Getting personal: Perceptions of male and female candidates' trustworthiness and personability in Facebook campaigning

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Abstract

Stereotypes of women impact their decisions to run for office and the way they campaign if they do run. This is carried over to social networking sites, in which female candidates have to strike a balance between optimizing the medium's features and producing content that does not negatively impact voter perceptions. Specifically focusing on personalization, social media is meant to simulate real conversations and interactions. However, common campaign methods for male candidates such as showing their families may reinforce stereotypes when performed by female candidates and detract from the campaign issues. The following 2x2 experiment simulates a gubernatorial candidate's Facebook wall that consists of either all personal or all professional campaign posts. The participants' perceptions of the candidate's trustworthiness and personability were measured. Given the difference in beliefs and social media use among generations, participant age was studied. The results found that personal posts resulted in perceptions of higher personability, and that in particular, younger participants perceived female candidates with personable posts as more personable. A significant relationship was not found between personal posts and trustworthiness. Results from this study provide insight into possible tactics for female candidates to improve social media strategies and a possible supportive group within younger voters.

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Introduction

It is not new information that women are underrepresented in elected office in the United States. The numbers have continued to slowly creep up over the last century, with 14 women serving in Congress in 1963, to 54 in 1993, to 106 currently in office (Center for American Women and Politics, 2018a). However, the country is not near gender parity and equal representation, with the United States ranking 102nd in female representation by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). The 2016 presidential election brought the first female candidate for a major political party. While Hillary Clinton was not elected, the election and events like the Women's March have motivated women to get involved in levels that have not been seen since 1992, which was dubbed the Year of the Woman (Caygle, 2018). The number of women currently intending to run for state and national office is significantly higher than years past. This includes over 50 more gubernatorial candidates since 2014 and more than double the number of women who were running for United States Congress just two years ago (Center for American Women and Politics, 2018b; Kurtzleben, 2018).

These numbers are incredibly hopeful and are indicative of female responses to systemic issues that seem to have reached the boiling point in the last few years. These issues include women's health care coverage and sexual assault. The #MeToo movement and the nationwide Women's Marches are representative of female frustration with the status quo in government and society as a whole (Barr, 2017; Caygle, 2018). As women become passionate about a particular issue or upset with how things are done, they are moved to get involved in ways they may not have been before. However, deciding to run for office is just part of the battle facing female candidates and the issues they care about. There are unique obstacles and stereotypes still facing women almost one hundred years after female enfranchisement through the Nineteenth

Amendment. There is a large distance between deciding to run and being elected to office, and female candidates need to be equipped with the necessary campaign strategies and tools to meet their goals. Some aspects of this include understanding the stereotypes and perceptions of female candidates and how technology, such as social media, can make an impact in overcoming some of the negative biases. In addition, different age groups have different values or issues that are most important to them. This is based on past voting trends of millennials and their recent online political engagement. Evaluating young voters in connection with social media and their perceptions of female candidates offers insights on their ability to serve as potential supporters.

The following study looks at the differences in perceived trustworthiness and personability among male and female candidates through an experiment designed to simulate a Facebook wall. This study is of great importance because female candidates need accurate information regarding the use of social media and constituent interaction in order to be elected. For true progress to be made on the local, state, and national level, women need a seat at the table. Without women in elected office, perspectives regarding half the population will not be given equal consideration. The polarization across the country is drawn on party lines, and it is often perceived that women are more willing to find compromise (Pew Research Center, 2014a). While in reality, it is more often Republican women crossing over to vote with Democrats, compromise is necessary in these divisive times, and women need as many resources to support their campaigns (McGill, 2016). This includes tactics for overcoming stereotypes to effectively using social media. The following literature review will discuss characteristics of female candidates and how they contribute to voter perception. Following this, a review of social media trends will identify tactics important for female candidates, specifically personalization. This will

culminate by looking at the evolution of young voters and how their belief systems and avid

technology use could contribute to electing women to public office.

Theoretical background and literature review

Social presence theory establishes the effectiveness of different media at communicating,

with in-person communication being the gold standard (Short et al., 1976). Through social

presence, communication media are measured on qualities such as socialness, warmth,

sensitivity, personability, intimacy, and immediacy — characteristics of real conversation (Short

et al., 1976). As technology has evolved, researchers have posited that the social presence of

media has increased, with computers providing higher levels than televisions or phones (Cui,

Lockee, & Meng, 2013; Short et al., 1976). Much of the theory has been studied in connection to

online learning methods and found that the internet is able to simulate the feeling of real

locations, and that people feel and act as if they are there (Lowenthal, 2009). This theory offers

an interesting perspective regarding social networking sites, as their goal is to connect people

and form bonds digitally (Cui, Lockee, & Meng, 2013). When applied to personalized campaign

social media, social presence was found for those who are interested in engaging with a

candidate or campaign. In these instances, on Twitter, personalized posts simulated real

conversations and intimacy between the groups (Lee & Oh, 2012). Personalized tweets are more

likely to elicit social presence, and when combined with factors such as gender and political

party can have an even greater response (McGregor, 2018). Relating to political social media,

personalized content has also been shown to raise impressions of social presence and is also

strengthened when combined with gender and affiliation (Lee & Oh, 2012; McGregor, 2018).

This framework may offer guidance as to how social media campaigning is interpreted by voters and give insights to ways specifically female candidates should adjust their approaches.

Female candidates

Female representation has steadily grown since 1992 and the "Year of the Woman." However, seats in state, local and national office are still dominated by male politicians, with approximately 20 percent of the available seats in Congress being held by women and six female governors currently serving around the country (Brown, 2017; National Governors Association, 2018). Perception of female candidates by voters and the media has remained a significant area of study in academic research throughout this time. Scholars within fields including politics, communication, sociology, and psychology have looked to find trends and answers regarding the obstacles faced by female candidates in first choosing to run and then in winning elections. The following section will examine factors relating to female candidates including perceived gender stereotypes and characteristics of political leaders, the double bind, and political parties. The literature works to describe the current stigmas and challenges facing female candidates to give a cumulative understanding of how perception could be optimized.

Gender stereotypes and leadership traits

Theories about female traits and ideologies have guided much of the research in this area. When studying perception, many scholars have looked at the qualities often attributed to women, including warmth and compassion (Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad, & Gaffney, 2012; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). These traditional traits are taken from roles women have held in society or some associated with motherhood. Some evidence shows that having sensitivity and other traits qualified as "feminine" can be an asset to women getting involved with politics. In this way,

targeting gender stereotypes can be of value to female candidates and a way to connect to issues that matter to groups likely to vote for them (Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003, p. 251).

This is because society holds assumptions that women possessing these qualities are going to be better equipped in handling policy issues related to women, children, education, and other topics deemed feminine. This assumes that women share similar life experiences that would benefit them in handling such topics and may give them an advantage over those policies (Rosenwasser, Rogers, Fling, Silvers-Pickens, & Butemeyer, 1987). In addition, when compared to men, women are expected to be able to work better with such marginalized groups, acting with compassion (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, p. 121). A recent example is the 2017 Republican health care bill, which was stopped in great part by female Republican senators Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski, who crossed party lines and voted against it.

While some research above may show an inclination to embrace female stereotypes, there is recent evidence and research stating that stereotypes should be avoided or overthrown. Compassion and empathy can benefit politicians, but there are also specific traits that are associated with candidates and leadership that enable them to make the tough decisions on issues surrounding the economy and the military. Men are stereotypically seen as stronger and more assertive, which translates into an expectation of their ability to competently handle military policy better than women (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, p. 121). Many attributes needed for political leadership are credited as components of male personality. This leads voters to perceive men as natural leaders and believe that women are just putting on a front to seem qualified in those masculine attributes (Brooks, 2013). When women run for office, they may try to de-emphasize stereotypes and focus on masculine issues. They may do this by not campaigning on the issues most considered feminine and reiterating their stances in areas most associated with

male politicians (Windett, 2014). Windett observes that only later in elections may it be strategic for women to begin incorporating feminine issues into their platforms, once their male counterparts begin to do so (Windett, 2014, p. 643). This is because, while female candidates want to appear as holistic, well-rounded candidates, they also do not want to receive pushback or negative criticism for not focusing on the expected traditional issues.

In addition to being encouraged to tackle comprehensive platforms, women are also counseled to campaign using tactics and personality traits attributed to men. This involves choosing to negatively campaign with attack advertisements against their competitors to promote strength (Evans & Clark, 2016; Wagner et al., 2017). Because men are assumed to have the traits necessary to lead, they may not feel it as necessary to include them as often in their campaigning as well. Female candidates discuss male traits more than men, while men may find more success focusing their campaign efforts on issues (Meeks, 2014). The kind and caring behaviors may also help them counteract negative opinions or balance out other behaviors necessary of political decision making. Men have been found to respond more positively and be influenced by women who combine competence with warmth, as opposed to only emphasizing their credentials (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 584).

