UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE EFFECTS OF INTERACTIONAL IDENTITY TRAITS (GENDER, PARTISANSHIP, AND VETERAN STATUS) ON CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS AND ELECTORATE VOTING BEHAVIORS IN U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

MARIA SHPEER
Norman, Oklahoma
2023

Downloaded from SHAREOK. Persistent Handle URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11244/337539

THE EFFECTS OF INTERACTIONAL IDENTITY TRAITS (GENDER, PARTISANSHIP, AND VETERAN STATUS) ON CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS AND ELECTORATE VOTING BEHAVIORS IN U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Ioana A. Cionea, Chair

Dr. Lindsey Meeks

Dr. Ryan Bisel

Dr. Meta Carstarphen

© Copyright by MARIA SHPEER 2023
All Rights Reserved.

DEDICATION

To my family.

You are my main source of inspiration.

Thank you for patiently and lovingly supporting me throughout this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation project is a fruit of my academic pursuits, and, although at times this road was uneasy and quite rocky, it certainly had some unexpected twists and turns. My professional career was outlined by my family long before I was born – I was supposed to be a doctor, a safe choice for a second-generation immigrant kid. But, ironically, I inherited a great deal of stubbornness from my parents, which then led me to quit medical school and seek an undergraduate degree in International Relations at Ural Federal University.

At first, my parents were (no surprise here) furious, so it was hard not to question my sanity. But I was lucky enough to meet wonderful instructors and mentors that introduced me to politics and international relations. Professor Dmitry Pobedash and my undergraduate academic advisor, Professor Yuri Kiryakov, not only taught me about U.S. politics and media, but also helped me develop crucial critical thinking skills and passion for science and research. I also want to thank Professor Katerina Shushmarchenko for a great deal of support throughout those four years. I absolutely loved your classes and use some of your instructional practices in the classroom with my very own undergraduate students.

During my time at Saint Petersburg State University, Professor Natalia Tsvetkova taught me about the value of academic inquiry, which made me determined to ask questions and seek answers as means to make sense of the world around me. Professor Tsvetkova, you are a role model for me, thank you for encouraging us to work on research papers and for suggesting seeking funding for studying abroad. Your classes were always engaging - somehow, you just made the learning process fun and easy. To a great extent, this led me to pursue my doctoral degree at the University of Oklahoma (OU).

Due to a lucky coincidence, I joined OU's doctoral program in Communication, where I made another switch from international relations and politics to the communication discipline but did not entirely abandon my previous studies. I transformed my undergraduate research interests into something new and complex by blending politics, culture, and gender as my doctoral research agenda. Truth is, Dr. Ioana Cionea, my doctoral advisor, played a significant role in shaping who I am today as a person, an instructor, and a researcher. Dr. Cionea is a very kind and, at the same time, firm advisor. You are one of my greatest supporters and, at the same time, toughest critics. You push me like (almost) no one else does, and I really appreciate that. #TeamCionea

I also wanted to sincerely thank Dr. Lindsey Meeks, Dr. Ryan Bisel, and Dr. Meta Carstarphen for believing in this project and supporting me throughout this journey. I said it once, and I will say it again – you are my greatest cheerleaders and nothing less but my dream committee. I really appreciate all the conversations we had about my dissertation project. Your unique understanding of the context and your thoughtful suggestions allowed me to re-configure some of the initial ideas and strengthen the design of this study. It has been a great honor to be learning from you.

I would also like to thank my wonderful parents, Inna and Evgeniy, for their patience, love, and support throughout these years. To my grannies, Ida and Frida, I miss you and hope that I made you proud.

To my husband, Liam, who watched all the new episodes of *Ted Lasso*, *Last of Us*, and *You* without me while I was working on the dissertation, I love you. You are my rock; I am really grateful that fate brought us together. Thank you for taking care of me and the pups, I truly appreciate everything you've done for me over these years.

Finally, a big thanks to all the good friends from Norman, Lexington, Chicago/San-Diego, and Lubbock that helped me along the way with this process.

Note: Data collection for the dissertation was possible thanks to a research fellowship awarded to me by the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences. Thank you for your support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication……. iv

Acknowledgments…… v

Table of Contents ……. viii

List of Tables…… xi

Abstract…… xii

Chapter 1: Introduction……. 1

Chapter 2: Voting Behaviors……. 19

Factors Influencing Voting Behaviors…… 20

Candidate Gender…… 21

Gendered Norms and Social Expectations…….. 23

Gender Stereotypes…….. 28

Gender and Politics……. 36

Effects of Gender in U.S. Congressional Elections…… 40

Candidate Partisanship…… 42

The U.S. Bi-Partisan Political System……. 43

Candidate Veteran Status…… 54

Military Culture…….. 54

Veteran Candidates…… 59

Theoretical Framework……... 69

Scholarship on Voting Behaviors……90

Outcomes of the Voting Process for Political Candidates…….. 104

Additional Influences on Voting Behaviors…… 114

Chapter 3: Pilot Study: Mailers Realism Assessment ……. 124

Participants……... 124

Procedures…… 126

Measures…….. 127

Data Analysis……... 129

Findings…… 136

Discussion…… 144

Chapter 4: Main Study Method and Results……. 149

Participants……... 149

Procedures…… 151

Measures…….. 153

Data Analysis……... 157

Results…….. 158

Chapter 5: Main Study Discussion…… 183

The Effects of Gender on Candidate Evaluations…… 185

The Effects of Partisanship on Candidate Evaluations…… 189

The Effects of Veteran Status on Candidate Evaluations…… 193

Interaction Effects of Gender, Partisanship, and Veteran Status on Candidate Evaluations…….…….. 193

What Predicts Vote Choice Intent for A Candidate? …….. 194

The Mediating Effects of Candidate Evaluations on Vote Choice Intent for A Candidate…….…… 195

Communicative Behaviors and Attitudes and their Effects on Voter Evaluations.. 197

Theoretical Implications…….. 198

Practical Implications…….…….. 201

Limitations…….……. 204

Directions for Future Research…… 206

Conclusion…….……. 209

References…… 211

Appendix A: Pilot Study Survey ……. 287

Appendix B: Main Study Survey……. 300

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sample Characteristics for Pilot Study: Prolific Sample ……..…. 125

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Mailer Realism Scale……. 132

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Mailer Realism Scale, Each Item per Mailer ……..… 132

Table 4. Sample Characteristics for the Main Study: Prolific Sample …… 150

Table 5. CFA Model Fit Results…….. 161

Table 6. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability Scores for Study Variables……. 162

Table 7. Correlations for Likability, Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Vote Choice Intent……164

Table 8. Mean Differences for Trust in Government Based on Race ……. 165

Table 9. Mean Differences for Trust in Government and Benevolent Sexism Based on Education …….. 166

Table 10. Mean Differences for Political Participation, Benevolent Sexism, and Hostile Sexism Based on Political Ideology ……. 167

Table 11. Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Gender …… 173

Table 12. Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Partisanship …… 175

Table 13. Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Veteran Status …… 175

Table 14. Direct and Indirect Effects of Gender on Vote Choice Intent through Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Likability……... 178

Table 15. Direct and Indirect Effects of Partisanship on Vote Choice Intent through Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Likability…… 180

Table 16. Direct and Indirect Effects of Veteran Status on Vote Choice Intent through Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Likability……. 182

ABSTRACT

Every year, the political candidates who run in the U.S. congressional elections become more and more diverse; there are more women, more veterans, more members of ethnic group minorities in Congress. Political candidates are complex in their identity and what they portray to the electorate. This dissertation examined how candidates' identity traits (i.e., gender, partisanship, and veteran status) and their interaction affect how voters evaluate such candidates, and the effects such evaluations have on voting behaviors. A pilot study (*N* = 184 U.S. adult participants) was conducted to develop experimental stimuli. Then, a main study (*N* = 404 U.S. adult participants) with a 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (partisanship: Republican vs. Democrat) x 2 (veteran status: veteran vs. non-veteran) between-subjects factorial design was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses.

Results indicated that female candidates and Democratic candidates were evaluated by participants as higher on competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability compared to male candidates and Republican candidates. Additional mediation analyses showed that competence and likability mediated the relationships between gender and vote choice intent and between partisanship and vote choice intent. The discussion expands on these findings and their theoretical and practical implications, acknowledging the study's limitations, while also proposing several lines for future research.

Keywords: political communication, gender, politics, identity, elections, voting behaviors.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Democracy is impossible to achieve without successful communication. Communication is at the heart of deliberations, negotiations, developing legislations, and even elections. Elections are remarkable processes that involve political campaigns and are focused on highlighting candidates' strengths or downplaying their weakness to sway the electorate into casting the ballot for the nominees. Thus, political campaigns, ultimately, can define how American citizens are governed. More so, political campaigns serve as a cornerstone of United States democracy, helping to support existing structures and regulations present in the American political system.

There are several types of elections in the United States. The most common elections are held at the federal, state, and municipal levels (U.S. Government, n.d.). Elections can sometimes be focused on presenting the nominated candidate in a positive light at all levels of governmental offices (e.g., federal, state, local). Therefore, these carefully crafted campaigns attempt to communicate reasons why political candidates are a good fit for office (i.e., explain why the candidates are electable), many of which are rooted in a candidate's identity traits and characteristics (e.g., personal, professional, etc.).

Candidates portray their identity in political campaigns by implementing various complex communication strategies. By doing so, candidates may initiate a process of co-construction of meaning, which could involve different types of stakeholders (i.e., politicians, political campaign managers, and the electorate). Therefore, communication is at the heart of political campaigns. It is important to examine how candidates communicate their identity to audiences to learn more about how voters perceive and respond to such identity traits and characteristics of political

candidates. Such knowledge can help enrich political communication research and can provide practical implications for identity displays and portrayals of political candidates.

There are multiple opportunities for voters in the United States to engage with political candidates and express their preferences in various elections. Voters in the U.S. presidential elections choose the next president and vice president every four years via the Electoral College. Presidential elections, however, are unique in that citizens' popular vote does not determine the ultimate decision of who the president and vice president will be. Political parties in each U.S. state make up their list of potential electors. A candidate in a presidential election needs more than half of the electors' votes to win. Currently, there are 435 U.S. representatives and 100 U.S. senators from the 50 U.S. states, as well as three members from the District of Columbia, resulting in 538 potential electors (U.S. Government, n.d.).

During congressional elections, voters decide who will stand for their state in Congress. The results of such elections also determine whether Republicans or Democrats will hold a majority vote in Congress (U.S. Government, n.d.). Congressional elections are held every two years and cast candidates by a popular vote. Congressional nominees are political candidates running for positions in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Thus, there are significant differences in the electoral processes between presidential and congressional elections. These differences are crucial, given that the U.S. government is formed of three branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) that support democracy and ensure the balance of power is in place—that is, no political party, interest group, or person concentrates too much authority in their hands (U.S. Government, n.d.).

While the recent presidential race of the 2020 election cycle attracted the eyes of many and was the primary focus of news media, this election was also marked by several high-profile

tight congressional races (Foreman, 2022). Specifically, for both the U.S. Senate (Senate hereafter) and the U.S. House of Representatives (House hereafter), the margin of victory for congressional races in 2020 was less than ten percentage points in 89 races, and five percentage points or less for 42 races (Ballotpedia, 2021). For example, one of the tightest elections for the U.S. House in 2020 was in California (25th congressional district), where Republican and U.S. Navy veteran Mike Garcia ran against Democrat Christy Smith and won the election by a slim margin of 0.10 percentage points (Ballotpedia, 2021). Another notable example for the U.S. House was the race in Iowa (2nd congressional district), where Republican candidate and U.S. Army veteran Marianne Miller-Meeks won against Democrat Rita Hart by a margin of only six votes, which was reportedly the tightest margin in the history of U.S. House elections since 1984 (Ballotpedia, 2021).

Thus, many of the 2020 U.S. congressional races were highly competitive. They also involved a variety of candidates, such as male and female veteran candidates. Specifically, the Pew Research Center (2021) indicated that 27% percent or 144 seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate belong to women, which is an overwhelming 50% increase since 2011. According to the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP, 2022), this number has increased by 0.5% in the 2022 congressional elections, in which women occupy 147 of 535 seats. According to Military Times (Shane III, 2023), the 118th Congress currently includes 97 veterans that represent 36 states (80 veteran-candidates elected to the House, and 17 veterans who are now a part of the Senate), which is a slight one percent increase since the previous year - from 17 percent up to 18 percent of veterans now occupy seats in Congress. To be precise, 2022 highlights an increase in the number of veterans who were elected to Congress since 1965 (Shane III, 2023). These numbers are projected to increase in the future (Veterans Campaign,

2022). Based on these considerations, congressional elections and the types of candidates that run for office in such elections are a worthwhile focus of further analysis.

This dissertation will do so, focusing on congressional elections, as the outcome of such elections decide which political party controls the U.S. Congress. According to the Pew Research Center (2022), approximately 63% of registered U.S. adult voters argue that control over Congress "really matters" (n.p.). Furthermore, Congress plays a crucial role in delineating political issue importance and deciding the future of the United States. The profile of congressional candidates has been changing. Every year, U.S. politics becomes more diverse since many candidates with interactional identities run for political offices. Thus, there is nowadays more diversity in respect to their identities, such as gender, background, and so on (Bejarano et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important to examine further U.S. congressional elections given their importance and changes in candidates that may reveal new knowledge about how such elections unfold. Scholars need to look beyond how candidates communicate surface identity characteristics to voters and include more identity facets that have not been studied extensively in previous research. Examining how politicians are able to construe their image based on multiple overlapping identity characteristics is important for understanding and predicting the outcome of upcoming U.S. elections in which such candidates-politicians are running for Congress. To this end, this dissertation will focus on three identity characteristics of congressional candidates: their gender, their partisanship, and their veteran status, and examine how interactional effects of these identity characteristics impact voting behaviors and attitudes, namely voter evaluations.

The types of candidates who seek office also differ in other respects. In general, there are two types of political candidates in an election: incumbent candidates and challengers (non-

incumbent candidates). Although this dissertation does not focus on incumbency, the importance of candidates' incumbency should be noted as a factor that can potentially influence perceptions of the candidates and the electorate's voting behaviors. Incumbent candidates are those who ran in a previous election cycle, won, and currently occupy the seat, whereas challengers (non-incumbents) can be candidates who ran in the previous election and lost; or new candidates who did not participate in the previous election and are now running for the first time. Communicating about incumbency status in one's political campaign may yield neutral, positive, or negative effects on how voters may think about the political candidates (Shair-Rosenfield & Hinojosa, 2014). Positive effects of incumbency for political candidates entail being frequently nominated, gaining more resources and being perceived as more qualified as a candidate, something that Shair-Rosenfield and Hinojosa (2014) refer to it as "reputational advantages that come with being an incumbent" (p. 837). The vice versa also applies, in that negative effects of incumbency signal to party leadership that the candidate is less qualified, meaning that the challenger will be nominated less often, and receive less funding.

Typically, runners who seek re-election are in a better position than challengers (Keefe & Ogul, 1992; Prior, 2006) and have a more positive public image due to numerous benefits that stem from their status. As a result, the electorate may view incumbent candidates more favorably and better prepared to handle their responsibilities compared to non-incumbent candidates. In turn, non-incumbent candidates may struggle to capture voters' attention and support. Challengers may be prone to various obstacles, including some related to their identity characteristics (e.g., personality traits, gender, party affiliation, partisanship, past work experience, stance on political issues) that could affect voter evaluations (see Carroll, 1994; Seltzer et al., 1997; Shair-Rosenfield & Hinojosa, 2014).

