-represented in all levels of United States government. At the national level, no woman has been elected to the highest office: President of the United States. Prior to the 2020 election, women only held 23.7% of the seats in the United States Congress, making up only 26% of the Senate and 23.2% of the House. At the state level, women held only 28.9% of all elected Statewide Executive

seats and 29.3% of all State Legislative seats. More locally, women were elected Mayor of 27% of the 100 largest cities in America, and only 23.3% of cities larger than 30,000 in population (Center for American Women and Politics, 2020). The discrepancy between the results of the current study and the pattern of results for American Presidential, state, and local elections suggests that the current study failed to detect differences in perceptions of male versus female candidates, which may have been due in part to the quality of the data collected.

Data from a large number of participants were removed because the participants failed the manipulation check, which indicates that participants were generally not paying close attention to the vignette. Furthermore, the manipulation check tested whether participants retained the information on the candidate's political party but did not test whether participants retained the candidate's gender. It is possible that participants did not retain the candidate's gender even after passing the manipulation check. It could also be that the candidate's political party affiliation was more salient than the gender and participants were more influenced by the candidate's party affiliation. However, it is also possible that participants who were included in the final analysis passed the manipulation check merely by chance and still did not pay close attention to the vignette or retain the necessary information to accurately rate the candidate. Because the participants could select an answer from three possibilities (as opposed to requiring participants to write in an answer), it is possible that the question could be answered correctly by guessing. This

left room for inattentive answering, potentially allowing participants to answer the question correctly without actually knowing the correct answer.

The current study also only focused on one fictitious speech given by the candidate and participants were expected to make a decision on whether or not to vote for the candidate based on limited information. Typically, voting decisions in major national elections are based off of multiple factors that include, but are not limited to, descriptive policy platforms, debates, experience, and campaign advertisements (Gershtenson, 2009; McKinney, 2007; Kirkland & Coppock, 2018; Bauer, 2015). It is possible that the limited information presented in the experimental manipulation may not have elicited gender biases, whereas Presidential campaigns in their entirety might be more impacted by these unconscious biases and stereotypes. Additionally, a large proportion of the voting-eligible population does not vote in each election. In the 2016 Presidential election, 61.4% of eligible voters self-reported voting in the election (File, 2017), meaning 38.6% of the voting-eligible population did not vote. The current study did not survey likely voters, but instead surveyed individuals living in America over the age of 18. Because of these parameters, the participant sample may not be representative of likely voters, which could partially explain the discrepancy between the study results and actual election results.

Implications

The results from the current study did not provide evidence that male and female Presidential candidates are judged differently on multiple important factors associated with political support and voting intent specifically. However, there is still a glaring

disparity in the election of Presidential candidates. Of the 45 elected American Presidents, all were men and there has only ever been one female nominee for a major political party. Further, while women have occasionally been selected as Vice Presidential candidates, only one woman has been elected to hold the office of the Vice President, and there has yet to be a woman elected to hold the office of the President. These facts cast doubt on the validity of the study's results.

Another possible explanation for this discrepancy between the results of the current study and the reality of American politics may be related to the large proportion of participants who self-identified as being affiliated with the Democratic party. Self-identified Democratic participants ($n = 187$) outnumbered self-identified Republican participants ($n = 100$) nearly 2:1 in the current study. More female candidates running as Democrats have been elected than female candidates running as Republicans (Winter, 2010). This suggests that Democrats are more willing to vote for female candidates than Republican voters. This context, in combination with the large proportion of Democratic participants, may explain the failure to achieve a significant difference in the willingness to vote measure between the male and female candidates.

According to Winter (2010), the traits associated with the Republican party are congruent with those associated with male candidates as described by Huddy and Terkildsen (1993). Similarly, the traits citizens associated with Democrats are in congruence with those associated with female candidate stereotypes (Winter, 2010; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Given this information, it is conceivable that Democratic

voters are more supportive of and aligned with female candidates and might be more willing to vote for them than Republican voters. This suggests that bias against female candidates is less severe among Democrats which could be of benefit to Democratic female Presidential candidates during U.S. elections. This may have contributed to the lack of differences in the current study due to the large proportion of self-reported Democratic participants. However, this information fails to explain why there is still an apparent bias in US elections against female Presidential candidates, Democratic and Republican.

It is clear that female Presidential candidates are at a disadvantage in American politics, though the results suggest that the inequities in voter perceptions of candidates may not be elicited after exposure to a summary of a single speech. The results of the current study indicate that solely presenting a candidate's gender may not be enough to elicit biased attitudes, however, gender biases against female candidates may arise due to other factors associated with political campaigning and candidate dispositions. One such factor is likeability, which plays a large role in the perception of candidates (McGinley, 2009). The current study was narrow in scope relative to the diverse aspects of the campaign process and did not assess or manipulate candidate likeability as a factor contributing to participants' willingness to vote for and perception of candidates.

Future research would benefit from a more representative sample of likely voters to attain a more accurate representation of voter attitudes and behavior. Additionally, including multiple aspects associated with political campaigns would improve ecological

validity. A stronger manipulation of candidate gender and manipulations of other factors, including candidate characteristics such as likeability, may be more likely to elicit the gender biases observed in American Presidential Elections.