While researchers have found that female candidates need to take on masculine traits and be tough in politics, there are often expectations that they must maintain traditional feminine characteristics. Women who are assertive or show ambition are likely to receive more negative criticism than men in the same positions. But when traditional feminine behaviors are combined with agentic attitudes, this can be counteracted as long as it does not interfere with the job being done (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 590). These two thoughts can come in conflict and lead to criticisms of female politicians, known as the "double bind." Female politicians are required to

make a variety of difficult decisions while in office but are judged if they do not hold onto the stereotypical warmth. According to research by Monica C. Schneider and Angela L. Bos, traits ascribed to male politicians are many of the same stereotype traits ascribed to all men — "assertive, confident, dominant, and hardworking." However, female politicians are considered a "sub-type" of women where the traits most often chosen to describe them do not overlap with women overall. Women in this case were criticized for having leadership behaviors, but they were not seen as positive personality traits as they were for men (Schneider & Bos, 2014, p. 17). This means that in working to meet the demands of government, they may not be positively perceived through either group of personality traits.

Alice Eagly and Steven Karau evaluated the ways in which women experience prejudice when vying for leadership opportunities. One observation is that women are not perceived as potential leadership candidates, and the second is that necessary behaviors for leadership are not as well received when displayed by women as they are by men (Eagly & Karau, 2002). With this frame in mind, female candidates must adjust the traits they display to meet the demands of constituents, while still maintaining their beliefs as a candidate. In a 2016 National Public Radio article, former female members of Congress were interviewed on their experience working in the male-dominated legislature. U.S. Senator Carol Moseley Braun spoke about balancing "the very fine line of being a shrew on one hand and a puppet on the other" (Klahr et al., 2016). This thought of a double bind was a media focus during the 2016 presidential election, as Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be a presidential nominee for a major political party. A piece in the Washington Post titled "Our Impossible Expectations of Hillary Clinton and All Women in Authority" called out the different connotations of "ambitious" in headlines regarding the political headlines. The article stated Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders had "ambitious plans,"

while Clinton was described as "pathologically ambitious" (Tannen, 2016). This is reflective of

Schneider and Bos' research where ambitious, driven, and assertive were positive traits of men,

but negative traits of female politicians. "This overlap illustrates the classic double bind for

women — what might be a positive quality for a man could be a negative quality for women"

(Schneider & Bos, 2014, p. 24).

While the media reinforce this double bind and research has seen these struggles for

women in the workplace, recent research indicates that the double bind is not the obstacle

impeding female candidates' electoral success (Brooks, 2013). Through hypothetical

congressional representatives, it has been found that women are not penalized more than men

when they act less empathetic in office. Regardless of gender, constituents expect their

representatives to be caring and tough. Similarly, looking at state governorships, stereotypes hold

less vote influence; rather, voters are looking for candidates who can adequately manage male

and female policy areas (Dolan, 2014). However, it is not just female candidates who are

expected to adapt. Male candidates also take on feminine qualities such kindness and availability

when running for office (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, p. 120). Female candidates need to ensure

that they are representing agentic leadership qualities and male candidates need to maintain their

personalities and connections to the community.

Political parties

Rather than evaluating female political candidates through traits, other research has

looked at the impact of party affiliation and ideology. Political party needs to be evaluated

because it plays a large role in voter decision and could matter more to voters than gender. In

addition, each party has a belief system that could be transferred to candidates and their gender.

The long-lasting impression of women running for office is that they have more liberal leanings

than their male counterparts (Dolan, 2014). Of the 84 women currently serving in the United States House of Representatives, 62 are Democrats and 22 are Republican (Center for American Women and Politics, 2017). So rather than being involved with issues such as education and health care because of their personality traits, researchers posit that it is because these are issues most associated with liberal ideology (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, p. 121). In some instances, this can be of benefit to female candidates because voters will choose a candidate based on his or her party most often (Dolan, 2014). They assume that the ideologies of the candidate align with those of the party with which they have chosen (Hayes, 2011). In this way, the candidate's gender is not going to encourage a voter to switch and vote for the other candidate based solely on his or her sex. However, ideological stereotypes can also be problematic, as each candidate does not meet every generalization or follow every part of a party's platform. This can cause issues for female candidates who would choose to support issues across the aisle. For example, this can specifically be an issue for conservative women, as gender stereotypes are more prevalent within the Republican Party (Wagner et al., 2017). In the case of conservative female candidates, being considered more liberal could be a hindrance to electoral success, specifically in a primary situation when competing against another conservative candidate. This may put female Democratic candidates at an advantage over female Republican candidates in accurately expressing their platforms to voters (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, p. 143).

This may mean that for women running for office, their political party drives how their gender affects their campaigning. Because liberal values are complementary to many feminine traits and issues, it could elevate a voter's assumptions of the candidate. On the contrary, if the party's beliefs are counter to the gender stereotypes, voters may disregard the gender factors (Dolan, 2003, p. 81). Since political parties each hold certain ideologies and areas of expertise,

candidates running for office may work to emphasize the positive traits of the other party. This can help to pull voters from the other party, and for female candidates may assist in sorting through the party-identified politics. The traits that candidates choose to emphasize may vary between the two parties. "A Democrat who establishes himself as an unusually strong leader, or a Republican who comes across as especially empathetic, for example, might win over voters looking for information to distinguish between the two candidates" (Hayes, 2011, p. 159).

Regarding these different stereotypes, women are encouraged to not stay within traditional gender roles, and only emphasize them as a "riskier strategy" (McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2017). For this reason, it may appear that women and men are implementing very similar campaign strategies and have similar understandings of what is necessary to be elected to office. According to Kirsten la Cour Dabelko and Paul S. Herrnson, this includes having adapted to the "financial, technical, and strategic imperatives of contemporary elections," as well as comprehending the media's role and being able to critically analyze one's own work and that of their competition (Dabelko & Herrnson, 1997, p. 133). Rather than a candidate's gender deciding the issues and communication strategies, candidates' work may be more comparable when analyzed through political organizations (Lawless & Hayes, 2016, p. 52). While male and female candidates may have similar objectives in getting elected and similar issues they want to spread, their communication strategies may vary given the preconceived perceptions about gender. Voters have notions based on candidates' gender and political party that they use to make evaluations of candidates. This must be factored in when creating content and determining how to communicate through social media. Being aware can enable campaigns to target specific strengths and minimize other areas to reach the largest audience and voter base.

Social media

In the last decade, social media has become integral to campaign strategy. In each election cycle, social networking sites have grown more valuable as they have diversified in their abilities and expanded to wider audiences. From simply having a Facebook page to "like" to being able to interact with constituents through live streaming video, the tactics continue to enable candidates to reach many voters in new and unique ways. When discussing social media use, the strategies employed by candidates as a whole and by gender, and the impact on voters are important to consider. The following section will discuss social media campaign tactics, specifically incorporating personalization, gendered online campaign messages, and differences in social media use among male and female candidates. Understanding both the tool and content that will work to change perceptions of unsure voters and motivate supporters to get more involved is key to determining the effect of personalized and professional campaign social media.

Social media tactics

Depending on the level of office, candidates may choose to employ different social networks within their campaigns. For example, a city council candidate in a small town is not as likely to invest in creating content for Snapchat, a newer platform, while United States presidential candidates are willing to do so. For this reason, this review will mainly focus on Facebook and Twitter, as candidates from many branches of government have adopted social media plans. They have seen the results in voter turnout correlated with their social media presence. In 2010, Facebook reported predicting more than 80 percent of the Senate elections based on which candidates had more fans on the site (Facebook, 2010).

The ways in which social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are used in elections play an important role in determining digital and electoral success. As recent events with Cambridge Analytica's illegal use of Facebook data shows, groups will go beyond the limits of traditional ethical norms to understand voters ("Facebook Cambridge Analytica Scandal," 2018). Just like other campaign strategies, a candidate's team must evaluate the politician's strengths and weaknesses and figure out how best to portray them on the specific platform. There is more to incorporating social media into a campaign than just creating the accounts. They must be maintained with relevant content and used to interact with constituents. Twitter, Facebook, or another social networking site makes no difference if it just sits there empty with a profile picture (Hwang, 2013, p. 255). As in coordinating other facets of communication, male and female candidates have similar understandings of what is needed on social media. Research on 2014 tweets shows that gender produces little difference in the overall content and number of posts (Lawless & Hayes, 2016). In regard to prioritizing campaign needs, research on Taiwanese elections observed that candidates choose to emphasize their positive attributes on social media (Chen & Chang, 2017). Regardless of gender, candidates found it more beneficial to highlight themselves through a "self-presentation strategy" instead of running attacks on their opponents through the platforms. President Barack Obama held a similar philosophy in his use of Facebook during his 2012 re-election campaign. Roman Gerodimos and Jákup Justinussen determined that the rhetoric on Facebook was focused on the campaign's positive efforts and stayed away from polarizing or attack material (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015, p. 11).

Personalization

Campaign posts that offer personal information about candidates can make them seem more relatable; however, they can also play into the "double bind" concern for female candidates. Understanding how this tactic has been used successfully can contribute to further campaigning improvements for female candidates.