The U.S. electorate may also have preconceived beliefs about candidates' gender and partisanship. Politics is traditionally viewed as a male domain, and female politicians must often work hard to challenge these social stereotypes and make a name for themselves (Gershon, 2012). These processes mainly occur because female politicians are often attributed feminine traits, such as being compassionate or emotional (see, for example, Dolan & Sanbonmatsu, 2011), which translates into them being portrayed in the media as experts in "women's political issues" (e.g., healthcare, education, women's rights; Meeks, 2012). This, in turn, signals to audiences that female politicians may not be able to handle other political issues, such as external affairs, crime, or the economy, properly. Dolan (2004) also argues that voters similarly assess both female and male candidates through a prism of their partisanship, ideology, and incumbency. Scholarship has demonstrated that female politicians are viewed as more liberal than male politicians (Koch, 2002; McDermott, 1997), but this stereotype may hurt moderate and conservative female politicians as they may be perceived as not being sufficiently moderate or conservative. Thus, stereotypes related to candidates' gender and partisanship may influence the way voters perceive candidates and, therefore, may have an impact on how the electorate cast their ballots in an election.

There is la growing body of research that examines the interaction of both stereotypes (gender and partisanship) that apply to political candidates in relationship to U.S. voting behaviors in elections. The studies that examine this phenomenon have yielded mixed findings (Brians, 2005; Dolan & Sanbonmatsu, 2011; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Huddy & Capelos, 2002; Lizotte, 2017; Matland & King, 2002; Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2008). For example, a study by Lawless and Pearson (2008) argued that female candidates seeking office in congressional elections may encounter more competition in primary races than male candidates due to the

gender bias that permeates our society. Scholars also claim that female Republican candidates who run for primary elections in Congress have less success than female Democrat candidates, which exemplifies the effects of double-barrel or double-bind stereotypes (Dolan & Sanbonmatsu, 2011; Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2008).

Double-barrel stereotypes are unique in their complexity, and they result from several overlapping stereotypes that interlace and activate at the same time. Dolan (2010) refers to double-barrel stereotypes as intersectional identity stereotypes and describes them as a "combination of more than one stereotype that together produce something unique and distinct from any one form of stereotyping standing alone" (p. 71). Stereotypes about a candidate's partisanship may interlace with stereotypes about the candidate's gender, and result in a complex stereotype that combines these two factors (gender and partisanship). Consequently, female Republicans and female Democrats are viewed differently because they are subjected to slightly different stereotypes. For example, female Democrats are perceived to be more liberal than male Democrat candidates (Dolan & Sanbonmatsu, 2011). Another example that demonstrates this tendency is that Republican voters may judge female Republicans harsher compared to how Democrat voters typically judge female Democrats (Bratton, 2004).

To illustrate the effects of this double-barrel stereotype further, political communication scholars have identified a gender gap related to political campaigns' funding that demonstrates the challenges female candidates may face while building donor networks and raising campaign funds versus male candidates (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Thomsen & Swers, 2017). These factors are crucial, since lack of funding may influence the quality and the scale of one's political campaign, which may have significant effects on the electoral outcome for political candidates.

For example, Barber et al. (2016) argue that, in some cases, female candidates, in general, may raise approximately 80 - 125 percent less funding than male candidates.

Current literature posits that gender, political partisanship, and even the type of donors [individual donors, political action committees (PACs), super PACs, or their respective political party] may play a role in what amount of money a political candidate may raise, which partially explains this gender gap in campaign fundraising. Thus, gender stereotypes, in part, illustrate the relationship between gender and partisanship for political candidates, and also show that the gender gap may have serious effects on voting behaviors. If a candidate's political campaign does not receive enough funding, then it may be less advertised, and, as a result, less salient for voters. Ultimately, this aspect may lead to voters being less politically knowledgeable and engaged (Alexander, 2005; Hansen & Pedersen, 2014; Jacobson, 1990), which, in turn, can make some political candidates appear as less electable and influence the outcome of an election, in general.

The gender and partisanship of political candidates may also affect fundraising. Thomsen and Swers (2017) found that female Democrat donors donated more often to female Democrat political candidates; likewise, male Democrat donors often preferred to fund male Democrat candidates over female Democrats. The authors argue that female Democrats are elected more often and viewed more positively by female Democrat donors, whereas Republican donors do not necessarily consider the gender of the candidate when making their fundraising decisions. A similar account was reported by Francia (2001), further extending this argument from individual donors to PACs that often favor Democratic candidates over Republican candidates. Such findings highlight that Democratic female candidates may benefit from their gender and partisanship in comparison to female Republican candidates.

The above-mentioned examples show that several factors may decide the fate of political candidates who run for congressional office. While many of these factors have been studied in isolation, there is a clear need to examine how some of these political candidates' overlapping identity aspects function together to understand further the electorate's voting behaviors.

To be successful, candidates who seek political office in the United States may choose to highlight or emphasize certain traits to present themselves in a positive light and potentially increase their likelihood of electability. For example, some candidates may use their age, gender, ethnic and racial background (Santia & Bauer, 2022), partisanship, professional experience, religion, or even military service strategically (Hardy et al., 2019; McDermott & Panagopoulos, 2015; Richardson, 2022; Teigen, 2013) to gain more voter support. According to McDermott and Panagopoulos (2015), former military service is a factor that can influence voter behaviors during elections.

Being a military veteran means being a highly trained professional who embodies traits essential for someone who aspires to serve as a public official. For example, veterans are viewed as individuals with attributes such as "outstanding leadership experience in the face of adversity, [and] familiarity with a broad cross-section of American society..." as well as "willingness to put America and its citizens before their own well-being" (McDermott, 2016, p. 293). Some may say that the abovementioned attributes make political candidates seem and be "qualified" to perform their duties successfully based on beliefs and stereotypes about veterans. For example, Hardy et al. (2019) found that veteran candidates were perceived as better at handling issues of foreign policy and terrorism compared with civilian candidates, regardless of their party identification. Therefore, some voters may distinguish military veterans as highly qualified political candidates and cast their ballots for them.

Furthermore, candidates may choose to highlight a combination of their traits and identities (two or more at the same time) to appear more likeable, such as, for example, their gender and ethnicity. Santia and Bauer (2022) examined how Latina political candidates considered their gender and ethnic background simultaneously in order to tailor political messages strategically. One of the reasons these political candidates chose to highlight both their gender and ethnicity was due to the social stereotypes that cast positive associations onto these factors. Specifically, being a female politician is often associated with amicability and more outgoing communication styles as well as the ability to handle successfully political issues perceived to be associated with women (i.e., women's rights, healthcare, education; Dolan, 2014; Meeks, 2012, 2021). Being a Latina political candidate indicates a personal approach to relationship-building, a commitment to representing multiple social groups, a desire to connect and build community, as well as an ability to handle racial and ethnic issues, among other positive traits (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Fraga et al., 2007; Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Sampaio, 2019; Towner & Clawson, 2016). Thus, this study showed that, when Latina candidates emphasized both their gender and their ethnicity, their candidacy was more appealing among female minority political voters (Santia & Bauer, 2022). So, a combination of several factors can be used strategically by political candidates to appear more likeable and sway voters' behaviors in a desired direction. However, using compound social stereotypes strategically is more complicated, and may not always be viewed positively by the electorate. Thus, it is important to investigate this issue further and examine connections between various factors (and combinations of factors) that may explain current trends in how U.S. voters engage with political candidates in elections.

Statistics on political candidates and gender in the United States explain several such trends in U.S. politics. Even though American policymaking may still be perceived primarily as a male domain, the Women & Politics Institute (2023) argues that the 2020 U.S. vice-presidential and congressional elections were ground-breaking for women. Specifically, female politicians made history with the election of Kamala Harris as the U.S. vice president and a remarkable 141 women who were projected to win the election and serve in the 117th Congress (CAWP, 2020). What is more, fast-forward to 2023, Congress currently accounts for 150 congresswomen which makes up to 28% of the Congress out of the 535 total seats, which is a notable increase since 2020 (CAWP, 2023). As a result of the 2023 congressional elections, the U.S. House accounts for 125 congresswomen, and the Senate accounts for 25 female senators (CAWP, 2023).

In contrast, according to CAWP (2020), women constituted only 23.2% of the U.S. House and 26% of the U.S. Senate in the 2020 election, with the number of women serving in the U.S. Senate decreasing from 26 female candidates in 2019 to only 24 in 2020. These numbers highlight not only general patterns that reflect changes in the numbers of women seeking seats at all levels of political cabinets (local, state, and federal) or competing against other women, but also seeking political office for a second time, following the last electoral defeat (Women & Politics Institute, 2023).

Furthermore, candidates' partisanship also played a significant role in the 2020 U.S. elections on both the presidential and congressional levels, in combination with a candidate's gender. Six Democratic female candidates sought the presidential seat, including four U.S. senators, one author, and one female military veteran. At the congressional level, Republican female candidates broke a record previously set in 2010, with 17 political candidate-challengers

who ran against the incumbent candidates for the U.S. House and won (CAWP, 2020). The 2020 U.S. House election was also marked by an impressive win of 89 female Democrats, which was a record at that time (note: this number shows a slight improvement for 2022 elections with 91 female Democrats and 32 female Republicans). At the same time, out of seven female candidate-challengers who were elected to the U.S. Senate in 2020, only two were Democrats, whereas five were Republicans. With Democrat Kamala Harris, who left the U.S. Senate to seek vice-presidency, and 17 incumbent female candidates who did not seek re-election, this number resulted in 16 female Democrats and only eight female Republicans. These data reflect vital shifts that are happening in society, and show that political candidates' gender is not the only variable that can potentially sway voters' perceptions, and, ultimately, determine candidates' electability. Other identity traits can account for these differences, and it is important to study these traits as a combination of factors rather than single variables isolated from each other.

Indeed, a vast body of scholarly research has examined political candidates' gender or partisanship as two major factors that significantly influence candidates' electability. For instance, Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2008) have examined how political candidates' gender and partisanship interacted to influence the outcome of an election. Scholarship that looks beyond candidates' gender and partisanship primarily focuses on the racial or ethnic background of candidates. However, there are a few notable exceptions that highlight other social identity traits of political candidates as well that go beyond gender, partisanship, race, and ethnicity. For example, Doan and Haider-Markel (2010) studied connections between candidates' gender and their sexuality and voters' perceptions. Moreover, voters often view political candidates as more than binary categories: not solely as males and females, or Republicans and Democrats (Bejarano et al., 2021; Brown & Gershon, 2016, 2017; Gershon, 2012; Gershon et al., 2019). Humans are

complex. Thus, political candidates are viewed by the electorate as people with unique personalities and interactional identities, and their political campaigns are crafted by political consultants and professionals to reflect these perceptions. Consequently, voters perceive political candidates as individuals possessing many overlapping identity traits: age, gender, party affiliation, partisanship, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, relationship status, work experience, incumbency, and other identity aspects (Brown & Lemi, 2021).

In addition to gender and partisanship, veteran status is also an identity worth exploring further. U.S. veterans belong to a distinctive social category, as veterans' communicative behaviors are governed by military culture (Dunivin, 1994), which separates them from the rest of political candidates that run for Congress. Richardson (2022) argues that former military service presents an electoral advantage for both male and female candidates; however, female veteran candidates may benefit from it more than male veteran candidates given that female veterans are the only demographic category to reach descriptive representation in the U.S. Congress. Most importantly, though, studying veteran status brings important contributions. Military communication is a nascent field of studies, where communication scholars-veterans explicitly state that they cannot see themselves in the scholarship about veterans (Hunniecutt, 2020). Current military communication studies show that social reintegration is challenging for military veterans (Howe, 2022). Hence, research on veterans who run as political candidates in Congress will not only help expand the scholarship on this topic, but also help civilians learn about veterans as highly functional professionals. Presenting former servicemembers in a new light (not only as a victim or a charity case) may aid in diminishing stereotypical media portrayals of veterans that may have negative consequences for this population (McCormick et al., 2019; Parrott et al., 2022; Phillips et al., 2020).

Furthermore, veterans are members of marginalized populations that are often overlooked in the scholarly literature. Although, veterans tend to be an invisible minority (Best et al., 2021), the presence of veterans in the United States and in U.S. politics grows each year (Collens, 2020; Doherty et al., 2022; Goggin et al., 2020; Hardy et al., 2019; McDermott & Panagopoulos, 2015; McLaughlin et al., 2022; Teigen, 2007, 2013, 2018), which is why this unique population needs to be investigated further. For example, as mentioned above, veterans can be viewed as highly efficient professionals and leaders, which can be appealing to voters and may have a positive impact on voting behaviors.

Finally, the United States is a global power that is currently involved in a number of international conflicts (e.g., Syria, Somalia, Yemen). It is also a part of several international organizations (e.g., NATO, UN) that require USAID disbursement, (in)direct involvement, or intervention to mitigate the consequences of these global conflicts (e.g., Ukraine, Ethiopia, Taiwan, Afghanistan, Iran). Therefore, there is a growing demand for political candidates with military background who can address these challenges. Teigen (2013) supports this point by claiming that military veterans tend to be perceived as more successful at handing issues such as national security and defense compared to non-veterans.

According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (as cited in Pew Research Center, 2021), there were approximately 19 million U.S. veterans in 2020, which accounts for almost 10% of the total U.S. adult population. Out of these, 182 veterans sought office in the 2020 U.S. congressional election in 162 House and Senate races (74 veteran candidates celebrated victory while 83 lost the race), which shows a slight increase in numbers since the 2018 U.S. congressional election (Shane III, 2020). According to Military Times (Shane III, 2023), for the first time since 1965, the number of veterans in Congress improved – voters elected 97 veterans-

members of Congress who represent 36 states (80 veteran-candidates elected to the House, and 17 veterans who are now a part of the Senate). Yet, veterans constitute only 18% of Congress (Military Times, 2023). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the overall veteran population is decreasing, according to U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (2023)—from 2000 to 2020 the average decrease for veterans was approximately 26.3% at the state level (from 26.4 million to 19 million veterans). In part, the decrease in the number of veterans can be explained by the fact that the United States no longer drafts soldiers (i.e., there is no active-duty service), and the U.S. military is now a fully voluntary service.

Furthermore, many congressional candidates are incumbent and, thus, have a higher chance of being re-elected due to media and voter support (Richardson, 2022). However, the scholarship that shows the connection between congressional candidates' incumbency and veteran status is very limited; therefore, such claims need to be examined further. As far as public opinion goes, veteran candidates are often viewed favorably: "There's some great veterans running … in seats that people wouldn't have thought are winnable, but may end up winnable because of the strength of the candidates there…" (USC Annenberg Media, 2022, n. p.).