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Table 1*Participant Political Affiliation*

Party	Frequency	Percent
Democrat	184	49.7
Republican	100	27
Independent	63	17
Libertarian	8	2.2
Green	6	1.6
None	6	1.6
Other	2	0.5

Table 2*Participant Education Level*

Education	Frequency	Percent
Less than 8 th grade	1	0.3
Some high school	2	0.5
High school graduate	32	8.6
Some college or technical schooling	54	14.6
College graduate (Bachelor's degree or equivalent)	217	58.6
Some post-graduate education	17	4.6
Post-graduate degree (Masters, PhD, etc.)	46	12.4

Table 3*Participant Voting Behavior in the 2016 Presidential Election*

Candidate Voted for by Participant	Frequency	Percent
Donald Trump	169	45.7
Hillary Clinton	139	37.6
Gary Johnson	9	2.4
Jill Stein	7	1.9
Other	3	0.8
Did not vote	43	11.6

Table 4*Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) for the Competence measure*

	Democratic		Republican	
	Candidate		Candidate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate
Male	5.09 (1.18)	5.07 (1.13)	5.02 (1.19)	5.22 (0.91)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 61	<i>n</i> = 65	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>n</i> = 52
Female	5.17 (1.14)	5.07 (0.79)	5.21 (1.26)	5.11 (0.94)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 41	<i>n</i> = 34

Table 5*Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) for the Warmth measure*

	Democratic		Republican	
	Candidate		Candidate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate
Male	5.22 (1.14)	5.06 (1.25)	4.97 (1.55)	5.14 (1.01)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 61	<i>n</i> = 65	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>n</i> = 52
Female	5.27 (1.10)	5.16 (0.99)	5.00 (1.46)	4.94 (1.16)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 41	<i>n</i> = 34

Table 6*Means and Standard Deviations (in parenthesis) for Negative Traits*

	Democratic		Republican	
	Candidate		Candidate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate
Male	3.91 (1.48)	3.45 (1.42)	4.05 (1.38)	3.72 (1.33)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 61	<i>n</i> = 65	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>n</i> = 52
Female	3.57 (1.24)	3.45 (1.29)	3.59 (1.50)	3.81 (1.35)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 41	<i>n</i> = 34

Table 7*Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) for Positive Traits*

	Democratic		Republican	
	Candidate		Candidate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate
Male	5.03 (1.04)	4.88 (1.10)	4.90 (1.31)	5.01 (0.97)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 61	<i>n</i> = 65	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>n</i> = 52
Female	5.07 (0.96)	5.06 (0.79)	4.93 (1.16)	4.86 (0.93)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 41	<i>n</i> = 34

Table 8*Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) for the Willingness to Vote measure*

	Democratic		Republican	
	Candidate		Candidate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate	Candidate
Male	7.07 (2.31)	6.55 (2.83)	6.55 (3.06)	6.56 (2.72)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 61	<i>n</i> = 64	<i>n</i> = 49	<i>n</i> = 52
Female	6.82 (2.83)	6.54 (2.55)	6.15 (3.06)	6.24 (2.93)
Participant	<i>n</i> = 39	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 41	<i>n</i> = 34

Appendix A

Female Candidate

The Democratic/Republican Presidential candidate Susan Smith spoke to potential voters yesterday about her platform and plan for the country once she is elected. Her platform focused primarily on lowering the national debt and amending the immigration process. She became audibly louder when addressing the current immigration process, raising her voice at some points to emphasize the importance of this issue. Later in her speech, Smith emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relationships with the country's allies and emphasized her opponent's inexperience with the issue. Towards the end of the speech, a touching moment occurred when a member from the audience of potential voters asked Smith about her plans regarding national security and the threats to the country, including the possibility of war with other countries. Smith took this opportunity to address issues veterans face with the ability to see a medical specialist and became visibly choked up when recounting an encounter she had with a veteran in Iowa who was unable to afford their prescription medication with their current insurance.

Male Candidate

The Democratic/Republican Presidential candidate Steven Smith spoke to potential voters yesterday about his platform and plan for the country once he is elected. His platform focused primarily on lowering the national debt and amending the immigration process. He became audibly louder when addressing the current immigration process, raising his voice at some points to emphasize the importance of this issue. Later

in his speech, Smith emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relationships with the country's allies and emphasized his opponent's inexperience with the issue. Towards the end of the speech, a touching moment occurred when a member from the audience of potential voters asked Smith about his plans regarding national security and the threats to the country, including the possibility of war with other countries. Smith took this opportunity to address issues veterans face with the ability to see a medical specialist and became visibly choked up when recounting an encounter he had with a veteran in Iowa who was unable to afford their prescription medication with their current insurance.

Appendix B

Items used to complete the measure of competence:

- Competence
- Confidence
- Capability
- Efficiency
- Intelligence
- Skillfulness

Items used to complete the measure of warmth:

- Friendliness
- Well-Intentioned
- Trustworthiness
- Warmth
- Good-Nature
- Sincerity

Appendix C

Measures used to compile overall positive and negative ratings of candidates:

Positive Traits:

- Honest
- Gentle
- Analytical
- Hardworking
- Expressive
- Effective
- Tough
- Independent
- Compassionate
- Moral
- Knowledgeable
- Strong
- Ambitious
- Strong Leader
- Objective
- Consistent
- Vital

Negative Traits:

- Weak
- Biased
- Passive
- Emotional
- Uninformed
- Unintelligent
- Unexpressive
- Dependent
- Erratic
- Ineffective
- Power-Hungry
- Weak Leader
- Untrustworthy
- Immoral
- Aggressive
- Insensitive

Excluded Trait: Noncompetitive