Rather than running smear campaigns or focusing on his opponent, Obama's Facebook had a heavy emphasis on his personal life and connecting to the voters, which appeared to appeal to his younger base. In the 2008 election, Obama captured 66 percent of the youth vote against John McCain (Pew Research Center, 2008). In planning a re-election strategy, it made sense to incorporate communication platforms that have large youth participation. Social media helped Obama stay connected with youth voters, helping him receive 67 percent of the youth vote in his re-election (Robillard, 2012). Facebook offered a way for young voters to show their virtual support, something they were more accustomed to than their parents were. To young voters, social media interactions are more significant and representative of their political involvement. By posting about a candidate or sharing a candidate's post, it is their way of participating in the process along with voting (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015, p. 9). In addition, being able to manage an up-and-coming technology shows off a relevance and skill set to voters (Hwang, 2013).

The personal content was also a notable factor of Obama's Facebook campaign. Analysis shows that he did not choose to post about issues, policies, or his track record as the seated president (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). Instead, the Facebook posts noted Obama's character and highlighted his personality, often in connection to his family (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015, p. 16). Obama's personalization is representative of several trends in social media campaigning, specifically among male candidates. Male candidates use personalization on

social media more than their female opponents (McGregor et al., 2017). The use of

personalization is meant to increase follower engagement with content, and the greatest source is

those who are already great supporters of the candidates (Lee & Oh, 2012). Personal campaign

posts are also more likely to engage feelings of social presence and parasocial interaction

(McGregor, 2018). Along with posting information about one's personal life comes a more

casual tone, which is fitting for the digital age, as social media in general is meant to have a more

social tone, and less professional atmosphere meant to facilitate conversations. Posts that seem

more conversational can result in positive views of candidates on and off social networks (Lyons

& Veenstra, 2016). In opening conversation through social media, candidates can highlight

favorable traits to voters that they may have only been able to do through face-to-face

interactions before, such as sincerity and trustworthiness (Hwang, 2013, p. 254). This leads

candidates to post pictures of their children, for example, because it elicits the feelings of trust

related to parenthood that could be transferred to trust in a political representative.

However, personalization is not as effective as a campaign strategy in all forms for all

candidates. Different ways of personalizing have served male and female candidates more

effectively (Meeks, 2014). As personalization attempts to simulate real relationships with voters

on social media, the outcomes are better for men regardless of political affiliation (McGregor,

2018). Female candidates are less likely to initially incorporate personalization in their social

media campaigns but will if competition deems it necessary (McGregor et al., 2017). The reason

women may hesitate in personalizing their social media could be similar to why men decide to

do it — they both are concerned about how they are perceived in communal traits. Women don't

want to be stuck in female stereotypes, and men want to appear compassionate.

When it comes to specific types of personalization, Lindsay Meeks found differences during the 2012 elections. Her analysis showed that men use more photos and mentions of their family for personalization. Men were also more likely to reply tweet when interacting with constituents. Female candidates, however, were more likely to retweet or mention tweet when interacting on Twitter. They also would use photographs for interaction, as opposed to personalization. In terms of personalization, female candidates would often sign their initials on tweets to let their followers know when it was them writing, as opposed to a staff member (Meeks, 2014). For example, Hillary Clinton signs tweets she personally writes "-H." These posts included holiday messages, a more personal topic for postings. Looking at the recent presidential election, the gender differences are visible in Clinton and President Donald Trump's social media use. Trump personalized by retweeting followers and tweeting out endorsements. His posts would also appear to be unprepared and at times uncivil. Hillary Clinton, however, would retweet her own staff and highlighted her policy ideas (Lee & Lim, 2016). Trump's efforts, while unorthodox, emphasized interacting with his constituents, giving his voters the belief that he was talking to them (Andrews, 2016).

Personalization is only part of a social media strategy. Candidates may also use the sites more as platforms for traditional campaigning (McGregor et al., 2017). Focusing on all personal or all professional posts can be to the detriment of the candidate. By combining elements of both strategies, candidates can appear both qualified and relatable to voters. Regardless of the candidate's gender or political beliefs, utilizing a personal information about a candidate can strengthen the social media presence (Colliander et al., 2017, p. 281).

Gendered messages

In finding a balance between personal and professional social media content, there are still differences in the way candidates choose to campaign on social media. This is important to the big picture because the content posted by candidates contributes to the overall perception of the candidate and could strengthen preconceived notions. The different ways men and women campaign are reflected in their social media use. Male and female candidates discussed issues that society has gendered, such as the military as masculine and education as feminine, in similar amounts (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Meeks, 2014). This is contrary to findings from an analysis of the 2012 House of Representative candidates that found that women tweeted significantly more about women's issues than men, which can include these policy areas as well as concerns that may affect women at greater rates than men (Evans & Clark, 2016). In addition, during the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton discussed feminine issues on Twitter more than Donald Trump did (Lee & Lim, 2016).

More of the posts by male and female candidates cover masculine issues (Meeks, 2014). This is reasonable considering issues deemed masculine are often popular issues and party priorities high that voters base their decisions around. Discussion of women's issues also decreases as more women enter races (Evans & Clark, 2016). Simply put, if all the candidates are women, they are no longer "women's issues" and are just issues. Female candidates will not need to emphasize them if they do not make them stand out from their opponent. While gender may not determine a complete strategy, it plays some role in the network of conversation. When the candidates are of opposite genders, the woman is more central to the conversation (McGregor & Mourão, 2016). While she may share more of the attention, she may not have control of the narrative, with men making gender a focus and dominating the conversation.

Male and female candidate social media use

Each gender enacts social media strategies in efforts to further campaign messages and goals, spreading specific messages and ideas. The content and amount candidates post can contribute to a voter's perception. Meeks (2014) found that female Senate candidates in 2012 tweet or post less often than male candidates, yet their posts may contain more information. However, Wagner et al. (2017) saw that among 2010 Congressional candidates, women tweeted more during their campaigns than their male opponents did. These discrepancies could be accounted for in the difference of election years, as well as different level of office being contested. Wagner et al. also analyzed the tendency for female candidates in that election to go negative. In addition, more female candidates in an election may lead to an increase in negative or attack tweets (Evans & Clark, 2016). Incumbents may also feel less inclined to go negative (Wagner et al., 2017). This could explain why more women use negative posts, as more are running for the first time than not, and incumbents are generally men. This could also be extended to the presidency, as the analysis of Obama's Facebook page showed he refrained from negative posts during the 2012 election (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015).

Just as gender determines the strategy and effectiveness of social media, so does political party. Republican women receive the greatest change in electoral outcomes from social media use (Wagner et al., 2017). This could be because they have the most to gain in terms of having a platform to share their beliefs, as party ideals and feminine stereotypes can serve as contradictions for them. Along similar lines, Republican women may do this by posting more negative content than other candidates (Wagner et al., 2017). Because message personalization helps reach a larger audience, it can come into conflict with political parties at times. Those with strong party identification may not respond as well to candidate personalization, as they connect

with the party issues. However, the personalization can improve perception from those with fewer ties to the political party (Lee & Oh, 2012, p. 946).

Male and female candidates receive varying benefits for their efforts on social media, but appropriate strategy and training can be very worthwhile in meeting new voters. However, it is pivotal that the candidates are focusing on the traits, issues, and amount of personalization that are fitting for their office and demographics.

Young voters

In 2015, millennials outpaced baby boomers and accounted for more than a quarter of the United States' population (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Millennials are considered those born between 1981 and 1996, and now all of them are eligible to vote in U.S. elections (Dimock, 2018). This is a very significant voting bloc and a group that has the potential to make huge impacts on electoral outcomes. If young voters are going to help decide who is elected and are the ones most actively using social media, the strategies should be aligned. This section will look at past trends of young voters to determine their importance as a voting group and connect the issues most important to this generation with those historically in women's platforms.

Voting trends

Looking at the 2012 presidential election, there were swing states in which the other candidate would have won if not for the number of youth votes received (Khalid, 2016). Millennials made a difference for winning candidates, and those candidates likely would have lost without their support (Khalid, 2016). This shows the value of this group in determining results. However, even while encompassing a large portion of society, youth voting has historically declined, and millennials are participating less than older generations (Adler & Goggin, 2005; File, 2014).

During the 2016 election, 50 percent of eligible millennials voted. While this is a slight increase from the previous presidential election, it falls behind other age groups and is lower for local and midterm elections (File, 2014). Alienation and disengagement seem to play a large role in millennial voter turnout. Younger voters do not identify as strictly with the two major political parties (CIRCLE, 2016; Kiley, 2014). This can cause them to feel apathetic toward the election process, if no candidate seems to represent them or their issues. This may also lead to young voters picking and choosing when to get involved, based on the candidates rather than the importance of civic responsibility (CIRCLE, 2016, p. 11). This type of passion was evident with Obama's and Bernie Sanders' campaigns. As voters feel less committed to parties, the parties may stop investing the resources into this younger demographic and put their funds into groups they feel are more attainable. As a result, young voters may become further separated from politics and voting, and parties will invest even less into reaching them (Nickerson, 2006, p. 48). Such alienation may lead to even lower polling numbers, as was seen with a decrease since 2008 (Southwell, 2016). The motivation to vote and inspiration to back Obama may not have been matched with the necessary recruitment since. By voting, constituents can show which issues matter most to the majority of the nation. When a certain candidate wins, it serves as an endorsement that his or her platform is supported by the majority. This system does not work when large factions of society stay home from elections. Specifically, because those 18-34 have different beliefs from the rest of society and have historically voted differently than those older than them (Fisher, 2008).