In addition, there are several other major changes in current social trends related to veterans in the U.S., apart from the number of veterans in politics. U.S. veteran political candidates are becoming more diverse. The idea of traditional "straight, white, native-born cisgender male" (Bradford, 2021, p. 4) veteran political candidate clashes with the new generation of veterans who now run for office. These new social tendencies reflect changes in the age, gender, and partisanship of new veteran political candidates. The average age of veteran candidates is changing, as some of the older veterans may be retiring from Congress (Shane III,

2022). The average age of the veteran candidates who sought political office in the Congress is declining (Pew Research Center, 2022). Thus, the age of a typical veteran political candidates in the 2020 congressional election decreased compared to the past. Military Times (Shane III, 2023) also expand this idea by emphasizing that out of the 97 veterans who are currently in Congress, approximately 60 obtained their military service at some point during the 2000s.

Furthermore, women veteran political candidates made history in the 2020 election by doubling the major party nominations since the 2018 election, with 24 female candidates running for the U.S. House office and four for the U.S. Senate. The 2020 congressional election was also marked by an increase in veteran Republicans seeking office (Shane III, 2020), with 121 primaries winners as compared to only 60 veteran Democrat candidates who won primaries (Veterans Campaign, 2020). Military Times (Shane III, 2023) also reported that the Congress now accounts for seven female veterans – it is currently the largest number of female veteran politicians in Congress, which represents an important achievement for female veterans. Thus, the military veteran status of a political candidate is a unique identity trait because it may not be as visible to the audience and voters as some other identity traits (e.g., age, gender, or ethnic/ racial background). Nevertheless, military culture may have a significant impact on the lives of veteran political candidates and, consequently, those who vote for them.

In sum, further research that accounts for political candidates' unique interactional identities is needed to understand better the processes mentioned above since scholarship that examines military veteran culture in the context of political candidacies and political partisanship is limited (e.g., Hardy et al., 2019). Furthermore, overall changes in U.S. society call for more research to be conducted to examine the combination of various identity factors (gender, political affiliation, veteran status) and their role in elections.

This dissertation will examine the effects of interactional political candidates' identities—gender, political partisanship, and veteran status—on voting behaviors in the context of U.S. congressional elections. Specifically, this dissertation proposes a 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (partisanship: Republican vs. Democrat) x 2 (veteran status: veteran vs. non-veteran) experimental design that will entail eight hypothetical political campaign messages in the form of mailers in which a candidate running for Congress is depicted. The goal of the study is to examine the relationships between the hypothetical congressional candidates' interactional identities (i.e., gender, partisanship, and veteran status) and voting evaluations and behaviors (the perceived likability, competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill of the candidate, as well as the electorate's vote choice intent for the candidate depicted), while considering the effects of appropriate covariates (e.g., demographic information such as age, race/ethnicity but also communicative behaviors and attitudes such a trust in government and sexist attitudes, which have been found to affect voters' perceptions).

In the following chapters, I provide an overview of scholarship on gender in the context of the U.S. elections, partisanship and its role in congressional elections, veteran status and veteran political candidates, as well as scholarly literature on voting behaviors. I then explain the theoretical framework of social identity theory and the concept of interactional identities (informed by the notion of intersectionality) to explain the relationships between interactional identities of political candidates and voting behaviors. Research questions as well as hypotheses for the study will be presented at the end of the literature review, culminating the arguments made throughout that chapter. In chapter 3, I describe in detail the pilot study conducted to assess the stimuli for the main study, describing the pilot study's participants, procedures, measures, how the data analysis was conducted, then moving on to detailing the pilot study's findings, and

a discussion of how these findings informed changes made to the experimental stimuli for the main study. Chapter 4 contains detailed information about the main study participants, the procedures followed to conduct the experiment, the measures for all variables of interest in the main study. Then I explain the data analyses (both for preparing the data as well as for answering the study's proposed research question and testing the proposed hypotheses) and also present the main study results. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude the dissertation with a discussion of these findings and their implications, both theoretical and practical, as well as limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: VOTING BEHAVIORS

According to the Pew Research Center (2021), the 2020 presidential election was marked by a record number of ballots cast by voters, with roughly 158.4 million ballots, which was approximately seven percentage points more than in the 2016 election. The election showed high voter engagement and increased interest in the outcome of the elections, with approximately 56% percent of voters claiming to be more interested in politics compared to 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2020). The results of the 2020 U.S. Senate election aligned with votes cast in the 2020 U.S. Presidential election in terms of the distribution of votes by states (Pew Research Center, 2021). Another trend marked the 2020 U.S. House election, in which female voters were more likely to vote for Democratic candidates in both the House and the presidential election compared to male voters, who were more prone to support Republican candidates in both the House and the presidential election (Pew Research Center, 2021). Some of the political analyses report similar trends for the 2022 elections, in which female voters were fueled by the overturn of Roe vs. Wade, which led not only to an increase in voter turnout for female voters from both urban and suburban areas, but also to an increase in support for Democratic candidates (USA Today, 2022).

The top three political issues that concerned American registered voters going into the 2020 U.S. election were the economy (79%), healthcare (68%), and the Supreme Court nominee appointment (64%; Pew Research Center, 2020). The 2022 elections shifted some of these priorities. More specifically, according to Gallup (Saad, 2022), almost half of the respondents viewed the economy as extremely important (49%), followed by abortion (42%), crime (40%), gun policy (38%), immigration (37%), relations with Russia (31%), and climate change (26%).

Recent changes in the Supreme Court's componence and the Court's decisions, such as the one in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022) overturning Roe v. Wade (1973), may have changed the importance that Americans place on some of these political issues. For example, according to the Pew Research Center (2022), more than a half of the U.S. registered voters were very concerned about the issue of abortion on the brink of the 2022 congressional elections. About 71% of the left-leaning voters indicated a drastic concern with the Roe v. Wade decision being overturned. Additionally, gun control and rates of crime in the U.S. were among the top political issues that were salient for American voters in the upcoming election (Pew Research Center, 2022). Given all the above, emphasis on certain political issues as well as candidates' unique perspectives on these issues may inspire voter participation in elections as well as drive the electorate to cast their vote for one or another candidate, based on how some of these political issues (e.g., abortion, healthcare) are communicated by candidates.

In what follows, first, I will discuss several key independent factors that relate to voting behaviors, specifically, gender, partisanship, and veteran status of candidates. Then, I will introduce and talk about the theoretical framework that will help guide this dissertation, social identity theory. Third, I will describe the dependent variables of the dissertation, voter evaluations and vote choice intent. Finally, I will address possible covariates that will inform my research design.

Factors Influencing Voting Behaviors

In this section, I will examine some of the factors that may influence voting behaviors, namely, a candidate's gender, partisanship, and veteran status, which will be the three independent variables in this dissertation study, believed to affect voting behaviors. First, I will define what gender is, and what are some key differences between sex and gender, then I will

provide an overview of current literature that examines political candidates' gender identity and will clarify how social stereotypes may inform gender identification, thus, influencing the voting behaviors of individuals. Next, I will briefly define what partisanship is, explain the nature of the electoral process and bipartisan system in the United States, followed by a literature review on this topic. Finally, I will talk about veteran identity and clarify why military culture is different from civilian culture and what veteran status, as a social identity, entails for political candidates.

Candidate Gender

Gender is a socially constructed classification, formed through social interactions with others that label masculine and feminine social roles and behaviors. To clarify, gender informs our beliefs about genders and their roles as well as how individuals communicate with others based on the gender that the former assign to the latter or perceive the latter to be. Further, gender manifests in our social reality as communication patterns, behavior, and the character of our interactions with people around us. In the scholarly literature, gender is referred to as "a system of social practices within society that constitutes distinct, differential sex categories, sorts people into these categories, and organizes relations between people on the basis of the differences defined by their sex category" (Ridgeway, 2011, p. 9). In other words, gender is a complex multilayered phenomenon comprised of various characteristics that inform socially accepted ideas of masculinity and femininity and that allow categorizing people into these categories, based on the gendered characteristics. Thus, gender identity is a person's self-image that is related to the idea of maleness or femaleness embedded in the understanding of masculine and feminine social roles.

It is important to note the difference between the notions of sex and gender. Lips (2020) argues that scholars have previously used the concepts of gender and sex synonymously.

However, as time passed, these two notions became more separated. According to Schneider and Bos (2019), *sex* is a "chromosomal pattern that differentiates humans based on their reproductive functioning, often identified by outward features at birth" (p. 174). Further, sex has to do with one's physiology or physical body, which can also be referred to as "biological maleness or femaleness," or a person's height and muscularity (Lips, 2020, p. 7). Sex labels the biological evolution and human anatomy of individuals and it is more of a biological term, whereas gender is a societal construct. Although the concepts of sex and gender differ drastically, scholars argue that there is an overlap between these two ideas (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Specifically, Lips (2020) argues that it may be hard to separate observations about human physiology (one's body) from cultural expectations about male and female gender roles.

The characteristics of gender can have many facets: appearances, traits, roles, and behaviors more typical of men or women (Kachel et al., 2016). To name a few, there is a social belief that men ought to be tall, muscular, and flamboyant, whereas women are expected to be "ladylike," petite, and unassuming (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). Additionally, other manifestations of gender include the idea that women are expected to appear womanly, such as wear a dress, skirts, heels, and makeup. Men are expected to be well-groomed, have an accurate haircut, and wear pants or a suit to appear masculine. Clothing may construct one's gender identity: the way a person dresses and presents themselves communicates social cues about their gender (Palczewski et al., 2022). However, the social norms that define one's gender according to appearance and clothing may vary from culture to culture. For example, in many non-Western countries, wearing sarongs or gowns is socially acceptable and perceived as ordinary for men.

Scholarly research has examined some of the characteristics of gender that include but are not limited to such constructs as agency (i.e., the ability to exert power and have control over

one's behaviors), competence (i.e., being efficient due to a combination of factors, namely, one's skills, knowledge, and so on), warmth (i.e., kindness), expressivity (i.e., being expressive or being emotionally expressive), and other factors (Kachel et al., 2016). Further, gender is often viewed through a lens of the constructs mentioned above (i.e., agency, warmth, expressivity, etc.) that may inform behaviors associated with male or female genders. Specifically, existing scholarship has examined gender-role conformity associated with gender norms and the appropriateness of social norms depending on the gender they may apply to (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Fiske et al., 2002; Kachel et al., 2016; Spence & Buckner, 2000). The results of these studies show that, since the notion of gender is socially constructed, it is communicated in society through a variety of gendered norms and social expectations about gender, discussed next.

Gendered Norms and Social Expectations

Gendered norms and expectations towards gender are unwritten rules about men and women and their respective roles that guide our behaviors (Schneider & Bos, 2019). For example, gender norms postulate how males and females should communicate, dress, and behave (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gendered norms are implicitly communicated in society: these norms are typically learned, adopted, and further enacted via daily observations of other people's social behaviors and communicative patterns.

Eagly and Wood (2016) argue that the physical attributes of each gender, day-to-day behaviors, as well as family socialization play a big role in how traditional gender norms and social stereotypes are formed and further instilled in society. For example, if women are often perceived as acting emotionally, then women will be thought of as sensitive and emotive individuals. Alternatively, if men are perceived to be tough, then a gendered stereotype that

“men do not cry” will be reinforced. Children learn appropriate and inappropriate gender norms and how genders operate through socialization processes while growing up. Specifically, gendered norms are learned through daily interactions with parents at home and educators at school where children observe how their peers and adults communicate these ideas (Eagly & Wood, 2016).

Additionally, social norms can be learned in the workplace, through religion, mass- and social media channels, as well as through other institutions and organizations (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). For example, Shawcroft et al. (2022) conducted an analysis of gendered portrayals of animated characters in Disney movies, and found that, although the depictions of male and female characters significantly changed over time, male characters rarely engaged in caregiving behaviors on the screen in comparison with female characters, suggesting that caregiving was implicitly disconnected from male appropriate behaviors. Hence, as this study demonstrates, children can be encouraged to emulate gender behaviors in accordance with socially accepted gender norms through exposure to media content as well as daily interactions in their environments (Eagly & Wood, 2016).

Social expectations about men and boys emphasize physical strength and intelligence. For instance, men are typically expected to be strong, bold, driven, and frequently ascribed the role of primary wage-earners or primary decision-makers in the household (Eagly & Wood, 2016; Meeks, 2012; Shpeer & Meeks, 2022). Gendered norms related to women mainly focus on physical appearance, social skills, and caregiving inclinations. For example, women can be viewed as gentle, polite, emotional, and nurturing, and, therefore, are often ascribed the role of caregivers or homemakers (Eagly & Wood, 2016). Hence, some gender norms can create social inequalities due to gender imbalance that stem from social expectations about men and women.

Gender norms may also create gender gaps and gender inequalities in the workplace. Gender inequality can be defined as existing social hierarchy between individuals that benefits men over women (Ridgeway, 2011). Gender inequality can be frequently elicited by the power imbalance between men and women. It can also be further reinforced by various social institutions (e.g., traditional family) because this inequality is often constructed and reproduced through interpersonal interactions.

Scholars who study gender inequality consider different factors that influence this gender asymmetry (note that notions of gender asymmetry and gender inequality are used interchangeably in this context). Specifically, some of these factors that precede gender inequality may include but are not limited to social status, class, unequal distribution of resources, and social bias (Ridgeway, 2011) that are informed and reinforced by gender-based social stereotypes (Ridgeway & Krichelli-Katz, 2013). As a result, men and women must face stereotypes and prejudice associated with the gendered division of labor both in the public and private spheres, as well as gendered inequality caused by differences in income and promotions in the workplace (Ridgeway & Krichelli-Katz, 2013). To illustrate this point, although being a housewife is frequently associated with communal stereotypes about women and is congruent with expectations about female gender roles in society, the occupation of a housewife frequently has negative connotations attached to it, because female homemakers are linked to the ideas of low income and low social status. Further, the low social standing of female housewives may limit women's access to resources and opportunities, therefore, hindering women's social mobility, and resulting in gender inequality (Fletcher, 2006).

To explain the concept of gender inequality further, it is important to note a gender-related expectation that perseveres in society, which is that some jobs can be performed either by

men only or by women only. For instance, working in construction or being a soldier are viewed as masculine jobs, whereas being an elementary school teacher or a nurse are frequently associated with women (White & White, 2006). These examples show that the division of labor that arises from gendered stereotypes can significantly restrict one's professional achievements, access to certain types of jobs, or the wages earned. For example, male nurses can be judged based on their career choice, since nurses are traditionally viewed as nurturing. Male elementary teachers may experience prejudice and judgement as well because teaching is typically perceived as a feminine vocation given that it involves caring for children.

Further, the differences in pay for men and women that accomplish the same tasks and have equal sets of skills required to perform the same labor highlight that there is, in fact, gender inequality in some industries. Although substantial progress has been made to overcome this gender divide in the workplace, it is still present in some industries and domains, despite women's presence increasing significantly over the past years (Ridgeway, 2013). For example, some of these domains include STEM (Casad et al., 2020), the IT industry (i.e., cybersecurity) (Mickey, 2022; Peacock & Irons, 2017), the U.S. military (Reis & Menezes, 2020), and U.S. politics (World Economic Forum, 2022). This gender inequality is, partially, due to the omnipresence of gender norms and social expectations that dictate individuals' behaviors and gender roles not only in the private life, but also in their professional life as well.

U.S. politics requires politicians and political candidates to have outstanding leadership skills (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Dolan, 2004; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Newport & Carroll, 2007), be bold (Coulomb-Gully, 2009), and not afraid of confronting others (Aichholzer & Willmann, 2020). Given gender norms that women are expected to act and behave humbly, be gentle, polite, and preoccupied with household and caregiving, there is a potential disconnect

between social expectations about women in U.S. politics and female politicians. Specifically, women in politics may or may not share these characteristics that are ascribed to them by society. In other words, some women are gentle and polite, whereas others are not. A similar approach applies to female politicians as well—not all female politicians tend to embrace compassionate and humble qualities that can be related to their gender identity; some of these women may emphasize more masculine, competitive characteristics. Therefore, female politicians who violate gender norms and social expectations may be severely sanctioned by society in that they may face higher standards compared to men (Eggers et al., 2018). Pastor and Verge (2021) argue that politics is a "man's game," and, as a result, many female politicians suffer from being called out or trivialized for violating these traditional gendered norms in U.S. politics (Schneider & Bos, 2019). For example, Puwar (2004) has shown that sometimes female politicians who challenge the existing social dynamics in politics are referred to as "space invaders." However, if a voter does not hold traditional views on gender roles (i.e., that one's behaviors should not be defined by person's gender; Blackstone, 2004), then these individuals could be more open to seeing political candidates other than men run for office compared to voters who hold traditional beliefs about gender norms in society.

A similar discrepancy can be observed in the U.S. military, given that military and politics are both deemed as traditionally masculine domains (Do & Samuels, 2021; Dunivin, 1994; Meeks, 2012). In general, when one thinks of a U.S. soldier, it is usually the image of a man-soldier that first comes to mind, not a woman-soldier. Although the number of women in the U.S. military has been growing each year, their presence in the military may raise concerns, which could be caused (at least in part) by violations of traditional gendered norms. In other words, traditional gender norms would imply that women do not belong in the military given its

highly masculine environment and values. What is more, there have been (and still are) concerns about women fulfilling certain occupations in the U.S. military that entail tough physical job requirements as well as hazardous and burdensome work conditions. Do and Samuels (2021) echo these concerns and argue that female soldiers are frequently referred to as "faux warriors" in reference to women not being viewed as legitimate military soldiers. For example, combat-medics in the U.S. Army are required to carry wounded soldiers away from the battlefield, and there are concerns that petite women who are combat-medics would not be able to perform such a job because they may not be as strong, muscular or emotionally stable as men soldiers (Rice et al., 2018). Therefore, for a long time, women were restricted from fully participating in the U.S. military because soldiers face unbearable physical, psychological, and emotional challenges (Do & Samuels, 2021), which may feed into these traditional gender norms and social expectations towards the appropriate and inappropriate gender of a soldier.

Some of these traditional gender norms, behaviors, and roles have been challenged, are changing, and will continue to change in U.S. society. For instance, it has become more common for a woman to be the primary breadwinner in the family, while men can be a full-time stay-at-home parent. A change related to gender norms, though, can only happen if there is a change in society as well. However, some social stereotypes can threaten the evolution of gender norms in society, as discussed next.

Gender Stereotypes

Social stereotypes can guide communicative behaviors and shape the way people perceive others. According to Allport (1954), a stereotype "is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (p. 191). This means that people sometimes make uninformed guesses about strangers and, as a

result, adopt beliefs concerning these individuals to understand the reality that surrounds them better. However, people often develop such social stereotypes about others in a very short period of time, without any substantial grounds to support these beliefs. Hewstone and Giles (1997) claim that some of the aspects individuals may focus on while developing stereotypes about others stem from multiple social categories that include but are not limited to a person's sex, ethnicity, set of traits, roles, abilities, and so on.

Social stereotypes about gender are preconceived and generalized understandings of traits, characteristics, social, and professional roles that men and women embody (Fiske & Stevens, 1993). Typically, individuals develop stereotypes about others based on their respective categorical memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). In other words, people categorize individuals based on their presumed or explicit belonging to one social group or another. People observe human behavior and learn that men and women act a certain way during daily interactions with others. People also learn stereotypes through media portrayals and cultural artifacts, such as in-group and out-group bias. As a result, people form opinions (stereotypes) about members of the two social categories of "men" and "women." Further, people extend these gender stereotypes and apply them to strangers and those who surround them. Eagly et al. (2020) argue that gender stereotypes are very common since categorizing individuals in respect to their reproduction is inherent to human nature.

The scholarly literature recognizes that there are two salient theoretical concepts when it comes to gender stereotypes: agency (agentic traits) and communion (communal traits; Bakan, 1966). Agentic traits indicate a person's self-orientation and primary concern for personal achievements, such as being competitive and ambitious. Agentic traits are common in gender stereotypes about men. Communal traits suggest orientation and concern towards others rather

than the self, such as, for instance, being compassionate. Communal traits are common in gender stereotypes about women. Although gender stereotypes are universal, it is important to note that there are unique iterations that vary from culture to culture. For example, Shpeer and Meeks (2022) found that gender stereotypes about men in Russia not only entailed agentic traits, but also normalized the notion of extreme hypermasculinity (also referred to in Russian culture as "muzhik"). This dissertation will focus on U.S.-specific gender stereotypes, although I acknowledge that gender stereotypes may play out differently across the globe.

There are some positive stereotypes related to gender, such as women's alleged excellence when it comes to social skills and higher emotive expressiveness in comparison to men. Nevertheless, gender-related prejudice can harm individuals by limiting how a person is expected to dress, behave, and develop personally as well as professionally. Society often expects men to embody masculine traits (e.g., be agentic and competitive) and women to encompass feminine traits (e.g., be amicable or empathetic).

Similar accounts exist, for instance, in politics, where female politicians are viewed as norm breakers who try to establish themselves as credible professionals in a male-dominated political environment (Meeks, 2012). To illustrate this idea, authority and power play a significant role in politics; given that women are often associated with communal traits, they have to combat prejudices associated with the inconsistency between their gender and gender-related workplace expectations to be perceived as credible politicians. Successful political candidates are expected to not only be able to perform their duties upon assuming office, but also to embody several key qualities essential for an efficient politician, such as competence, trustworthiness, credibility, and experience. Additionally, politicians are often viewed by voters as excellent leaders. In general, voters look for male traits in civil servants, which, in turn, may

prompt them to vote more often for male candidates than for female candidates (Dolan, 2018; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Even though being competent or trustworthy is a universal quality that applies to any candidate, regardless of their gender, assumptions (or stereotypes) about candidates' gender may distort the way voters perceive politicians. Hence, social and professional (occupational) roles both need to be consistent with social expectations about traditional perceptions of gender. As a result, those who comply with gender stereotypes obtain social endorsement or validation. Otherwise, society may treat gender stereotype violators as a rare exception from the rule (Richards & Hewstone, 2001; Schneider & Bos, 2019).

Another potential consequence of gender expectation violations is to sanction individuals whose gender is inconsistent with gender-related expectations about their workplace (Meeks, 2012). For example, gender norm violators can be viewed as strange, teased about the violations, or seen as unlikable, which may result in ostracism, rejection, or social exclusion (Bosson et al., 2006). However, research shows that men who are inconsistent with gender-related workplace expectations (e.g., male teachers) are viewed more positively compared to women who attempt to establish themselves in non-gender-stereotypic vocations (e.g., female politicians, female soldiers; Froehlich et al., 2020). To summarize, social expectations about gender appropriate and inappropriate behaviors are guided by gender stereotypes, and those individuals who choose to go against social expectations may face serious consequences.

Similarly, female soldiers can also be subject to prejudice and gender stereotypes, although, contrary to a popular belief, women have been a part of the U.S. military culture in different modalities for a long time (e.g., as nurses, cooks, or caregivers). However, because military culture assumes masculinity (e.g., physical strength; Muhr & Sløk-Andersen, 2017; Sasson-Levy et al., 2011) and traditionally agentic traits (e.g., goal attainment, assertiveness),

women have to combat such gender stereotypes to earn the right to be called a soldier. The most common gender stereotypes about female soldiers are related to women's physical fragility, elevated emotionality, and mental unsuitability. In other words, women who are a part of the U.S. military may face gender stereotypes and could be subjected to discrimination because they are frequently seen as outsiders, since masculinity is at the core of the military culture. Social expectations dictate that women need protection, that they are not fighters, and their body is not physically built to defeat the enemy (Archer, 2013; Boldry et al., 2001; Brownson, 2014; Crowley & Sandhoff, 2017; Goldstein, 2018; Soules, 2021). Specifically, women are perceived to be too weak for combat (Goldstein, 2003; Muhr & Sløk-Andersen, 2017; Soules, 2021) and unable to perform on the same physical level as male soldiers (physical training standards in the military are lower for women compared to men); therefore, women are considered to not belong in the military (Cohn, 2000).

Furthermore, there is a belief that training male soldiers is more feasible than training female soldiers, which is perceived to be more problematic, since men and women are different in terms of physiology - men typically perform better on most physical fitness tests, have more muscle mass, higher aerobic ability, and reportedly, are subject to lower rate of injuries associated with military basic training, compared to women (Blair, 2007; Hauschild et al., 2017; Wood & Toppelberg, 2017). Thus, Simić (2010) reports that gender stereotypes related to different body structure and composition (see above) between men and women may lead to such beliefs about training female soldiers. Additionally, gender stereotypes portray female soldiers as emotionally and mentally not fit for the U.S. military: "peaceful women," "not aggressive enough for combat," and "needing protection," to name a few (Johnson, 2010; Sasson-Levy, 2003). As a result, gender stereotypes may restrict access for women to a variety of military-

related jobs, undermine their competence and achievements and, overall, diminish the potential advantages that female soldiers can bring to the U.S. military (van Douwen et al., 2022). Finally, female soldiers are believed to disrupt the climate of the U.S. military because, allegedly, "their presence inevitably means a weakening of a nation's military strength" (DeGroot, 2001, p. 23). Thus, gender stereotypes infuse attitudes and behaviors towards women in the U.S. military, resulting in prejudice and discrimination of female servicemembers as professionals.

All the above-mentioned examples illustrate that prejudice and gender-related stereotypes can inevitably influence gender equality, resulting in the existence of a phenomenon called the *gender gap*. The gender gap acknowledges social barriers that prevent women from having equal access to various vocations that are deemed to be traditionally masculine and that tend to value agentic traits (e.g., politics, military). Further, gender gaps may limit women's agency when it comes, for example, to unequal gender parity in leadership, among other consequences. For instance, U.S. politics has a significant gender gap at the ministerial or parliamental levels, where men hold approximately 69% of the seats (United Nations, 2022). Additionally, no woman has ever been elected to be the president of the United States. Thus, although women can access U.S. politics, high-level office seats are more difficult to attain by female rather than male politicians. Similarly, the gender gap in the U.S. military is more evident compared to other U.S. industries or occupations. Since the late 1990s, the government has implemented several strategies to increase the presence of women in the U.S. military (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022; Nagel, 2021). From 2004 to 2018, their presence rose only by 1.4 %. In 2018, women comprised only 16.5% of the U.S. military (Nagel, 2021). Further, men in the U.S. military occupy more high-ranking positions than women (Doan & Portillo, 2017; Turpin, 1998). This also means that men are promoted more often than women in the U. S. military, which further aligns with gender

stereotypes about male and female soldiers. Hence, though it is undeniable that a lot has been achieved in the field of gender equality, there is a lot more room for improvement.

The Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) oversees gender parity across the globe and provides insight into the evolution of gender equality within four major areas: economic involvement and prospects, attainment in education, health, and empowerment in politics (World Economic Forum, 2022). Specifically, the GGGR provides an index on a scale from 0 to 100 that denotes the change in gender equality, where the highest number indicates an improvement in the gender gap closure. According to this index, the global gender gap is currently at approximately 68.1%; it will take approximately 132 years to fully bridge it. This figure is a slight improvement compared to GGGR's 2021 report, in which the gender gap was at 68%, (World Economic Forum, 2021). North America is a leader in closing the gender gap, with an average score for the region at 76.9%. More specifically, the U.S. occupies the 27th place out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, reflecting changes in society that took place in 2021 due to a variety of different factors. For example, one of the big gender gap-related issues is politics, political participation, and female leadership, as mentioned above. Women represent 25.6% of national parliaments, 36.6% of the local government, and 28.2% of professionals at a managerial level across the globe (United Nations, 2021). It appears, though, that the gender gap in politics has only expanded in recent years due to a variety of social, economic, and political crises (i.e., cost of living, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and increased migration flows) that threaten to endanger achieved progress (World Economic Forum, 2022). Therefore, although the U.S. has shown significant improvement in the field of gender parity, according to GGGR (2022), politics is an area where the gender gap closure needs

improvement. Thus, it is important to keep in mind the effects of gender stereotypes on gender inequality to bridge the gap and improve female representation in U.S. politics.

As mentioned above, violations of gender norms and behaviors in society can be severely punished in some instances. For example, individuals who push back on gender role expectations and act incongruently with gender stereotypes may be reprimanded and sanctioned (Krook & Sanín, 2020; Meeks, 2012). Sanctions against such individuals may range from social disapproval to complete social isolation (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). In politics, female politicians are often deemed as not credible enough, not competent enough, or too emotional, compared to male politicians who embody agentic traits believed to be needed by a successful political leader (Schneider et al., 2016; 2022). Such misperceptions can cost female politicians their office because they may not be viewed as electable and likeable. Therefore, gender stereotypes may put female politicians' potential careers in jeopardy. The same issue occurs in the U.S. military, where many female soldiers are thought of as too fragile and unable to perform their duties (DeGroot, 2001). Hence, it is often the case that both men and women are rewarded only if they act in accordance with gender expectations.

In addition, gender is a very intricate characteristic that is much more complex than the dichotomous categorization of masculine and feminine traits. Individuals' gender may be represented by not only agentic or communal traits, but also construed by a combination of agentic and communal traits, at the same time (Meeks, 2017). For example, individuals can be brave and emotional, strong and compassionate, simultaneously, regardless of their biological sex or gender. What is more, individuals may display a combination of agentic or communal gender traits strategically in order to combat traditional gender stereotypes and gender expectations that are required in the workplace. These processes occur often in U.S. politics,

where female and male politicians learned how to use gender traits intentionally (Meeks, 2017). For instance, Fridkin and Kenney (2014) discovered that male and female senators may purposefully highlight both agentic and communal traits in political ads to exploit gender stereotypes while trying to diminish its negative effects. That is, such senators not only leaned into traditional gender stereotypes but also "paraded" opposite-gender traits in order to counterbalance the potential bias elicited by their gender. To be precise, McGregor (2020) illustrated that politicians may stress both sets of gendered traits, masculine and feminine, at the same time. Male politicians may emphasize not only their agentic but also communal traits by placing an accent on their private life (i.e., family, marriage, children) to appear more caring and nurturing. Displaying aspects of one's private life, family and children for male politicians is a strategy that can make voters de-accentuate agentic traits (Mattan & Small, 2021), and may help such politicians overcome some of the obstacles elicited by gender stereotypes in society.

Gender and Politics

Politics is often viewed as a predominantly masculine sphere (Jungblut & Haim, 2021; Schneider & Bos, 2014; Shpeer & Meeks, 2022; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). Hence, female politicians can face various challenges while trying to navigate politics. For example, one of the major challenges politicians may encounter during a race is related to being stereotyped by society and the media. Media may dissect not only candidates' political programs, electoral campaigns, and communicative behaviors, but also candidates' appearance and details of their private lives to either bolster or discredit them (see, for example, Bauer, 2017; Brands et. al., 2021; Bystrom & Dimitrova, 2014; Stalsburg, 2010; Sweet-Cusham, 2022).