As mentioned, not all millennials have decided against participating in elections. There are some inclinations that young people are more likely to vote for the first time if their parents do. There is a similar correlation among educated parents increasing their children's voter

turnout (Plutzer, 2002). Just as parents can influence millennials' decisions, so can their mentors and peers (File, 2014, p. 9). Young voters' interest and turnout in the electoral process may also vary by gender. For example, in the 2004 election, young male voters were reportedly more likely to respond that they were interested in the election (Banwart, 2007). However, women have voted in higher proportions in elections for more than 20 years (File, 2014). This may be because women have been "greater beneficiaries" of campaign messaging in recent elections and therefore inspired to act (Banwart, 2007).

As voting has declined or remained relatively stagnant among millennials, they often show their support for candidates or civic involvement through other forms (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 237). By contributing through other means, such as volunteer work, millennials may feel that they can make a bigger or direct impact through activism or service in which they can see the results, especially in the case of large elections in which the candidates or issues can seem abstract or not relevant to their lives. Civic engagement in the form of volunteering can allow young voters to see problems in their areas, and therefore allow them to discover what social and economic values they hold as a citizen and voter (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). As teens gain the ability to vote, this expectation of activism could encourage them to vote. In addition, as community service is ingrained in the generation, one of the reasons millennials may prefer Democrats is because of their policies regarding "governmental activism" (Fisher, 2008).

Party affiliation and issues

For decades those aged 18-34 have found to be the most Democratic of any age group in voting. However, more and more young voters are choosing to remain independent and not identify with a political party. Part of this phenomenon relates to the trend of young people relating to liberal ideas, but not to the Democratic Party (CIRCLE, 2016, p. 2). In the 2016

elections, 8 percent of young voters chose a third-party candidate over the major party candidates (Khalid & Rose, 2016). Millennials brought Sanders a huge outpouring of support in the 2016 primaries. His views resonated with this age group and resulted in him receiving more votes from this group than Trump and Clinton combined (Blake, 2016). The connection between female politicians being perceived as liberal and young voters being perceived as liberal brings to a light a possible support network for female candidates because there is an overlap in their interests.

Even with growing third-party support and independent registration, there are still traditional party followers. And just as with all voters, millennials have different political beliefs and values that influence their vote choice. While he did not carry the youth vote, 37 percent of millennials voted for Trump. These voters consisted mostly of "whites, evangelicals, and young people in rural areas" (CIRCLE, 2016). In contrast, Clinton carried groups including "unmarried young women and youth of color" (CIRCLE, 2016). In some situations, it is not age that defines voting decisions but gender, ethnicity, or environment. With that being said, millennials are less likely to stick solely to a party platform and may vote differently on social or fiscal issues. This crossover in voting removes them from some of the polarization currently impacting older generations (Kiley, 2014). This willingness to cross platforms may be related to the fact that millennials are less conservative and religious than older generations (Fisher, 2008). In this way, younger voters may be willing to compromise in areas or issues in which older voters are not.

The issues American millennials care about are reflective of societal changes and increased liberalism overall. Social issues that have been controversial for older generations are more widely accepted among young voters. While immigration or LGBTQ rights may be significant debates among older demographics, millennials are found to be more tolerant (Fisher,

2008). Education is another issue that is important to this demographic. This is likely because they are directly affected by education legislation, whether that be about federal student loan funding or curriculum regulations (Coleman & McCombs, 2007). Millennials, in general, support spending public funds on education, as well as childcare (Fisher, 2008). Defense spending is an area in which millennials believe funding could be reallocated to foreign aid (Fisher, 2008). While they think defense spending could be cut, young voters have historically followed along with the president's plans in terms of war and foreign policy (Fisher, 2008). This could stand as an example of the age group crossing over for voting, as younger voters worry more over the issue rather than the politician or political party.

Young voters, then, can play a large role in electoral outcomes and may have untapped potential in developing the longevity of political groups. However, for them to receive a campaign message or be recruited for a party, they must be contacted. As stated previously, millennials have a relative interest in politics and the events happening around them, and registered young voters are not harder to mobilize than older voters (Nickerson, 2006). However, young voters cannot be reached through the same tactics used to mobilize older voters. A large barrier is the frequency with which millennials move. They may move between states for college or jobs, and campaign or party contact banks are not able to keep up with them (Nickerson, 2006). Another simple way in which campaigns may work to interact with voters is through news outlets; however, millennials watch and read less traditional news (Coleman & McCombs, 2007). Again, tying into the activism exhibited by the demographic, a successful approach may be for campaigns to work to mobilize through the groups in which the young voters are actively involved and spending time (Nickerson, 2006, p. 61). And while traditional news may not be as

successful, social networking sites offer a slew of new opportunities for connecting to the youth vote.

As of 2016, 88 percent of 18- to 29-year olds have Facebook accounts (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). In addition, it is younger voters who are using the internet more for politics than others (Weaver Lariscy, Tinkham, & Sweetser, 2011). These statistics alone show the reasons why there has been such push for social media use in elections, as discussed in previous sections. Youth voters in particular have embraced personal politics (Bennett, 2012). This makes social media an ideal medium for communication, as it can allow for more casual and personal messages while still campaigning.

The 2008 election was an advancement in social media campaigning and allowed for some noteworthy generalizations. Facebook political activity is correlated with actual civic engagement. In addition, one's network engagement contributed to one's own political engagement (Vitak et al., 2011). This signifies that peer engagement, even digitally, can motivate Facebook users to get politically involved. Young voters can learn important civic skills and discuss political issues through Facebook and perhaps be motivated to then take that engagement off the computer to the ballot box.

Millennial voters have grown up in a technological and social age that has brought more opportunities, but also more considerations. They may be more cautious in joining a political party with which they don't fully identify. This does not mean that they are not extremely important. Millennial voting needs to be established now in order for it to become habitual. Incorporating social media and the issues most important to young voters may lead to them being becoming a reliably large voting group in the future.

Hypotheses

As discussed, voters do not determine their perceptions of candidates merely on gender or one factor. If this was the case, it would have been expected that Hillary Clinton would have carried more women voters than she actually did (Scott, 2018). Rather, candidates are multifaceted, and impressions of them will be determined by existing beliefs of the voters and the ways candidates present themselves. Vote intention may be impacted positively when personalization is combined with factors like affiliation and gender (McGregor, 2018). Looking at the differences in personal and professional presentation styles on social media can give credence to the impact of social media's role in elections. Specifically, the two presentation styles' effect on perceived trustworthiness and personability can show if the impact varies among gender. With young voters' beliefs aligning with stereotyped beliefs of female candidates, as well as their increased use of social media, it is also of interest to specifically see how young voters perceive the communication styles among female candidates. With this in mind, the following hypotheses are considered:

H1a: Personalization of campaign social media will lead to stronger perceived personability.
H1b: Personalization of campaign social media will lead to stronger perceived trustworthiness.

H2a: The relationship between social media personalization and perceived personability will be stronger for male candidates.
H2b: The relationship between social media personalization and perceived trustworthiness will be stronger for male candidates.

H3a: The relationship between social media personalization and perceived personability will be stronger for younger voters than older voters.
H3b: The relationship between social media personalization and perceived trustworthiness will be stronger for younger voters than older voters.

H4a: The relationship between female candidates' social media personalization personalization and perceived personability will be stronger for younger voters than older voters.

H4b: The relationship between female candidates' social media personalization personalization and perceived trustworthiness will be stronger for younger voters than older voters.

Methods

To test the effects of social media personalization regarding perceptions of male and female candidates, a web-based experiment was conducted. Using a 2x2 factorial design, comparisons were made by analyzing male and female conditions by personal and professional conditions. Age was then considered as a moderating effect on the conditions. Personalization was evaluated through participants' impressions of the gubernatorial candidate's personability and leadership.

Sample and experiment administration

The sample was collected using Amazon Mechanical Turk, a common method for data collection in the communication research field (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Through the online interface, participant requesters are able to establish the conditions for their sample, and only those meeting the qualifications will be able to view the request and opt-in as participants. This means of data collection allows for a quick turnaround and the ability to include a wider variety of participants than can be collected from a college campus or an in-person collection. Mechanical Turk participants are compensated based on the time and effort required for the experiment. The experiment took less than ten minutes to complete, and participants were paid $0.50 for their involvement (Buhrmester et al., 2011). An 80-person pilot test was conducted before the full experiment. To randomly assign participants to conditions, each condition (Male/Professional, Male/Personal, Female/Professional, Female/Personal) was posted separately with the title "Read Social Media Posts and Do a Survey." Each participant

saw only one of the four conditions. Each condition followed the same requesting guidelines including a 95% HIT (high-performing) rate from participants and a one-hour time allotment.