While being scrutinized by the media can apply equally to both male and female politicians, social expectations about gender behaviors in politics may hurt female candidates

more so compared to male candidates, who are perceived as endemic in politics (Dolan, 2018; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). For example, Huddy and Capelos (2002) claim that female politicians who behave too polite and excessively nice can be viewed by voters negatively. At the same time, in some cases, female politicians who are too assertive may violate social expectations concerning appropriate gender behaviors and be cast as non-gender and occupation incongruent, resulting in negative voter evaluations (Meeks, 2012). Thus, many female politicians have to face double-bind stereotypes and implement elements of both masculine and feminine communication styles to appear as both credible and genuine political candidates. At the same time, some scholars argue that gender stereotypes may result in voters favoring male candidates over female candidates (Dolan & Sanbonmatsu, 2011; Lawless & Pearson, 2008). Specifically, favoring candidates based on their gender among voters can also be strengthened by gender affinity, where female voters may prefer to support female candidates and male voters prefer to back up male candidates (Ono & Burden, 2019).

What is more, the higher the office that female candidates are running for (local election versus presidential election), the higher the gender expectations of the candidates are (Erichsen et al., 2020). At the same time, Alexander and Andersen (1993) expand the notion of double-bind stereotypes into a "first-timer/frontrunner double bind," in which presidential political candidates who are men and challengers are viewed as interlopers; at the same time, male presidential candidates are viewed as credible politicians compared to female candidates. Further, there are a few studies that have examined successful male political candidates who adopt both feminine and masculine gender-related traits in how they portray themselves (Cooper, 2009; McGinley, 2009). For example, one of the former U.S. presidents, Barak Obama, in his electoral campaign, took advantage of a similar approach, appearing kind, empathetic, and, at the same time, firm

and decisive. Going back to the idea of gender stereotypes, former president Obama portrayed both agentic and communal traits, but was not reprimanded for it. Instead, his approach was perceived positively as an exception from the rule (Cooper, 2009; McGinley, 2009). The idea of being able to integrate both masculine and feminine traits, according to Cooper (2009), is quite an elegant approach to self-presentation that allows politicians "to be suitable to either gender" (p. 633). In other words, they can be an appealing candidate for both male and female voters and avoid backlash, at the same time.

Although voters in the United States are getting more and more accustomed to women who hold a wide range of offices in politics, female politicians being portrayed as not tough enough translates to voters not seeing them as competent enough to deal with various political tasks (Meeks, 2012), such as, for example, not being able to stand against competitors in political debates successfully. Presumed lack of competence is critical for political candidates, can seriously hurt their political ratings, and lower their chances of being elected. More so, candidates' stance on political issues is one of the factors that can play a significant role in determining whether a candidate will gain voters' support and, ultimately, win a race or not (Huddy & Capelos, 2002). This is crucial for female candidates who are being judged not only based on the way they look or communicate, but also based on how they are expected to handle various political issues (Meeks, 2012; Schneider & Bos, 2019). Specifically, scholars have identified a set of political issues that are believed to be masculine, such as the economy, war/ defense, or crime. Male politicians are traditionally considered to be more capable of dealing with these masculine political issues, whereas female politicians are perceived to be better at handling feminine political issues, such as women's issues (e.g., reproductive rights), ecology, healthcare, and higher education (Fridkin & Kenney, 2014). This phenomenon can be explained

based on gender stereotypes that women possess feminine traits and have been traditionally perceived as more caring and nurturing compared to men. Therefore, the gendered division of political issues overlaps with occupational stereotypes that are informed by feminine and masculine traits (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Namely, male politicians are perceived as more competent at handling masculine political issues (e.g., defense), since men are expected to possess agentic traits and are typically viewed as gender congruent in politics. Women may have a hard time establishing themselves as competent at masculine political issues, because gender stereotypes about female politicians may have a negative impact on perceptions of these candidates. For example, when Hillary Clinton attempted to break the norm and establish herself as a competent political leader in the face of terrorist threats in the U.S. (i.e., traditional masculine political issue of defense), her evaluations as a female politician were negative (Holman et al., 2011). At the same time, female politicians who play by the rules of traditional gender stereotypes and establish themselves as competent at handling traditionally feminine political issues (e.g., education) are perceived more positively than female politicians who refuse to do so (Meeks, 2012). However, researchers may disagree on this issue as the scholarship demonstrates mixed opinions about what determines female candidates' success (Crowder-Meyer, 2020; Oliver & Conroy, 2018, Schneider et al., 2016).

All issues considered, a connection between a political candidate's gender and their perceived efficiency in dealing with political issues (either masculine or feminine) is subjective. However, it is impossible to deny that voters judge candidates based on their perceived ability to handle political issues (perceived competence), and gender stereotypes influence these perceptions. Therefore, it is essential to examine what the effects of candidates' gender are on the outcome of elections in the U.S. given that the candidates elected by voters will determine

the trajectory for the country's internal and external politics. In particular, this dissertation investigates the effects of gender perceptions about candidates in U.S. congressional elections.

Effects of Gender in U.S. Congressional Elections

As mentioned above, gender stereotypes may influence how voters view candidates' ability to handle political issues, depending on politicians' gender (Bligh et al., 2012). However, gender stereotypes may also influence gender expectations towards candidates due to a variety of additional factors. For example, the level of office the candidate is running for as well as the type of office may affect the outcome of an election for female candidates (Dolan, 2018). Specifically, the higher the office the candidate is running for is, the higher the stakes are. The scholarly literature that studies expectations about the gender of U.S. presidential candidates reflects the gender stereotype that the president needs to be a strong leader, has to possess "male characteristics," and be an expert in masculine issues, which becomes less crucial for lower offices for which candidates may be running. Female communal traits, however, are valued when candidates are seeking local office seats (Bauer, 2017; Bernick & Heidbreder, 2018; Sigelman et al., 1987). A similar trend can be identified in respect to the type of political office candidates are seeking, because gender stereotypes and gender expectations about workplace responsibilities also occur in such cases. Given all the above, although gender stereotypes may threaten female politicians' likability and electability, some women are able to overcome these barriers and win elections, for example, by strategically emphasizing or downplaying gender identity traits (communal or agentic traits).

Communication research has examined a variety of factors associated with gender and the outcome of elections. Some scholars argue that the U.S. Congress is an institution that was constructed by and currently operates largely with the help of men (Acker, 1992; Kenney, 1996).

According to the Congressional Research Service (Manning & Brudnick, 2022), 151 women held seats in the 117th U.S. Congress, which shows a slight increase since 2021. Out of these 151 women, 127 were appointed to the House (92 Democrats and 35 Republicans), and 24 held seats in the U.S. Senate (16 Democrats and eight Republicans). CAWP (2023) explains how these numbers changed for the 118th Congress, which currently includes 150 congresswomen (125 in the House and 25 in the Senate), meaning that women currently occupy approximately 28% of Congress (of the 535 total seats), a remarkable change since 2020. Although over time the presence of women in Congress has increased, the data shows that they still account for less than 30% of voting members. Therefore, it is important to further examine the role of gender in U.S. congressional elections.

The scholarship that investigates the effects of gender on congressional election is varied, and it can be divided in the following broad categories: motivations of female congressional candidates who run for office (Conroy & Green, 2020); gender stereotypes in relation to level and type of office a candidate is running for (Dolan, 2018), partisanship (Fulton & Dhima, 2021; Thomsen & Swers, 2017), candidates' fundraising strategies (Kitchens & Swers, 2016), gender effects on candidates' political campaigns (Burrell, 2014; Hawryluk, 2019), candidates' media portrayals (Banwart, 2010; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Winfrey, 2021), the importance of gendered representation (Smith et al., 2012), gender and congressional legislation (Anzia & Berry, 2010; Pearson & Dancey, 2011; Schmitt & Brant, 2019) and so on.

For instance, Hawryluk (2019) argues that female politicians frequently have to tone down conversations about their family and avoid emphasizing their role as mothers and wives not to appear "too soft for politics" (p. 1). At the same time, female politicians who do not have children can be judged for the same reasons (Hawryluk, 2019). Thus, female politicians are

frequently severely scrutinized, their private lives are carefully "dissected," and they can be the subject of a very thorough public investigation. These investigations are prompted by gender-related bias, which can be tied to how female politicians talk, look, dress, and how they are portrayed in the media (Winfrey, 2021). The public is not really interested in what brand of shoes or what suit Joe Biden is wearing, and whether such dress choices carry implicit meanings, but they are when making evaluations of how female politicians dress (e.g., Theresa May, former Queen Elizabeth II). Further, Pearson and McGhee (2013) found that female candidates have to be more qualified than male candidates, and they also need to run for office in districts that favor candidates with specific partisan identity (i.e., partisanship), to earn the same vote shares as male candidates. In other words, political communication research demonstrates that both male and female candidates are evaluated and treated differently by voters, and this partial treatment may, in turn, influence the patterns of voter support candidates receive.

Based on the arguments presented in this section, gender identity is crucial to political candidates' evaluations, and it is one of the core factors used by scholars to predict the outcome of elections. Therefore, gender will be examined as one of the independent variables in the dissertation study. Another key independent variable is partisanship, which is discussed next.

Candidate Partisanship

According to the Pew Research Center (2019), U.S. society remains divided, and partisanship often plays a role in the dividing line that separates Americans in respect to their political views and attitudes, overriding the effects of age, race/ethnicity, gender, education, and other social identities. To illustrate this point, about 85% of Republicans and 78% of Democrats argue that the partisan gap between these two parties is increasing, and that this divide aggravates the inability of both parties to find common grounds on policy issues and even "basic

facts." Political communication scholars also echo these reports by emphasizing that the United States is now enduring the highest partisan divide in the last hundred years, a gap that continues to grow because of the mutual mistrust and fear that members of opposing parties experience (Padró i Miquel, 2007). Such issues potentially threaten the character of the U.S. democracy (McCarty et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to study the effects of candidates' partisan identity on voting behaviors. To do so, in this sub-section, I will define what partisanship is, then I will give an overview of the U.S. political system. Finally, I will explain how candidates' partisanship may impact voting behaviors in elections.

Partisanship is a type of social identity related to high degrees of attachment and loyalty associated with strong political party identification that allows people to assume and defend a political party's values, ideology, beliefs, and opinions (Bolsen & Druckman, 2018; Greene, 2004; Robbett et al., 2023;). Further, not only does research show that partisanship may be more influential than policy orientation (i.e., stance on specific political issues; Andreottola & Li, 2022; Graham & Svolik, 2020; Hatemi et al., 2019), but also that partisanship may influence voting behaviors (Bartels, 2000; Cohen, 2003). For instance, if a person strongly identifies with the Republican party, then the party's values will shape this person's beliefs and attitudes towards both members of their own and opposing parties, meaning that partisanship may lead to in-group bias (Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). Although scholars report that partisanship and political ideology may correlate, the effects of partisanship may override ideological beliefs (Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018).

The U.S. Bi-Partisan Political System

The U.S. can be characterized as a two-party system with two major parties, namely, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party (Barnsley, 2010; Sellers, 1965). Gillespie (2012)

refers to this phenomenon as a “duopoly.” Bibby and Maisel (2003) argue that these two major parties essentially dominate the political landscape of the country on presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial levels ever since the United States was established, where nominees from both Republican or Democratic party won every presidential ticket, as well as had an exclusive control over the U.S. Congress, a trend that is relevant in terms of the 2020 and 2022 U.S. elections cycles. Bibby and Maisel (2003) also add that legislative power in each state belongs to either Democrats or Republicans (apart from Nebraska that has a non-partisan state legislature), except for a few political candidates who associate with some other political party or can identify as independent candidates (no party attachment). This is crucial because political parties are the ones who are responsible for nominating political candidates to participate in an election, they define how the government looks like, and who is going to represent citizens in Congress and the White House. Recognizing candidates’ party may help voters understand the electoral process better and may also help politicians connect with voters better. Thus, political parties are a type of grouping or a category that allows U.S. citizens to express lawfully their identities associated with political inclinations and beliefs.

Political parties range on the political spectrum of ideology anywhere from conservative to liberal. In other words, political ideology can be conceptualized as a constellation of attitudes related to politics that may vary on a continuum, from conservatism to liberalism, or vice versa (Warner, 2018). Conservatism embraces a sensible outlook on life and the government, respect for religion, and a cautionary attitude towards change, among other central characteristics (Aberbach, 2015). Further, there are various degrees of attachment to conservatism, from moderate libertarianism to radical dogmatism, which differentiate how individuals express their openness to changes in the establishment and society, as well as the degree of reliance on

doctrine to guide their behaviors and promote said changes (Aberbach, 2015; Huntington, 1957; Jost et al., 2018; Knight, 2006; Warner, 2018).

Liberals and conservatives disagree on questions related to hierarchy, authority, and the distribution of power in society (Jost et al., 2018). More specifically, in comparison to conservatism, liberalism is associated with a desire for social change and social equality, namely, flexibility of beliefs, instead of traditions and conventional dogmas (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Jost et al., 2018; Theodoridis, 2017). The political ideology of candidates and voters matters, given that there is a connection between political ideology, political attitudes, and individuals' voting behaviors (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016; Barker & Tinnick, 2006; Erikson & Tedin, 2003; Jacoby, 1991; Knutsen, 1995; Layman & Carsey, 2002). In other words, political ideology may fashion the electorate's voting behaviors.

Although a party's composition can sometimes be quite heterogenous, Republicans are typically associated with the conservative political ideology, whereas Democrats are usually associated with the liberal political ideology. Further, one of the central goals of a political party is to have an impact on U.S. public policy. Political party leadership typically facilitates this process by recruiting, nominating, and further promoting political candidates to participate in elections. Ultimately, these candidates can be voted in various public offices (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Layman & Carsey, 2002).

Primary elections serve the purpose of limiting the pool of candidates for a single office, or, alternatively, narrowing down the list of nominees for political parties prior to the general election. It is important to note that primary elections vary by state and are subject to change (U.S. Federal Election Commission, 2022). Further, a candidate who loses in the primaries cannot advance and participate in the general elections. What is unique regarding the U.S.

electoral system is that candidates must get the plurality of votes, instead of the majority of votes, to be officially elected. Plurality voting means that a candidate who obtains the highest number of votes wins, even if they do not get the majority of votes (Donovan et al., 2020). For example, since the Republican and the Democratic parties are the two major parties in the U.S., candidates from these two parties frequently get the plurality of votes. Thus, Republicans and Democrats take on the role of being the public's representatives in the White House and in the U.S. Congress. Further, political parties may enable and give voice to members of underrepresented or historically marginalized groups (e.g., women, U.S. veterans) so that these groups are included in the political process. Specifically, political parties may nominate members of minority groups as their candidates to represent their party, and, by doing so, a candidate may also receive the chance to represent their community.