Instruction checks were used to determine whether the participants could be included in the sample. There were two rounds of the instruction checks that were given after the participants read through the campaign posts. Because gender was a key component of this experiment, any participant who incorrectly identified the gender of the candidate the second time prompted was automatically removed from the sample. The next measure was time spent reading the candidate's Facebook posts. The instruction checks consisted of multiple-choice questions based on the posts to determine if they were reading for comprehension or trying to finish the experiment as quickly as possible. To improve this measurement, immediate feedback was added to the first instruction check, so as participants answered each question they knew if they had chosen correctly or incorrectly but were not told the correct answer. The participants would then read the posts again, with the prompt that they would be tested again on old and new information. The second information check was two questions longer and then repeated the three questions from the first. In addition to ensuring participant's attention, one purpose of repeating all the questions was to be able to ask the subjects a second time what the gender of the candidate was. This manipulation was key to understanding whether any of the variables were effective. However, if only that question was repeated, subjects may have realized what was being studied and this could have primed their answers on the later indexes. For the full instruction check, see Appendix C.

The average time spent reading the posts the first time was 111.75 seconds (SD = 132.69). All responses that were more than three standard deviations from the mean (greater than 509.82 seconds) or fewer than 30 seconds were flagged for review. If the flagged participants

missed more than one of the five questions in the second instruction check, they were removed. This helped control for those who simply read quickly or those who were possibly multitasking while taking the survey. This brought the sample to 376 participants (95 Professional/Male, 99 Personal/Male, 92 Professional/Female, 90 Personal/Female). All participants were notified of the experiment's purpose and their rights as participants through an IRB-approved informed consent form. Each participant had to consent before continuing to the experiment. Following the conclusion of the experiment, the subjects were debriefed and given instructions on how to receive payment. The procedures followed the methodology approved by Washington and Lee's Institutional Review Board on December 13, 2017.

Participants in the experiment consisted of United States citizens over the age of 18. This was necessary to reach only those eligible to vote in the United States and represent the social media interactions that would impact the participants. The experiment was specifically concerned with campaign social media and therefore needed a sample familiar with the country's particular political system. Of the 400 cases collected, 376 participants were evaluated. The ages of the participants varied between 18 and 73 (M = 38.36, SD = 12.184). Once the 24 participants (6%) who failed the instruction checks were removed, the sample consisted of 160 (42.7%) men and 216 women (57.4%). Regarding the sample's education, 90.7% of participants had received at least some college education or greater. This is compared to the 30.3% of U.S. citizens with a bachelor's degree or more ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts," 2016). The majority (80.3%) of the sample identified as white, with the remainder of the participants identifying as black or African Americans (7.9%), Asian or Asian American (5.0%), Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native (0.5%), and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders (0.3%). There were 25 participants of Hispanic or Latino origin. As of 2016 population estimates, 76.9% of the U.S.

population was white, with the next-largest group being black or African American. Total family income was recorded and was distributed among nine pay brackets; approximately 50 percent of the sample earned within the middle three brackets, between $30,000 and $75,000. The median household income in 2016 was approximately $55,000. The data appears to be generally representative of the U.S. population, except that it is skewed toward those with more education ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts," 2016).

The participants were also asked questions related to their political affiliation and social media use. Approximately 80% of the sample were certain that they were registered to vote. Regarding their political affiliation, 23.4% were Republicans, 45.2% were Democrats, and 29.5% were Independents. Facebook was used by more than 90% of the participants, with 87.9% of the participants using Facebook a few times a week or more. Referring to the conversations on social media, 46.9% of the participants commented, posted, or discussed government and politics at least sometimes. In addition, 70.2% of participants also saw local government and politics on Facebook at least sometimes.

Measures and covariates

The experiment's measurement devices were created using the software program Qualtrics. The devices include a personability index, a leadership index, and a manipulation check.

Stimulus

The independent variables were the gender of the candidate (male or female) and the types of Facebook posts (professional or personal). The candidates were named Jane and John Smith. To control for confounding variables such as the hypothetical candidate's age, race, and attractiveness, the candidates' Facebook posts were accompanied by identical logos instead of

profile pictures. Each condition had nine Facebook posts, meant to simulate a Facebook page with participants scrolling down the feed. The order, topics, and amount of user engagement were constant for all four conditions. The only intended difference in the conditions was emphasis of personal or professional information in the posts. The Jane and John conditions had identical professional and personal posts. The same campaign issues were raised in the conditions, and the goal was to keep them as neutral as possible and on issues that are not extremely polarizing. This meant constructing Facebook posts about infrastructure, education, and local business instead of health care, the environment, and taxes. The lengths of the posts were comparable when comparing the corresponding professional post to the personal post. In creating the personal posts, first-person language was used along with personal narratives. While these posts discussed issues, they were framed with references to the candidate's childhood and family. The professional posts discussed the same information, but through a third-person voice. Instead of relating an issue to a lived experience, the professional posts offered facts and statements. They emphasized the candidate's hypothetical platform and did not mention the candidate's personal life.

For example, each candidate spoke on road infrastructure:

- Personal: "I nearly wrecked taking my son to practice due to the poor conditions of our roads. I am sure I am not the only one. Comment below with areas that need repairs. They must be improved! #WithSmith"

- Professional: "The state's budget must address the upkeep and expansion of interstates and highways. Improving infrastructure will improve safety and economic opportunity. #WithSmith"

Complete versions of the professional and personal stimuli can be found in Appendix A and B.

A manipulation check was constructed to measure if participants saw a difference in the types of posts. Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants were asked how much they agreed with six statements regarding the makeup of the posts. Subjects of the statements presented included first-person language, references to family and use of colorful language and adjectives. It was expected that the professional candidates would receive low scores for using anecdotes and high scores for informational tone, with the opposite being true for personal candidates. All six manipulations were found to have been significant with p-values all less than .05.

Independent-sample t-tests were run on each manipulation question to ensure that the stimuli Facebook posts were successfully manipulating for personal and professional orientations. The samples were grouped using the personal/professional variable. All five items in the manipulation check were measured on a 7-point Likert scale and had p-values <.001. The t-values showed that there was a difference in the way the participants interpreted the Facebook posts and picked up on the use or lack of use. Some had larger differences, such as "He/She relayed personal anecdotes in posts" (t = -18.415, p < .001). This occurred after the personability and trustworthiness indexes so as to not prime the participants and contribute to testing effects. For full descriptions of the t-values in support of the manipulation check, see Table 1.

Table 1

Independent-samples t-tests of manipulation check for personal and professional posts for all participants

Manipulation Check	t (negative = personal)	p-value
He/She used first-person language.	-9.52	.001
He/She made references to family.	-15.75	.001
He/She included colorful language and adjectives.	-6.08	.001
He/She posted about campaign issues.	3.42	.001
He/She relayed personal anecdotes in posts.	-18.42	.001
The tone of the posts was mostly informational.	7.71	.001

*Note. Based on a 1 to 7 Likert scale with Strongly Disagree being 1 and Strongly Agree being 7. N=376

Dependent variables

The personability index and trustworthiness index were used to measure the dependent variables, personability and trustworthiness. The two indexes were presented together on a 7-point Likert scale following the second information check. The questions for the indexes were adapted from Rubin, Perse and Powell's parasocial interaction scale as used by Thorson and Rogers and Lee and Oh, Lyons and Veenstra's index of positive assessments and a 2016 Pew Research Center survey on campaign dissatisfaction (Lee & Oh, 2013; Lyons & Veenstra, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2016a; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 2006; Thorson & Rodgers, 2006). The combination of these measurements offered questions that looked at the candidate's engagement through a social medium, their ability to lead, and whether the participants found them relatable

or qualified. Each index contained five questions, with one reverse-coded to serve as an attention

check. An example of a personable statement was "He/She seems like a natural, down-to-earth

person" and an example for the trustworthiness index was "He/She is interested in making good

public policy." See Table 2 for a complete list of scales included in the two indexes and

Appendix D for the full wording of the items in the indexes.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations for all participant responses to personability and trust dependent variables

Scale	M(SD)
He/She understands the needs of people like me.	5.34 (1.17)
He/She is engaged with the public.	5.79 (1.04)
He/She seems like a natural, down-to-earth person.	5.47 (1.22)
He/She seemed to speak directly to me.	4.89 (1.55)
He/She is interested in making good public policy.	5.66 (1.06)
He/She is un-interested in her constituents' concerns. RECODED	5.31 (1.62)
He/She provides information that can be trusted.	5.08 (1.21)
He/She would use good judgment in a crisis.	5.09 (1.20)
He/She seems qualified to make decisions as governor.	5.41 (1.15)
He/She does not seem to understand the kinds of things I want to know RECODED	5.11 (1.55)

*Note. Based on a 1 to 7 Likert scale with Strongly Disagree being 1 and Strongly Agree being 7. N=376

Personability

Personability in this case refers to a candidate's ability to appear like a real person

through social media with genuine interactions. A component of the "real person" is that the

candidates are more than a politician and has relatable experiences and qualities.

To create the personability index, the reliability of the variables had to be determined.

Looking at the potential personability index, the combined alphas showed very good reliability

(Cronbach's α = .803). However, by removing the reverse-coded item "He/She is un-interested

in her constituents' concerns," which had served as an attention and reliability check, the

correlation rises (Cronbach's α = .869). For this reason, the recoded variable was removed when creating the personability index, and it only included the other four variables.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness describes the belief and confidence given to a political leader and their ability to make wise decisions representative of their constituents. Cronbach's alpha also showed strong reliability for the creation of a trustworthiness index. The proposed index would have been very reliable with a score of .846; however, it too was being held down by the reverse-coded variable from this set of variables. After the recoded item was removed, "He/She does not seem to understand the kinds of things I want to know," the index achieved a higher Cronbach's alpha of .880.

Once reliability was established, the two indexes were computed by adding the four selected variables that had high enough Cronbach's alpha scores (personability index: M = 21.48, SD = 4.27; trustworthiness index: M = 21.23, SD = 3.97).

Other variables

The survey concluded with basic demographic questions including age, gender, race, income, and socioeconomic status. Study-specific demographic questions were asked as well relating to political affiliation and Facebook use. Based on Facebook use, participants were prompted to answer more questions related to Facebook and politics. Response frequencies are described in the sampling section. These were adapted from Pew Research Center political opinion and trend surveys (Pew Research Center, 2014b; Pew Research Center, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2016b; Pew Research Center, 2016c). The age of the participants also served as a moderating variable to see if this characteristic impacted how participates viewed both

personality and trustworthiness of Jane and John Smith. Collection of the participants' ages was necessary for the moderation to be tested.

Data analysis to test the discussed hypotheses was conducted using SPSS, including ANOVAs, independent-samples t-tests, and descriptive statistics. Discussion of the actual collected data will be discussed further along with the data analysis.

Results

The period of recruitment and data collection took place was February 11-12, 2018. However, using Amazon Mechanical Turk, the 400 hits needed were collected within a few hours. The conditions were closed February 12, 2018, to prevent any participant or bot from taking the survey after the paid trial had concluded.

Hypothesis 1a was concerned with the relationship between social media personalization for candidates and the candidates' perceived personability. Similarly, H1b was concerned with the effect on the candidate's perceived trustworthiness. In both instances, it was posited that the two dependent variables would be positively related to personalization. To examine this relationship, SPSS was first used to determine the frequencies of each variable. See Table 2 for each question used in measuring the two dependent variables, personability and trust, as well each mean and standard deviation. This provided all conditions' responses, not separated by the stimuli that the participants received (male/female or professional/personal).

To determine if the null hypotheses for H1a and H1b could be rejected, univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were run on each dependent variable and the two indexes. The independent variables, gender of candidate (male or female) and type of Facebook post (personal or professional) were fixed factors. Age was controlled as a covariate, applying the average age

of 38.4 to the conditions. In evaluating the personability index, it was found that candidates who

personalized their campaign posts were perceived as more personable than candidates who used

professional posts ($F_{PostType}$ = 14.672, $p_{PostType}$ < .000, partial η2 = 0.038, df=1). See Table 3 for

each variable's significances and difference of means. Three of the four individual variables

included in the personability index also showed significance in the personal/professional

condition with 95 percent confidence. The candidates with personal posts were perceived as

more personable; thus, H1a was supported. Significance with 95 percent confidence was not

found from any of the trustworthiness variables or the trustworthiness index. When looking at

tests between-subjects (personal/professional), no significant difference among the conditions is

found in the trustworthiness index ($F_{PostType}$= 0.949, $p_{PostType}$ = .331, df=1). See Table 4 for the

differences between the conditions. Personalization of campaign social media did not lead to

stronger perceived trustworthiness; therefore, H1b was not supported.

Table 3
One-way between-subjects ANOVAs for gender and post type - personability

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Gender	1	10.53	10.53	.596	.441	.002
Post Type	1	259.27	259.27	14.672	.000	.038
Gender*Post Type	1	12.196	12.196	.690	.407	.002

Note: N=373

Table 4
One-way between-subjects ANOVAs for gender and post type - trustworthiness

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Gender	1	.842	.842	.053	.818	.000
Post Type	1	15.001	15.001	.949	.331	.003
Gender*Post Type	1	11.331	11.331	.717	.398	.002

Note: N=372

Introducing gender as a factor to the strength of personality on social media posts,

ANOVA testing the between-subjects interaction between gender and personal/professional

posts was conducted. The male candidate's posts were not perceived as more personable

($F_{gender*PostType}$ = 0.690, $p_{gender*PostType}$ = .407). The average index scores of each gender in the

personal and professional condition varied very little ($M_{Femalepersonal}$ = 23.32, $M_{Malepersonal}$ = 22.30,

$M_{Femaleprofessional}$ = 20.29, $M_{Maleprofessional}$ = 20.99). See Table 5 for full descriptive statistics. Those

viewing personal posts did not perceive the male candidates as more personable than the female

candidates; therefore, H2a was not supported. The same process was tested for the

trustworthiness index and a significant difference was not found for male and female candidates'

perceived trustworthiness ($F_{gender* PostType}$ = 0.717, $p_{gender *PostType}$ = .398). Again, the mean for each

condition's trustworthiness index was between 20.903 and 21.656. See Table 6 for descriptive

statistics. There was no significant difference in how the male and female candidates'

trustworthiness was perceived from the personal posts; thus, H2b was not supported.

Table 5
Differences of personability between the four conditions

Condition	N	M	SD	Std. Error	Range	95 % CI LL	UL
Male	194	21.65	4.23				
Professional	95	20.98	4.38	.432	7-28	20.13	21.84
Personal	99	22.29	4.00	.423	7-28	21.46	23.13
Female	179	21.29	4.32				
Professional	91	20.29	4.71	.441	7-28	19.42	21.15
Personal	88	22.33	3.60	.450	7-28	21.44	23.20

Note: CI= confidence Interval; LL= lower limit; UL= upper limit; N=373

Table 6
Differences of trustworthiness between the four conditions

Condition	N	M	SD	Std. Error	Range	95 % CI LL	95 % CI UL
Male	192	21.164	.287				
Professional	95	21.14	4.40	.411	7-28	20.350	21.965
Personal	98	21.20	3.73	.402	7-28	21.421	22.001
Female	180	21.280	.297				
Professional	91	21.90	4.07	.417	7-28	20.084	21.723
Personal	89	21.69	3.65	.423	7-28	20.824	23.487

Note: CI= confidence Interval; LL= lower limit; UL= upper limit; N=372

Including age in the ANOVA allows for the analysis of the effect of the participant's age on his/her perceptions to be determined. Because the participants supplied their exact age, as opposed to the range they fell under, it was not necessary to make percentile groups. Age was not a significant factor in influencing perceptions of personability ($F = .072$, $p = .789$). Younger voters did not perceive the candidates with personal posts as more personable, and H3a was not supported. Age also did not have a significant effect on how trustworthiness was evaluated for any of the conditions ($F = .681$, $p = .410$). There was also no difference in the perceived trust of the male and female candidates between young and old voters from the personal posts; thus, H3b was not supported.

Further examining the relationship between age and impressions of personalization, independent-samples t-tests were used to evaluate whether younger and older participants perceived the four conditions differently regarding personability and trustworthiness of the female candidate. The sample was first sorted by gender, and then by age. The exact cut point (age) for the young and old voters was 35 years old. This allowed for equal groups of young and old participants. T-tests on the split data were then run on the personal and professional

conditions, first looking at the personability index and then the trustworthiness index. The

Bonferroni correction was set to p = .025 for significance to avoid Type I errors. Younger voters

perceived a significant difference in personality between the female candidate's personal and

professional posts ($M_{professional}$ = 20.409, $M_{personal}$ = 22.745, p < .01). In addition, a difference in

how older participants perceived the personability between the two conditions was not found to

be significant ($M_{professional}$ =20.1702, $M_{personal}$ = 21.7568, p = .097). Thus, younger participants did

perceive female candidates as more personable when they used personal posts and H4a was

supported. With the trustworthiness index, the same procedures were conducted, and no

significant results were found. For the young participants, trustworthiness of the female

candidate was not different between the professional and personal conditions ($M_{professional}$ =

21.0465, $M_{personal}$ = 22.0192, p = .228). Thus, H4b was not supported. While not included in the

hypotheses, these tests were run for male candidates as well and no significant results were

present. It is worth noting that significance was almost found between how older participants

viewed the male candidate's personality between personal and professional posts ($M_{professional}$ =

21.0566, $M_{personal}$ = 22.8125, p = .036). For significance, p < .025 was necessary to account for

Type I errors. It is interesting that this is the converse of the result found within the young voters

with the female candidates. See Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9 for complete t-test data.

Table 7
Independent-samples t-tests for personability between post type based on gender

| | F | p | n | 95% of CI Difference | | t | df |
				LL	UL		
Male	1.123	.03	194	-2.501	-.126	-2.182	192
Female	8.422	.001	179	-3.284	-.803	-3.251	177

Table 8
Independent-samples t-tests for female candidates and younger participants

	M	SD	F	p	n	95% of CI Difference		t	df
						LL	UL		
Professional	20.41	4.96	5.606	.007	44	-4.028	-.644	-2.742	93
Personal	22.75	3.28			51				

Table 9
Independent-samples t-tests for male candidates and older participants

	M	SD	F	p	n	95% of CI Difference		t	df
						LL	UL		
Professional	21.06	4.27	1.100	.036	53	-3.395	-.116	-2.125	99
Personal	22.81	4.00			48				

Independent-samples t-tests were run between the male and female conditions and personal and professional posts on the personability index because of their significant interaction. The data was separated by personal and professional conditions, which yielded no significant results. The data was then split by the male and female candidate conditions. For both genders, significant differences were found in how personability was perceived between the two types of posts ($M_{Maleprofessional}$ = 20.9789, $SD_{Maleprofessional}$ = 4.38076, $p < 0.05$). The difference between the types of posts for female candidates were significant ($M_{Femaleprofessional}$ = 20.2857, $SD_{Femaleprofessional}$ = 4.71472, $p < .001$). This means that perceived personability for both genders is determined in part by how personal they appear in their social media messaging. Regarding female candidates specifically, this means voters may be more apt to notice the presence or absence of personality in women's posts because of preconceived notions of the gender.