If elected, these minority political candidates may also have an impact on a variety of political issues that dominate the U.S. society by being a part of Congress, given that Congress may pass or reject legislations and various bills. For example, Senator Mitch McConnell is the U.S.'s Senate Republican leader. Although he was a part of the U.S. Army Reserve followed by an honorable discharge, McConnell displays his connection with the military identity by actively participating in policy issues and legislature concerning U.S. veterans. In July 2022, McConnell expressed concerns about the veterans' health benefits bill expansion not having passed in the Senate due to impediments from Democrats (Carney & Adragna, 2022). This example demonstrates how elected political candidates' partisan identity can be related to their policy issues orientation, and how political candidates can give voice to members of underrepresented or marginalized communities.

Studies that examine how political affiliation or candidates' partisanship can affect public perceptions date to early mid 20th century and contain ideas relevant to scholars nowadays (Campbell et al., 1954; Gerber et al., 2013; Hayes & Lawless, 2016). Berelson et al. (1986) developed a timeless work, *People's Choice*, that has inspired many to consider not only candidates' gender but also their partisanship and the role it can play in the electoral process. Campbell et al. (1954) argue that partisanship is a combination of one's beliefs and emotions that may result in "psychological attachment" to political parties (e.g., Republicans, Democrats). However, Huddy (2013) notes that partisan attachment is subjective and differs a lot from the notion of objective group memberships.

Specifically, political partisanship involves one's stance on political issues, and this stance differs, depending on their party's values, beliefs, and ideology. Thus, political partisanship shapes not only people's attitudes and beliefs, but also their behaviors (Gerber et al., 2013). For example, Bankert (2021) argues that partisanship allows candidates to generate powerful emotions and increase political engagement levels among voters. Further, Huddy (2013) argues that partisanship has an impact on public opinion and vote choice, which is essential in terms of voters' evaluations of political candidates and their outcome on elections. Scholars identify two types of partisanship: expressive and instrumental (Garzia, 2013; Lupu, 2013), where expressive partisanship means an identity that is fortified with one's social identifications with various categories (e.g., gender, religion, race/ethnicity), and instrumental partisanship is informed by the policies and stances on policies candidates communicate in their campaigns.

Political partisanship for a candidate means not only experiencing psychological attachment to their party, but also being highly motivated to protect their party's views and its

prestige in elections (Bankert, 2021). Political candidates' communicative behaviors in political campaigns may shift depending on whether a voter enacts expressive or instrumental partisanship – in the case of expressive partisanship, candidates are recommended to rely on slogans (e.g., evoke emotions in the electorate) rather than on deliberations related to policy. Partisanship allows political candidates to develop a sense of subjective alignment with a political party. Once the connection between a person and a political party is established, this link drives candidates to support and endorse the party, party's status, and aid in the party's advancement in elections (Fowler & Kam, 2007; Huddy, 2013).

For voters, identifying with a political party may result in self-categorizing as a member of the party, embracing their values, and perceiving the political party's candidates in a more positive light (Greene, 2004). Those voters who strongly adhere to their political party as a result of partisanship, may work hard to ensure the success of their party (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). For instance, if a person self-identifies as a Democrat, thinks of themselves as a Democrat, then they may also view Democratic candidates who participate in a race more positively compared to other candidates. As a result, they may be more willing to cast their vote for Democratic candidates. Furthermore, voters who self-identify as Democrats will likely perceive Republican candidates less favorably due to the effects of their self-identification with the opposing party (Iyengar et al., 2012).

Iyengar et al. (2012) also note that, as the U.S. society becomes more politically polarized, people may view individuals with differing values or party affiliations more negatively, which may have an impact on the outcome of an election (i.e., voters may view members of the opposite party as out-groups and as threats). This phenomenon of political polarization can be referred to as partisan bias. More specifically, voters may frequently rely on

candidate perceptions to form impressions about candidates and cast their vote (Todorov et al., 2005).

If the candidate is an out-group member (i.e., non-partisan) in respect to voters and their partisanship, then it is likely that these voters would form a negative impression of the candidate as a result of negative impressions linked to the candidate's partisanship identity (Bullock & Lenz, 2019; King & Browning, 1987; Todorov et al., 2005). This represents the definition of partisan bias (King & Browning, 1987). However, there are additional factors related to political affiliation that may influence voting behaviors that go beyond partisan bias. Such factors include, for instance, candidates' character traits (Meeks, 2012), the party's political issues orientation (Gerber et al., 2013), or candidates' perceived ability to handle political issues (Lim & Lee, 2016). Nevertheless, voters' loyalty to partisanship significantly impacts the outcome of U.S. elections, such as, for example, the involvement of voters in the electoral process and voter turnout (Bartels, 2000). Finally, partisanship is considered very seriously by voters, up to the extent that it may decide their vote choice (i.e., which particular candidate the voter will support; Miller, 1991).

It is necessary to mention that voters typically tend to associate male and female political candidates not only with political issues and perceived ability to handle these issues, but also with certain character traits. Thus, perceived ability to handle political issues is a somewhat biased perspective and it can be evoked by gender stereotypes that dominate our society. For example, male candidates are perceived as being better at handling masculine political issues, whereas female candidates are perceived as being better at dealing with feminine political issues (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Further, certain political parties in the U.S. are generally associated by the public with the ability to handle specific political issues, such as healthcare, defense,

education, and other ones (Meeks, 2019). Therefore, voters who know candidates' party affiliation infer candidates' ability to handle a variety of political issues, which can significantly impact the electability of these candidates (Petrocik, 1996). For example, political candidates may emphasize their ability to handle specific political issues to appear favorably in the eyes of the electorate. In addition, there are a variety of studies that illustrate the connection between partisanship and voting behaviors (Bartels, 2000; Campbell et al., 1954; Fiorina, 1981; Miller, 2013). More specifically, these studies underline that partisanship is one of the strongest determinants of voting behaviors and electoral outcomes. Thus, it may influence perceptions of the candidates, increase political participation, promote (non-)partisan bias, and determine individuals' vote choice (Bartels, 2000; Campbell et al., 1954; Fiorina, 1981; Jessee, 2010; Krishna & Sokolova, 2017; Miller, 2013; Robbett & Matthews, 2018).

Voters' political attitudes that are shaped by candidates' character traits, political affiliation, and political issues orientation can be a powerful driving force that influences who wins a race (Gerber et al., 2013). Recent controversial events that have had a significant impact on various issues in U.S. politics., such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the withdrawal of military troops from Afghanistan, may provoke disagreements among many social groups across the U.S. and may influence not only the way that candidates are portrayed, but also have an impact on the electorate's voting behaviors. Such issues dominate the current discourse in the United States. For example, Fernandez-Navia et al. (2021) found out that one of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was a decrease in voter turnout, that is, a decrease in political participation due to health concerns voters expressed in respect to the pandemic. What is more, the way that political candidates may talk about some prominent political issues or suggest ways of handling these political issues, may shape the degree of perceived competence, trustworthiness, lik(e)ability,

that voters may evaluate about the candidates (e.g., Bisbee & Honig, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to examine how candidates' partisanship influences voting behaviors to gain a better understanding and ability to predict voting trends in various upcoming elections.

As mentioned previously, the Republican and Democrat parties are the two major parties in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), Republicans and Democrats typically diverge a lot in their views on multiple political issues, their beliefs, and their political ideology. For example, Republicans are typically associated with issues that support low taxes, oppose abortion, and bolster governmental independence/non-involvement into business, whereas Democrats tend to emphasize and promote racial equality and the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community (Pew Research Center, 2021).

It is important to note that, although Republicans and Democrats represent two opposing parties, peoples' strength of association or identification with these two parties may vary. For instance, some Republicans may identify strongly with the Republican Party, whereas others may identify only moderately or even weakly with the same party. The degree or strength of party partisanship (i.e., attachment to one political party based on their own partisan identity) may have an impact on how congruent or incongruent candidates can be with their party's ideology; in other words, how closely a candidate overlaps or matches the party ideology. Further, if a candidate's representation is congruent with how voters view the party's ideology, then such a candidate may be perceived positively by voters (Lim & Lee, 2016). For example, Lim and Lee (2016) suggested that former president Donald Trump emphasized masculine issues and embodied the conservative ideology, which aligns with the Republican party. This approach was congruent with his respective Republican partisan identity, which was interpreted as an effective strategy that impacted voting behaviors and voters' evaluations of him as a candidate.

In other words, a congruency between a candidate's partisan identity, their political ideology, and the values communicated by the candidate's party may yield stronger effects on individuals' voting behaviors, resulting in stronger voter support of the candidate.

Voters usually assess candidates' electability based on the latter's perceived ability to handle masculine and feminine political issues. Therefore, Democratic political candidates may emphasize their ability to handle feminine political issues to appeal to the electorate more. However, gender stereotypes may interfere with candidates' political affiliation and impact the way voters view politicians: women candidates are frequently viewed as liberal, and often labeled as Democrats given that feminine issues are typically associated with the Democratic party (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Lee & Lim, 2016; Petrocik, 1996).

Further, scholars have found that women discuss more feminine political issues and men tend to discuss more masculine political issues (Bystrom & Dimitrova, 2014). However, contrary to the belief that female Democratic candidates need to emphasize masculine issues to establish their credibility, scholarship shows that delving into stereotypes about one's gender, political affiliation and perceived ability to handle issues may be beneficial for these candidates (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009). For example, Meeks and Domke (2016) identified that Democratic female candidates who stressed only masculine issues were perceived less positively by voters in comparison to female Democratic candidates who emphasized either only feminine or a combination of both feminine and masculine issues. They also found that Republican female candidates faced greater challenges due to their gender that was incongruent with the masculine ideology embraced by the Republican party. Meeks (2019) suggests that female Republican

candidates need to communicate both types of issues, feminine and masculine, to appear competent in handling both gender- and political party-congruent issues.

Furthermore, because the two parties have opposing stances on diverse political issues in the country, the language used by candidates from these political parties may also differ, to reflect the values embedded in candidates' rhetoric. For example, Benoit & McHale (2003) note the differences in the messaging of presidential nominees from both parties. Democrats are more prone to bringing up feminine political issues and openly criticize these issues compared to Republicans. Consequently, political candidates from both parties highlight not only political issues relevant to their parties but also traits of the candidates (i.e., masculine and feminine traits). Hayes and Lawless (2016) examined how voters described Republicans and Democrats, and found that Republicans were frequently viewed as determined, honest, and compassionate, whereas Democrats were often perceived by voters as "competent, trustworthy, hardworking, knowledgeable, grounded, and capable" (p. 97). However, the authors also noted that gender differences may come into play even when candidates belong to the same field: Democratic female candidates may be perceived by voters slightly unfavorably in comparison with Democratic male candidates. Thus, one can claim with certainty that there are significant differences between political candidates along gender and party lines. Such differences may influence how voters form impressions about the candidates and how they decide to cast their vote.

I have argued in this section that not only candidates' gender identity but also their partisan identity plays a significant role for voter evaluations. It is important for candidates to learn how to emphasize their partisanship while keeping in mind their gender identity. Additionally, candidates' messages that involve political issues need to account for candidates'

gender and partisanship as well; voters may view candidates whose gender is congruent with their partisanship and the types of political issues they address more positively than those candidates who display incongruence between gender identity, partisan identity, and the types of issues they tackle. As a result, candidates who abide by the norms and delve into social stereotypes concerning candidates' partisanship can be rewarded with voter support and increased electability. Thus, political candidates' partisanship is likely to affect voting behaviors and will be examined further in this dissertation.

Other aspects of a political candidate's identity that can have an impact on voting behaviors as well. In the following section, I explore the connection between one's veteran status (i.e., veteran identity) as a background identity characteristic that can impact voting behaviors.

Candidate Veteran Status

In this section, I will describe what military culture is, how it is different from civilian culture, and why veterans are often misunderstood and considered to be members of the vulnerable population that need to be protected. Overviewing these questions will help me build a foundation for justifying why it is important to examine how the veteran identity of political candidates may influence the electorate's voting behaviors.

Military Culture

Military culture is complex. The mindset, the worldview, and the outlook of military members and civilians differ in a variety of ways. Although Reger et al. (2008) mostly discuss the Army, they provide an exhaustive definition of what military culture is that is helpful to reiterate here. Military culture captures "the extent that a culture includes a language, a code of manners, norms of behavior, belief systems, dress, and rituals" (Reger et al., 2008, p. 22). It is, as

they claim about the Army, “a unique cultural group” (Reger et al., 2008, p. 22). I elaborate on these ideas in what follows.

Military culture is unique because it pervades the lives of servicemembers on all levels (i.e., it permeates all spheres of one’s existence), and instills specific military norms, values, beliefs, traditions, language (military jargon), and ideas of what proper behaviors are through the process of basic training (Dunivin, 1994; Howe & Shpeer, 2019; McGurk et al., 2006; Osiel, 2017; Soeters et al., 2006). The purpose of basic training is to enact a fundamental change, a transformation in one’s self that allows stripping one’s civilian identity to becoming one of many, a soldier who is ready for combat, and willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the country or fellow servicemembers (Dunivin, 1994; McGurk et al., 2006).

This military culture can influence the way people communicate with each other (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). Military culture is rooted in and born out of war culture, where war culture is a system of meanings that predisposes the nation to belligerence (Cockburn, 2013). It glorifies military values and supports a military establishment as the epitome of the state (Ivie, 2016; Ivie & Giner, 2016). In other words, military culture can be found in various cultural artifacts, such as the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia (a resting place for many of the United States’ fallen servicemembers) or spaces, such as U.S. military bases.

Koenig and Eagly (2014) emphasize that the main fundamental differences between military and civilian culture are that military culture is highly structured and organized as it “promotes self-sacrifice, discipline, obedience to legitimate authority, and belief in a merit-based rewards system,” whereas “American civilian identity … fosters individualism and liberty-based civic values” (p. 2). Further, Howe (2020) also found that military culture normalizes death, whereas civilian culture marks death, death-related experiences, and loss as extraordinary life

events. Therefore, as these examples illustrate, cultural differences between military and civilians are salient, and they may lead to tensions, highlighting the vast disconnect between these two cultures: “when your job is to take another person's life - … your language changes in order to dehumanize the enemy and make light of the unfathomable experiences of war” (O’Malley, 2021), which may affect how voters view veteran political candidates.

A sharp contrast between cultures may impede communication and complicate relationships between military and non-military communicators, shaping the perceptions of veteran political candidates by voters. Consequently, it is helpful to define military communication to highlight existent differences between military and civilian cultures further to understand better how the veteran identity of political candidates may influence the voting behaviors of individuals in elections. Military communication can be described as a process that involves making sense of various shared meanings, symbols, perspectives, and values related to war in public and private social discourse (Shpeer, 2023). One of the main goals of military communication is to deliver information rapidly, clearly, and effectively (Dunivin, 1994). The nature of military communication reflects this approach: military culture encourages servicemembers to communicate directly and to use special language that only soldiers can comprehend (Shpeer, 2023).

Namely, U.S. servicemembers learn the military phonetic alphabet, also referred to as International Radiotelephony Spelling Alphabet (IRSA), during basic training and use it to communicate with each other through radio and other means (Fraser, 2005). Furthermore, military members can use specific jargon (slang) in their speech that only their fellow servicemembers can understand (e.g., calling someone a “blue falcon”). Thus, not only is the verbal language of military members different from civilian communication, but the nonverbal

behavior of military members also differs significantly from the way civilians express themselves nonverbally. Servicemembers' nonverbal behaviors can be described as tactful and carefully exhibited compared to most civilians (Chaney & Green, 2004), because their safety and the lives of other soldiers may depend on their ability to conceal classified information (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). As a result, military members can frequently appear as emotionally unexpressive, cold, or distant, compared to civilians.