Discussion

Focusing on the use of social media personalization as a way to increase a candidate's personability, Hypothesis 1a was supported, as participants found the candidates who posted personal posts more personable than those who posted solely professional posts. This suggests that voters translate the way politicians communicate on social media and interpret it as part of their personality. A voter would find a candidate who posts about his or her children or connections to the state more relatable or more likely to understand the issues affecting voters' lives. This finding contributes to the previous work highlighting the intimacy and interactions that can be simulated through personalized social media efforts (Lee & Oh, 2012). The personal posts, while remaining at a similar level of knowledge as the professional posts, incorporated a less formal tone and invited comments and feedback. People recognizing the differences shows the benefit of using conversational language in political communication (Lyons & Veenstra, 2016).

Connecting the three areas of study further, Hypothesis 4a found that younger voters perceive female candidates as more personable based on their social media personalization than older voters. The younger participants, ages 18-35, connected the posts by Jane Smith as representations of her personability more than the older participants did for the female candidate. Younger participants were impacted by the type of post they saw, and it affected how they judged Jane's personability. In contrast, older participants' views on the candidate's personability were not altered by the tone or framing of the posts. This finding may have to do with younger voters' increased use of social media as a means of civic engagement and general understanding of the ever-evolving social networking sites (Bennett, 2012; Vitak et al., 2011; Weaver Lariscy et al., 2011). In addition, stereotypes or biases of female leaders may differ

between these two age groups or be interpreted differently. Because millennials and younger voters are more likely to vote moderately or across party lines, it would be advantageous for a female candidate to communicate in a personal way on the issues mattering to them (Fisher, 2008; Kiley, 2014). While some have found that emphasizing personal qualities could hinder a female candidate's campaign, this finding points toward the notion that younger voters recognize personalization and that it could help win elections, when connected to the right groups and issues (Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003). Bringing this to the world of political strategy, this information is valuable for understanding that different generations of people interpret information differently and that personalization for female candidates may be best used when targeting younger audiences.

Hypothesis 2a and 3a also examined perceived personability, with the added contexts of gender and age. Neither hypothesis was supported by the data. This contradicts literature that emphasizes the effectiveness of social media personalization as a tool for male candidates to appear more compassionate or relatable (McGregor et al., 2017). Similarly, methods of portraying personability such as showing children are reported to be used more by men (Meeks, 2014), but the male candidate's use of personalization did not lead to a higher score for perceived personability compared to the personal posts of the female candidate, just overall increased personability. However, this finding supports the notion that both men and women should follow similar campaign strategies to be elected, understanding all the moving pieces in a modern election (Dabelko & Herrnson, 1997). As noted, younger voters did not perceive candidate personality more strongly than older voters. This could contribute to the notion that regardless of age, voters have certain expectations for their candidates. Additionally, these two hypotheses were based on researched, existing stereotypes regarding women that would have

indicated larger advantages for men or a change in voter perceptions, such as their expected

character traits or political beliefs (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fisher, 2008). Further research should

be conducted to contribute to a resolution on these points.

While this experiment provides useful results on social media personalization and

candidate personability, the four hypotheses related to trustworthiness were not supported in the

results. Several explanations could have contributed to these results and will be further evaluated

while discussing the limitations of the experiment. First, one possible explanation for not finding

a difference in trustworthiness based on social media personalization could be the continued

debate over the "double bind" (Schneider & Bos, 2014). Anecdotally, people can think of

situations in which female leaders were criticized for acting too assertive or too compassionate –

a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation (Klahr et al., 2016). However, researchers

have found that this may not be as significant, but rather both genders are expected to act

personably and be qualified to enact policy (Brooks, 2013; Dolan, 2014). Similarly, trust was

defined in this study as belief and confidence given to a political leader and their ability to make

wise decisions representative of their constituents. In combining questions from multiple sources

to create the indexes, the measurement tool for trust may not have reliably measured trust as well

as an index from past trust research could have. With this in mind, personality is just one factor

that contributes to how candidates are viewed and therefore is not able to significantly alter

perceptions of trust by itself.

Limitations

The techniques employed in this study produced an effective methodology and

experimental design. Random assignment controlled for any variation within the different

groups, such as the level of education. While the sample was skewed to those with more

education, it was the same throughout all conditions. Efforts to control for outside factors contributed to a stronger procedure, but they may have created limitations to the strength of some results and the overall external validity of the study. The experiment design was created to simulate a Facebook page with participants scrolling to read through all of the posts. The posts included likes and shares and looked very similar to real Facebook posts. However, pictures and comments, which are common methods of adding personalization, were not included. In addition, the only difference between the male and female conditions were the names on the posts — Jane or John. As a control, this allowed for looks, age, race, and other factors to be removed from consideration. However, with such small representation of gender on the posts, it makes it harder to determine how the results would play out in a real-life scenario. Gender is multi-faceted and with so much removed besides a simple name to represent it, it's possible that actual biases about candidate gender were not displayed and that participants were more fair-minded than they would be in an actual election or viewing campaign social media.

Only participants who accurately recalled the candidates' gender were included, but not knowing what they looked like may have weakened the manipulation. Similarly, political beliefs are known to outweigh gender biases in candidate selection (Hayes, 2011; Lawless & Hayes, 2016). Posts were created based on local issues or neutral topics, but an actual candidate running for office would be pushing an agenda that supports a platform. Agreeing or disagreeing with a candidate's political belief may determine how one views the use of personalization. If you like the candidate, you could color it as them being relatable, but if you disagree it could be viewed as inexperienced or unprofessional. Another factor to consider is that participants viewed all professional posts or all personal posts, which would not be the case of an actual campaign's social media (Colliander et al., 2017). Combining the two posting techniques has been found to

be a more effective strategy and was first attempted for this study. Each condition had neutral posts that were not meant to signal either post type that were identical throughout. However, during a trial run, the neutral posts greatly affected the manipulation of the posts and the participants' ability to identify the overall personal or professional tone of the posts. This was because the neutral posts made the all-professional or all-personal posts less extreme. In reality, this result would be good to support a balanced posting approach.

These notes point to the external validity issue of viewing personalization as an isolated factor, rather than in combination with the other real-life considerations. For this reason, further analysis of these phenomena should be conducted using actual candidates during a campaign. A similar experimental process could be conducted, or real Facebook posts from the candidates could replace the experimental ones.

Furthering this study, more knowledge could be gained from conducting this experiment using within-subject comparisons — that is, by showing participants the posts of more than one candidate. While generalizations about the population perceptions can be made from the between-subject study, competitive elections consist of at least two candidates. By showing participants two candidates, it could be observed how the individual views of perception are changed from seeing both conditions — personal and professional. Similarly, this could provide another element of external validity and could then consider measuring vote intent.

Conclusion

The results from this experiment can open up a lot of discussion about how female candidates are being perceived on social media. The lack of difference found among men and women on trust and personality could seem very hopeful, and as if the country has reached a

turning point where women are not regarded so much by their gender. The data shows that when men and women post identical campaign content, there is not a significant difference in how the candidate is perceived regarding trust and personability. With so many women motivated to run, it might be heartening to think that the issues, social media strategies, and how the candidates connected with the voters would be the focus. And going into the 2018 midterm elections, it might also be encouraging to conclude that biases and expectations are not as prevalent in 2018 as they were in 1992. However, this is unlikely the complete story. As noted earlier, gender is more than a name, and party affiliation plays a large role in how voters make decisions. Sexism and the challenges facing women running for office have been ingrained in society in certain respects, and this work is just the beginning of positive progress regarding the removal of gendered perceptions.

With this in mind, the results regarding young participants' perceptions of female personalization do offer a positive outlook for the future and is worthy of future research. If female candidates are able to relate to the issues that matter to young voters and make lasting personal connections through social media efforts, they will have a voter base for generations. The recent coverage of school gun shootings and March for our Lives has shown the interest of this generation to get involved (Kirby, 2018). Women are being motivated to run at the same time that young people are seeing the necessity to vote. If female candidates are able to present the issues that matter to younger voters through personal social media, younger voters will feel connected to the candidate and motivated to work for their mutual causes.