In addition, discipline plays a crucial role during basic training and deployment, where servicemembers learn to display outstanding posture, exceptional eye contact, appropriate attire, and controlled gestures at all times (Chaney & Green, 2004). Discipline is at the core of military culture, and it is crucial in order to achieve team cohesion and maintain hierarchy in military ranks, where disobedience or poor teamwork may cost someone their life. Therefore, military culture can be considered a high-power distance culture with a strict hierarchy (Hofstede, 1983), in which a soldier cannot simply start conversing with a higher-ranking officer; in fact, they can be punished for violating these guidelines. Thus, these key aspects and values that are inculcated into veteran candidates as a result of basic training and deployment may shape the way veteran candidates carry themselves and interact with voters, influencing the nature of voter evaluations of these candidates.

The differences between military and non-military culture are paramount, and this divide can be observed not only through individuals' verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviors, but also in representations of veterans (Parrott et al., 2019). Thus, said distinction is reflected in veteran political candidates and how they present themselves throughout their political campaigns. Although, (veteran) candidates can typically control the narrative in self-representations, they typically have much less control over media portrayals and voters'

perceptions that are formed on the basis of such portrayals (Meeks, 2019). For example, many scholars note that military culture's representations are often distorted in the media (Parrott et al., 2019; 2022a; 2022b; Rhidenour et al., 2019; Wilbur, 2016). Inaccurate media portrayals of military culture may result in misperceptions of servicemembers and military veterans, which, ultimately, may lead to negative consequences for this marginalized population (Schmidt, 2020).

Kleykamp and Hipes (2015) argue that stereotypical portrayals of veterans may erase the unique identities and experiences of former servicemembers, suggesting that the military is a monolithic, non-heterogenous group of people. Perceiving veterans as a single homogenous cluster not only reduces these individuals into a single, rather simplistic category—"veterans," but also impacts how civilians act towards former servicemembers. Such perceptions play an important role in politics where exposure to military culture can be used strategically to gain points by candidates (i.e., veterans are typically perceived as responsible and highly skilled professionals; Caverley & Krupnikov, 2017), shift opinions concerning political issues (e.g., may increase the amount of budget allotted to defense versus external affairs; Aday, 2010; Caverley & Krupnikov, 2017; Johnson & Fahmy, 2009; Pfau et al., 2006), or change patterns of partisan attachment (Taber & Lodge, 2006).

Furthermore, since veteran political candidates are a part of military culture, media misrepresentations may have a significant impact on the outcome of their political campaigns, given that voters frequently gather information about candidates from the media (Meeks, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to study how military culture and, more specifically, veteran candidates (i.e., their veteran identity) influence voter perceptions of the candidates and the voting behaviors of U.S. citizens.

Veteran Candidates

Veterans compose only a small portion of the U.S. adult population. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), the number of U.S. veterans in 2021 was approximately 19 million people, which represents less than 10 % of the total U.S. adult population. What is more, the overall number of veterans in the U.S. keeps declining. The U.S. Census Bureau (2020) notes that, between 2000 and 2018, the number of U.S. veterans decreased by a third. However, the number of female veterans (as well as disabled veterans) has increased in the last few years. This number is projected to reach up to 17% by 2040 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Lofquist (2017) argues that, in 2015, there were 1.6 million female veterans, which accounts for 8.4 % of all former servicemembers. These numbers show that the social landscape is changing, and that may determine the demographic background of veteran candidates who pursue political offices in U.S. elections.

One important influence on perceptions of veterans is the way media portrays them. The way the media frame veterans and veteran identity can differ depending on the source of media (traditional media outlets versus social media), the ideological leanings of the source, or the audience itself. Scholars report that the coverage of veterans in news media is frequently sensationalized (Schmidt, 2020), and veterans and veteran identity are also often stigmatized (Parrott et al., 2019a; Rhidenour et al., 2019; Wilbur, 2016). Political candidates may sometimes use the veteran population as a prop to appeal to their audience more effectively while communicating with potential voters (Eckhart et al., 2021). Although veterans' agency may be limited when it comes to media portrayals, former servicemembers may rely on new media, more specifically, social media to exert their agency and fight misrepresentations and stereotypes concerning military culture. For example, veteran candidates have begun to use social media to

communicate their ideas and unique narratives to avoid their words being distorted by traditional media outlets and other gatekeepers. This allows veterans to frame themselves not as mere victims, but rather as competent candidates in order to increase their likability and trustworthiness among voters (Maltby & Thornham, 2016).

Further, as mentioned above, veterans tend to be clustered by both media and society (Kleykamp & Hipes, 2015) in one large group, despite the fact that the experiences of military veterans are remarkably different and may vary depending on their individual identity traits (e.g., gender), combat status, and country of deployment, among other factors. For example, the experiences of veterans who served in the Vietnam war may be completely different than those of veterans from the Afghanistan war (Kleykamp & Hipes, 2015). Specifically, some scholars argue that WWII veterans are likely to be depicted as heroes, whereas Vietnam war veterans are frequently viewed as victims (Algra et al., 2007) or "misfits" (Patterson, 1982).

In addition, scholars claim that the relationship between media and the military is very delicate (e.g., Kleykamp & Hipes, 2015; Parrott et al., 2019a; 2019b; 2020; 2022; Parry & Pitchford-Hyde, 2022; Phillips et al., 2020; Phillips & Connelly, 2021; Schmidt, 2020; Shields, 2020; Rhidenour, 2015; Rhidenour et al., 2019; Whitley & Carmichael, 2022; Wilbur, 2016). This delicacy is due to the fact that the media do not have unrestricted access to information, which can also be potentially classified, which means military representatives may not be authorized to conduct an honest dialogue with reporters and other media entities. Similar accounts were reported by Choi (2006) that show the discrepancies between the official representations of military battles during the Iraq War and contrasting voices of, for example, foreign media that portray an alternative picture. Aday (2010) echoes this notion by stating that the military may control the narrative by imposing restrictions and deciding what information

sees the light as well as how servicemembers are represented in news coverage. As a result of these restrictions, military servicemembers can often be negatively stereotyped and/or misrepresented by the media (Parrott et al., 2019). For example, Schmidt (2020) notes that media coverage may disproportionately emphasize combat while neglecting or diminishing servicemembers' other types of experiences, which may differ from veterans' firsthand accounts. Consequently, representations of (former) servicemembers, especially veteran candidates need to be interpreted with caution, given the abovementioned limitations, and must be thoroughly investigated.

Scholarship that examines media framing of military veterans relies on three main frames (hero, charity case, and victim). There are, undoubtedly, positive stereotypes that can be ascribed to veterans and servicemembers that are primarily connected with appreciation for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of civilians (Schmidt, 2020). However, positive perceptions of servicemembers, in part, can be the result of a narrative better known as "Support the troops" that encourages audiences to support veterans (Hipes & Gemoets, 2018). "Support the troops" is a rhetorical tool used by government officials to re-shape public opinion about war conflicts and shift away public attitudes from moral justifications of casualties towards the sacrifices made by military service men and women to establish the legitimacy of war (Hipes & Gemoets, 2018). In other words, this rhetoric is used to re-frame military aggression as a glorious act of self-sacrifice.

Stahl (2009) argues that this narrative gained popularity during the Vietnam War, and it served two major goals: to deflect and to dissociate, where deflection highlights the urge to save the soldiers who suffer during the conflict (i.e., potentially held in captivity or went missing), and dissociation creates a sense of distance between the military and civilians (i.e., where dissent

towards the war and conflict translates into a strike against soldiers). Similar accounts that echo "Support the troops" are widely spread in the United States. Some examples include the Department of Defense's (DOD) program "America Supports You" or the "Joining Forces" initiative founded by the White House (Stahl, 2009). This narrative portrays military members as highly skilled, brave, strong, capable individuals and true patriots that need the public's support. Such narratives demonstrate that training and values acquired during military service (i.e., loyalty, camaraderie, leadership) are in demand and highly valued in other areas. More specifically, these values can be positively viewed by voters when evaluating veteran candidates in an election and may aid in forming more positive attitudes towards aforementioned candidates. In turn, such positive perceptions of veteran candidates may enable more pronounced voter support.

Servicemembers can also be framed in the media as peacekeepers (Soroka et al., 2016). The frame of a peacekeeper is usually associated with non-combatant efforts and the role of servicemen that involves observing and monitoring to maintain stability, and containing or freezing a conflict (i.e., separating conflicting parties) rather than participating in an active military engagement. Therefore, a peacekeeper frame can often be juxtaposed with a hero frame, given its placating role where diplomacy and humanitarian aid precede the use of arms to solve a conflict.

There are a few other central media frames associated with the military. Military service can often be thought of as a hypermasculine and violent environment because it is often associated with war conflicts and defense (Schmidt, 2010; Wilbur, 2016). Parrott et al. (2019) also point out that media often emphasize frames related to the physical, psychological, emotional trauma, and heroism of servicemembers, resulting from combat (or deployment). For

example, veterans can be portrayed as broken, unstable, or disturbed individuals. As a result, these portrayals can prompt the media to publicly frame veterans as charity cases that need donations and other type of support to stay afloat (McCormick et al., 2019). This frame can also arise due to the support that many veterans receive from the government in the form of Social Security benefits, making them be viewed by civilians as deserving or undeserving of these disability compensations checks (Matsumoto et al., 2020).

The above-mentioned stereotypes are difficult to dispute if civilians are unfamiliar with military culture or with positive examples of veterans who have successfully reintegrated into society. Further, these beliefs can distort the image of veteran candidates who are running for office and can reinforce existing negative stereotypes about them, which may potentially hurt the chances of veteran candidates in elections.

Some scholars propose that a more nuanced approach is needed to examine the above-stated stereotypes since audiences make a clear distinction between active servicemembers and veterans. Specifically, Phillips et al. (2020) found that people associate both soldiers and veterans with the frame of hero or war hero, in which heroism is mainly related to individual character traits of servicemembers, but less to their military status or former service. However, the audience may de-personify veterans by perceiving them as a homogenous social group rather than distinguishing their individual achievements and varied experiences. As a result, only veterans (and not active servicemembers) were associated with the victim frame. This phenomenon can be potentially explained by the fact that veterans may have sustained injuries during their service and may experience a variety of severe issues upon exiting the military, such as unemployment, homelessness, drug addiction, and physical or psychological health issues (Phillips et al., 2020) and, above all, difficulty communicating and connecting with civilians

while transitioning to civilian life. These factors (or their aftermath) may inform the difficulties that some military veteran candidates may be facing when trying to pursue political office, which may reflect onto voters and influence the electorate's voting behaviors in respect to veteran candidates.

Negative stereotypes about military members and veterans can be harmful as they can potentially diminish veterans' achievements and create stigma related to veteran status. Stereotyping can also potentially limit veterans' work-related experiences. On the one hand, organizations may strive to increase the number of veteran hirees by implementing various diversity initiatives, since veterans are members of underrepresented social groups. On the other hand, as mentioned above, social stereotypes may result in the stigmatization of veterans: some civilians may assume that veterans may have behavioral and psychological issues (e.g., PTSD) due to their military background (MacLean & Kleykamp, 2014). Thus, for example, if a veteran is perceived as "crazy" or "broken" (Gonzales & Simpson, 2021; Kleykamp & Hipes, 2015), this may also severely affect interpersonal communication and result in tensions in the workplace between a veteran and their civilian colleagues. Similar accounts can also be found in the case of veterans running for political office (Smith, 2022); the difference is that these stereotypes may shape the electorate's vote choice. In other words, misperceptions can diminish veteran candidate's like(a)bility and may even potentially result in the loss of an election.

Further, some veterans may also want to avoid stigmatization due to other perceived traits, not only their behavior and abilities. Specifically, stigmatization can be related to veterans' perceived political ideology. Although many U.S. veterans are believed to be conservative and/or Republican, this is not always the case, according to some scholarship (e.g., Klinger & Chatagnier, 2014). For example, comparisons of ideological orientations of veterans and non-

veterans demonstrate that former servicemembers have mixed political ideology. Although the number of veterans who are Republicans is higher in contrast with civilians, the number of veterans who are Independent is also higher compared to civilians (Gallup, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2019). Thus, misperceptions about veteran candidates are present not only in respect to the effects of military service on candidates' mental health or competence, but also in respect to political ideology. Veteran candidates can, in fact, appeal to various types of voters, depending on how they communicate to the electorate their stance on the ideological spectrum.

As mentioned above, political ideology is one of the key factors that may connect voters with a candidate or generate an in-group versus out-group outlook in respect to candidates and voters with opposing ideological perspectives. Namely, when, for example, a voter is liberal and a candidate appears to be conservative, a disconnect may be created between the two, and, thus, influence the voting behaviors of said individual. Similar processes may occur when it comes to veteran political candidates pursuing political offices. More specifically, the ideological differences among veterans and veteran candidates when it comes to political ideology (conservatism-liberalism) are crucial. Both the media and scholars connect approximately 10-12% of active and former servicemembers, who disagreed with the outcome of the 2020 Presidential election and supported former president Trump, to the attack on the U.S. Capitol in 2021 (Hodges, 2021; Schake & Robinson, 2021). At the same time, the role of former servicemembers in the Capitol insurrection appears to be slightly exaggerated, given that roughly 88-90% of the attackers were civilians; yet some scholars refer to this number as "disproportionate" (Schake & Robinson, 2021).

However, social perceptions are not always accurate and not all veterans backed up Donald Trump's leadership, according to the Pew Research Center (2019). But it is important to

note that the military usually view POTUS as the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Armed Forces, which means that servicemembers cannot question the chain of command. Given that former president Trump called the results of the 2020 elections inaccurate, this could have explained why there was a small percentage of rogue veterans and servicemembers who decided to communicate disagreement openly in the form of an insurrection. Undoubtedly, the U.S. military and political radicalism (i.e., the attack on the U.S. Capitol in 2021; Simi et al., 2013) are present in the U.S. society, but, given the above factors, veterans could be stigmatized in connection to this incident due to their perceived political ideology.

Military members are also known to rely on each other, which is communicated through the idea of camaraderie, an essential component for team cohesion and the successful accomplishment of missions during military service (Shpeer & Howe, 2020). Camaraderie involves working together and being able to rely on each other, regardless of individual background or personal disagreements among servicemembers, to complete a mission and protect one another (McCormick et al., 2019). Thus, another frame associated with military veterans is camaraderie or this idea of "brother in arms." These positive stereotypes about veterans mentioned above communicate the idea that veterans are to be mature, experienced, and highly skilled professionals (Phillips et al., 2020), which can translate into certain expectations about veteran candidates, since experience, high trustworthiness, competence, expertise, and loyalty are often associated with military service (Caddick et al., 2021; Cree & Caddick, 2020).

Hence, veteran political candidates' whose image communicates dissimilar ideas or is a mismatch to the media portrayals of servicemembers as heroes can be at a disadvantage. Vice versa, veteran political candidates who rely on media portrayals to paint them as warriors and fighters, and are able to meet these expectations, will appear more appealing to the audience.