This work adds to social presence research by further supporting the strength of social media's social presence and applying it to campaign strategies. A major goal of campaigning is making as many connections and interactions as possible to increase one's possible voter base. In
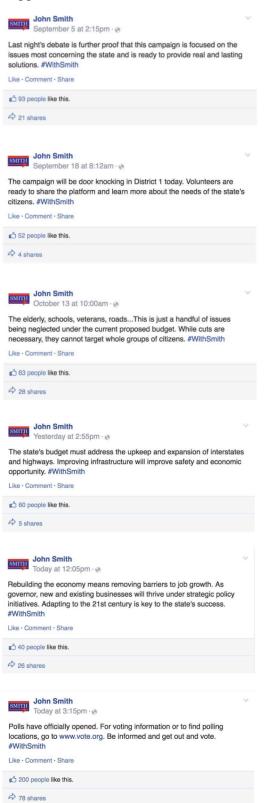
simulating face-to-face communication, those running for office are able to spread their

platforms and voters are able to get to know them.

It is worth considering whether changing a voter's perception of a candidate will actually

result in different voting behaviors and changes in policy. While it is only one piece of the

campaign strategy, when thinking of female candidates, it could offer important implications. If

women running for office are facing deeply rooted stereotypes that affect how voters view them

or even deter them from running, working to alter perceptions can offer a more level playing

field. While perceptions might not directly impact policy issues, policy priorities are determined

by those in office. Increasing representation can impact how policy is discussed and what

changes are enacted. So while it is worth being cautious of candidates' overusing social media

personalization strategies to alter their personas, social media's benefits should not be ignored.

In conclusion, this work provides insight into the use of personalization as a social media

campaign tool, with specific regard to female candidates' personability and their reach with

younger voters. Further testing should be conducted to validate the results found, as well as to

solidify the measurement for trustworthiness. Within the year of this experiment's execution, the

role of social media as a necessary tool has only continued to grow, along with the need for

female leaders. By taking this work out of theory and into practice, it could, one hopes,

contribute to connecting voters and electing women.

Appendices

Appendix A: John/Professional Posts

John Smith
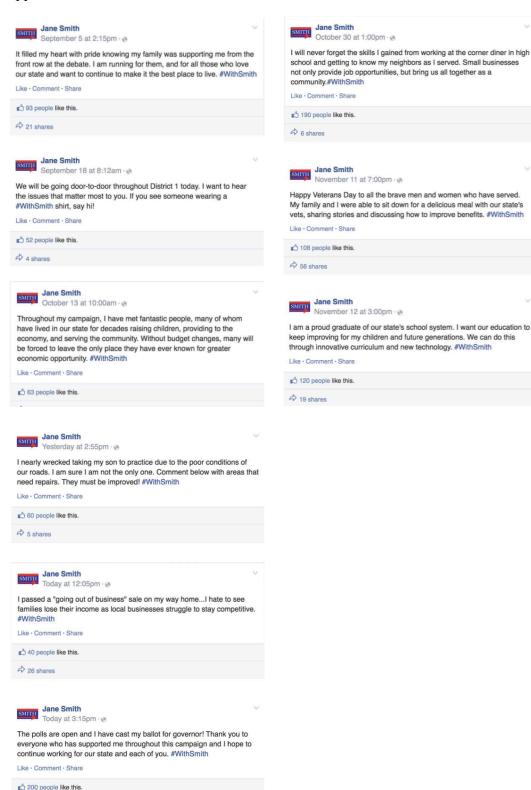September 5 at 2:15pm · 🌐

Last night's debate is further proof that this campaign is focused on the issues most concerning the state and is ready to provide real and lasting solutions. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 93 people like this.

↪ 21 shares

John Smith
September 18 at 8:12am · 🌐

The campaign will be door knocking in District 1 today. Volunteers are ready to share the platform and learn more about the needs of the state's citizens. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 52 people like this.

↪ 4 shares

John Smith
October 13 at 10:00am · 🌐

The elderly, schools, veterans, roads...This is just a handful of issues being neglected under the current proposed budget. While cuts are necessary, they cannot target whole groups of citizens. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 63 people like this.

↪ 28 shares

John Smith
Yesterday at 2:55pm · 🌐

The state's budget must address the upkeep and expansion of interstates and highways. Improving infrastructure will improve safety and economic opportunity. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 60 people like this.

↪ 5 shares

John Smith
Today at 12:05pm · 🌐

Rebuilding the economy means removing barriers to job growth. As governor, new and existing businesses will thrive under strategic policy initiatives. Adapting to the 21st century is key to the state's success. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 40 people like this.

↪ 26 shares

John Smith
Today at 3:15pm · 🌐

Polls have officially opened. For voting information or to find polling locations, go to www.vote.org. Be informed and get out and vote. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 200 people like this.

↪ 78 shares

John Smith
October 30 at 1:00pm · 🌐

Small business owners are the backbone of all communities and they rely on community support to succeed. The state's policies must make opening new businesses possible and worthwhile. Legislation must encourage entrepreneurship. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 190 people like this.

↪ 6 shares

John Smith
November 11 at 7:00pm · 🌐

On this Veterans Day, funds must be allocated to improve the failing veteran programs. The rates of veteran unemployment are unacceptable and the current administration is not doing enough to serve these brave men and women. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 108 people like this.

↪ 56 shares

John Smith
November 12 at 3:00pm · 🌐

Every child in the state deserves access to a quality education. New education policies must make standards competitive with other states and increase graduation rates. Improved curriculum and technology support schools and the state's future. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 120 people like this.

↪ 19 shares

Appendix B: Jane/Personal Posts

Jane Smith
September 5 at 2:15pm · 🌐

It filled my heart with pride knowing my family was supporting me from the front row at the debate. I am running for them, and for all those who love our state and want to continue to make it the best place to live. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 93 people like this.

↪ 21 shares

Jane Smith
September 18 at 8:12am · 🌐

We will be going door-to-door throughout District 1 today. I want to hear the issues that matter most to you. If you see someone wearing a #WithSmith shirt, say hi!

Like · Comment · Share

👍 52 people like this.

↪ 4 shares

Jane Smith
October 13 at 10:00am · 🌐

Throughout my campaign, I have met fantastic people, many of whom have lived in our state for decades raising children, providing to the economy, and serving the community. Without budget changes, many will be forced to leave the only place they have ever known for greater economic opportunity. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 63 people like this.

Jane Smith
Yesterday at 2:55pm · 🌐

I nearly wrecked taking my son to practice due to the poor conditions of our roads. I am sure I am not the only one. Comment below with areas that need repairs. They must be improved! #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 60 people like this.

↪ 5 shares

Jane Smith
Today at 12:05pm · 🌐

I passed a "going out of business" sale on my way home...I hate to see families lose their income as local businesses struggle to stay competitive. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 40 people like this.

↪ 26 shares

Jane Smith
Today at 3:15pm · 🌐

The polls are open and I have cast my ballot for governor! Thank you to everyone who has supported me throughout this campaign and I hope to continue working for our state and each of you. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 200 people like this.

↪ 78 shares

Jane Smith
October 30 at 1:00pm · 🌐

I will never forget the skills I gained from working at the corner diner in high school and getting to know my neighbors as I served. Small businesses not only provide job opportunities, but bring us all together as a community.#WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 190 people like this.

↪ 6 shares

Jane Smith
November 11 at 7:00pm · 🌐

Happy Veterans Day to all the brave men and women who have served. My family and I were able to sit down for a delicious meal with our state's vets, sharing stories and discussing how to improve benefits. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 108 people like this.

↪ 56 shares

Jane Smith
November 12 at 3:00pm · 🌐

I am a proud graduate of our state's school system. I want our education to keep improving for my children and future generations. We can do this through innovative curriculum and new technology. #WithSmith

Like · Comment · Share

👍 120 people like this.

↪ 19 shares

Appendix C: Instruction checks

What was the candidate's campaign hashtag?

○ WinSmith

○ WithSmith

○ WinWithSmith

What holiday does the candidate reference in a post?

○ Veterans Day

○ Christmas

○ Memorial Day

What campaign event did the candidate reference in a post?

○ Townhall Meeting

○ Debate

○ Meet and Greet

What is the candidate's gender?

○ Male

○ Female

The candidate is running for which office?

○ House of Representatives

○ Governor

○ City Council

Appendix D: Manipulation Check

Please rank on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree, your opinion on the following statements. Please read each individual statement carefully.

	1.Strongly disagree	2.Disagree	3.Somewhat disagree	4.Neither agree or disagree	5.Somewhat agree	6.Agree	7.Strongly agree
He used first-person language.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He made references to family.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He included colorful language and adjectives.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He posted about campaign issues.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He relayed personal anecdotes in posts.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The tone of the posts was mostly informational.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix E: Personability and trustworthiness indexes

Now that you have read all of the candidate's Facebook posts, please rank on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree, your opinion on the following statements. Please read each individual statement carefully.

	1.Strongly disagree	2.Disagree	3.Somewhat disagree	4.Neither agree nor disagree	5.Somewhat agree	6.Agree	7.Strongly agree
He understands the needs of people like me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He is un-interested in his constituents' concerns.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He is engaged with the public.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He seems like a natural, down-to-earth person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He seemed to speak directly to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He is interested in making good public policy.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He provides information that can be trusted.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He would use good judgment in a crisis.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He does not seem to understand the kinds of things I want to know.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
He seems qualified to make decisions as governor.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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