However, Wilbur (2016) notes that negative media framing of former servicemembers may undermine the achievements and prospects (i.e., electability) of veteran political candidates. Thus, representations of veteran candidates that are congruent with voter expectations and that rely on positive frames to portray veterans may yield positive results when it comes to voter support. However, negative frames and incongruent portrayals of veteran candidates that may evoke negative associations resulting from military service may put veteran candidates at a disadvantage and may potentially affect their electability.

Dunivin (1994) reports that the military's fundamental activity that outlines its nature and values is rooted in combat, where servicemembers perform a variety of activities that involve and revolve around combat. Veteran candidates who have the experience of combat may be viewed differently in comparison to non-combat veterans, as Ashley and Brown (2015) report that "combat experience or exposure is the defining feature of a 'real soldier'" (p. 535). Therefore, a "hierarchy of combat elitism" is present in the military community (Ashley & Brown, 2015, p. 534), and this hierarchy may extend over to combat and non-combat military veteran candidates. As a result, being actively engaged in combat during deployment aligns with stereotypes about military service and the masculinity that pervades it. Combat military experiences can be rewarded and regarded as respectable or honorable, whereas non-combat military experiences can be devalued and labeled as deviant (Ashley & Brown, 2015; Dunivin, 1994). Portraying combat veterans in a more positive light than non-combat veterans can possibly put political candidates who are veterans but lack combat experience at a disadvantage (Keats, 2010).

Consequently, the gender of veteran candidates also plays a role in how audiences perceive political nominees. Acknowledging women can participate in combat and can enact not

only the nurturing gender-congruent role of a military nurse, but also a G. I. Jane role allows viewing female veteran candidates from a new perspective. As the U.S. society and institutions change and develop, the U.S. military also needs to reflect these social changes. For example, modern military bylaws acknowledge and (or at least strive to) mirror the current diverse demographic makeup of the U.S. society, promote inclusivity, and establish a universal set of rights and responsibilities related to servicemembers.

In the past, the U.S. military-imposed restrictions onto which roles women could perform in the military. Specifically, women were not allowed to participate in combat, since war was perceived to be "men's work" (Dunivin, 1994, p. 534). Furthermore, Parrott et al. (2020b) claim that some female veterans are delegitimized by society in different ways. For example, female veterans are being publicly called out for using veterans-only parking spots. Additionally, female-veterans suffer from the lack of women-specific Veteran Affairs (VA) medical procedures and treatments. Finally, there are many memorials that honor fallen male soldiers across the U.S., but there are only a handful of war memorials dedicated to deceased female servicemembers. However, these memorials raise social concerns due to the nature of female veteran depictions. Specifically, these memorials of female veterans are perceived by society as either too feminine (i.e., depicting a female veteran wearing a skirt) or overly masculine (i.e., a visibly strong and muscular woman in a uniform; Ford, 2017). These perceptions can be due to the fact that military culture is hypermasculine; thus, being a female soldier goes against social expectations (Doan & Portillo, 2017).

Hence, being a female, a veteran, and running for political office can pose serious challenges and influence candidates' electability. For example, Bauer (2020) argues that voters already expect female candidates to possess exceptional qualifications that would meet their

expectations about political candidates; being a female veteran candidate adds another layer of complexity. Therefore, female veteran candidates need to learn how to balance masculinity and femininity and weave these ideas strategically with their expertise, qualifications, and background in military service.

Given all the above, perceptions of servicemembers and veteran candidates by the electorate still remain very narrow and need to highlight other parts of their identities (e.g., gender, partisanship) and other unique experiences in order to create a full picture of what it means to be a veteran and appear more electable as the candidate. Therefore, I plan to examine how political candidates' veteran status can affect the electorate's voting behaviors. My examination of all these identity traits discussed up to this point is rooted in the theoretical framework offered by social identity theory, which is detailed below.

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory

Needless to say, not only do political candidates acknowledge that voters have become increasingly diverse, but also that political candidates themselves tend to highlight their social identity traits that may overlap and combine various characteristics, including gender, racial/ethnic background, social roles, and so on. Emphasizing their identities allows these politicians to connect with voters by relying on the support of different social groups that may seek descriptive representation in the political candidates for whom they vote. For example, female voters may look to support female political candidates. At the same time, candidates can also branch out and appeal to and target various groups of voters based on how they communicate their identity to voters. The following section will discuss what social identity is, different types of social identities, how identity influences the dynamics of social relationships,

how sometimes social identities overlap, and how political candidates sometimes may use their identity traits and characteristics in their political campaign ads to gain voter support.

Communication scholarship notes that the number of women, veterans, and other minority political candidates in U.S. politics has significantly increased in past years (Brown & Gershon, 2016). What is more, candidates may choose to highlight or downplay some of their social identity traits to appear in a more positive light (i.e., be more likeable) to voters. By doing so, politicians may increase their chances of electability (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001; Fridkin et al., 2009; Kahn & Fridkin, 1996).

SIT is a theoretical framework developed by social psychologists Tajfel and Turner (2004). SIT is anchored in the idea of self-categorization on the basis of group memberships and the social stereotypes we develop towards ourselves and others. Specifically, this theory examines and explains the relationship between cultural expressions of one's identity and group memberships through the prism of intergroup behaviors between individuals. In other words, SIT looks at how people communicate ideas about their belonging to various social groups, such as gender, partisanship, and veteran status, and how others may interpret these meanings. SIT can help explain how individuals may form or dissolve relationships and communicate with others based on belonging to various social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

According to Tajfel and Turner (2004), SIT typically involves three core processes: social categorization (assigning people to categories to understand who they are), social identification (assuming group identity upon categorization), and social comparison (comparing groups to one another as a result of social categorization and identification). More specifically, social categorization is an unintentional cognitive process that allows individuals to identify and assign themselves as well as others to various social categories (i.e., groups) based on specific

aspects that these people may embody, such as non-physical characteristics (i.e., accent), various traits (i.e., behavior or character), physical attributes (i.e., skin color), and so on, to develop a better understanding of the social reality that surrounds us (Fiske et al., 2007).

For example, if a person possesses feminine physical attributes, wears a dress, and behaves in a feminine-like manner, then this person can be categorized as a woman and seen as belonging to an abstract social group, a category named "women." Next, social identification is the process that allows individuals to adopt or assume the group identity based on the category (or categories) previously identified in the process of social categorization. Given the example above that illustrates how social categorization functions, this individual that was labeled as a woman will be ascribed to a social group of women, meaning that the gender identity of this person will be inherently associated with this social group.

Finally, social comparison is a key SIT process that allows people who identify as belonging to a particular social group to compare themselves with members of other social groups to determine their relative standing in society, in comparison with other social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Individuals will view members of their own social group more favorably based on their shared group membership, compared to members of another social group. These in-group out-group differences may generate bias and prejudice towards those individuals who belong to a different social group. For example, men may develop an out-group prejudice towards women because members of these social groups simply do not share the exact group membership. Women may be viewed as inferior in respect to various cognitive or behavioral abilities. An example that illustrates this process of social comparison is the stereotype that all women are bad drivers, which may not be entirely true (although there are, certainly, some women who embody this social stereotype).

The idea of social groups and group processes is central to understanding how SIT functions (Tajfel, 1974). Social groups can be defined as social groupings that consist of two or more members, such as, for example, college students, educators, college football fans, musicians, and so on. Furthermore, members of social groups may share commonalities (i.e., traits, characteristics, views, beliefs, attitudes, and social norms), and perceive each other as similar or dissimilar because of the social stereotypes we tend to ascribe to others, perceived sense of belonging to one group, and alleged common group traits (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Huddy, 2013; Tajfel, 1974). Campbell (1967) argues that people develop social stereotypes about others based on first-hand experiences and interactions with members of other social groups or based on second-hand experiences, through mediated portrayals of others in the media, for instance. For example, U.S. Democrats may perceive themselves to be close with voters who self-identify as Democrats and members of the Democratic party because of the shared political identity both assume (e.g., partisanship) and shared group commonalities (e.g., liberal political ideology, women's issues policy orientation). This process is referred to as group closeness.

Group closeness can be explained by the fact that individuals frequently undergo emotional attachment to social groups as a part of the self-categorization process, which may define their sense of self-esteem. Particularly, people constantly evaluate themselves and others based on their group memberships, differentiating between groups they identify with (in-groups) and groups that they do not identify with (out-groups; Hogg & Reid, 2006). In doing so, individuals create their social identity—that is, one's socially constructed and assumed knowledge of the self that originates as a result of developing emotional attachment and sense of belonging to a social group.

Scholars argue that one's social identity is not a rigid construct, but rather that identity is

a versatile concept that is socially constructed as a result of intergroup relationships between individuals (Huddy, 2013). To be precise, social identity is not a singular construct, it is multifaceted (e.g., individuals may possess more than one social identity, at the same time, that interlace and interact) and situational (e.g., identity may shift depending on the context in which individuals are; Hogg et al., 1995; Huddy, 2013). An example of multifaceted social identity is when Democratic women-candidates are viewed not merely as women, but also as political candidates who identify as Democrats and belong to the Democratic party. However, as mentioned above, social identity is situational, and it may change depending on the context: the social identities of Democratic women-candidates can be also expressed in the form of relational social identities, based on the social roles and character of their interpersonal interactions with others, such as being a friend, a colleague, a wife, and so on.

Adopting a certain social identity and developing attachment to a group may be beneficial as it may promote group cohesion and increase rewards (Tajfel et al., 1971). However, social identity may have negative consequences for members of various groups as well. In particular, SIT can be divisive: it may promote discrimination and intergroup bias (in-group versus out-group mentality) as the powerful effects of assuming a social identity, which, in turn, may lead to intergroup conflicts between members of different social groups (Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1987). Tajfel and Turner (2004) employ three central theoretical assumptions that explain how social identity and categorization function in respect to one another: 1) that people are motivated to uphold or maximize their positive self-esteem as a result of social identification. Therefore, individuals may discriminate out-group members to maintain or increase their positive self-esteem related to group membership; 2) that social group membership can be frequently related to positive and negative assumptions (stereotypes) about others (i.e., an

assumption that all veterans are conservative on the ideological spectrum) ; and 3) that individuals may rely on out-group members as a reference for in-group comparisons to identify the standing of their social group in society. For example, Republican and Democrat political candidates may make references to one another and pursue the same offices. To sum up these ideas, group membership occupies a vital role in SIT and determines the nature of the relationships between individuals that may translate into the field of politics, more specifically, elections.

Although SIT is used frequently as a valuable theoretical tool in intergroup and identity-related research, social identity is a crucial theoretical concept that can also be applied in the context of political communication research. In particular, the application of SIT may allow scholars to examine the effects that various social identities of political candidates who are from diverse backgrounds have on the audience. More specifically, the notion of social identity can be implemented to study the electorate's voting behaviors as SIT explains how one's identity may drive political behaviors, namely, evaluations of political candidates (i.e., candidate's credibility, competence, likability) as well as the electorate's vote choice intent in elections (Hayes, 2005; Huddy, 2013). Therefore, the SIT framework is used in this dissertation to examine the relationships between candidates' interactional identities (gender, partisanship, veteran status) and their effects on voting behaviors. First, I will examine how SIT is associated with the gender identity of political candidates, then, with political identity and partisanship, followed by veteran identity. Finally, I will explain the effects of one's social identity on voting behaviors.

SIT and Gender Identity

Gender identification (i.e., one's sense of their personal gender) may vary from person to person; it can define one's views, beliefs, and behaviors. In particular, by identifying with one

gender or another, a person ascribes themselves into a category with well-defined social norms and rules of conduct that determine what are some of the appropriate and inappropriate modes of behavior in relation to this social category. Gender identity can be formed on the basis of gendered social stereotypes about men and women that are present in society, meaning that individuals may have certain perceptions about prototypical male and female modes of behaviors that they can enact and to which they conform.

However, people do not assume only one identity (Gomez et al., 2020; Lau et al., 2020). People can adopt various social identities based on their group memberships that include but are not limited to gender identity. These identities can be more or less salient, depending on the context of their social interaction (Huddy, 2013; Pradel, 2021). Furthermore, social stereotypes may change the way people view their gender identity. For example, Swann and Bosson (2010) show how gendered stereotypes influence the perception of one's gender identity and, as a result, shift how individuals understand and communicate the status of their social group (i.e., in terms of differing content and style of communication about one's gender). More specifically, Swann and Bosson (2010) argue that men who identify with the male social group are conscious about the fact that their social group has a higher social hierarchical standing compared to women, whereas women recognize that women as a social category have a lower social standing (i.e., status), which, in turn, influences the way that both social groups communicate about their gender identities in conversations with others. Further, Pradel (2021) also argues that stereotypes can trigger a shift in the perceptions of candidate representations: portrayals of female candidates are often biased, and demonstrate the connection between a candidate's gender identity, the presence of information cues, and voter perceptions of a candidate, which may result in worse

evaluations of female candidates as well as potential negative voting outcomes of said candidates (i.e., electoral loss).

Although there are double-barrel stereotypes that may be detrimental for female politicians (Eagly & Karau, 2002), scholars argue that female candidates may use their gender identity to gain electoral advantages. Given that voters frequently describe female politicians in light of gendered stereotypes and can ascribe feminine characteristics, traits, and policy orientations to such candidates (see section on Gender for further information), female political candidates who rely on these stereotypes may be viewed positively by female voters. Hence, female voters may view female candidates in light of their shared gender group identity and interpret similarities in such a group identity as ways of improving the standing of women, as a group, in society (Dolan, 2004; Sanbonmatsu, 2020). This idea explains why female voters evaluate female candidates through a lens of in-group similarities, and, therefore, frequently view them more favorably than male candidates in relation to candidates' charisma, expected effectiveness, and likelihood of voting a particular political candidate (Lau et al., 2020). Thus, gender identity and gendered stereotypes play an important role for political candidates and may influence how voters decide to cast their vote in an election.

Further, one's social identity salience may promote ingroup bias (Mullen et al., 1992). Social identity theorists argue that an increase in ingroup bias may be related to how one's social identity manifests in the face of group-related threats. Specifically, Schmitt and Brant (2019) report that women may strengthen their identification as women when they experience threats related to their gender identity. Further, this process may not always present itself in all cases. For example, sometimes voters may distance themselves from candidates if the candidate they were supporting loses the election (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 2002; Miller, 2013). In other words,

both processes—strengthening of identification as well as weaking can take place as a result of an election.

Consequently, in politics, gendered policy issues associated with one's social identity may result in increasing support in the form of attitudes and behaviors related to this gender identity. To illustrate this idea, if a political candidate who runs a political campaign that explicitly targets women and advocates for women's rights loses the race, women voters may view it as a female identity threat. Consistent with one of the potential consequences described above, some female voters will still uphold their female identity and increase support for gendered policy issues to make up for this threat associated with their gender identity. Gómez et al. (2020) found evidence for this point when analyzing how voters affirmed their gender identities following the electoral loss sustained by Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. Specifically, Gomez and colleagues surveyed voters prior to and directly after the 2016 U.S. presidential election and found out that those voters who identified as Clinton supporters (i.e., voted for her in the election) reinforced their female gender identification with Clinton as a result of an in-group threat (i.e., Clinton's electoral loss).

Further, some scholars argue that not only can gender identity be activated in case of a group threat, but that it can also change based on candidates' party identity (Bauer & Santia, 2022; Ditonto et al., 2014; Pradel, 2021; Schneider & Bos, 2019). For instance, female candidates are considered to be congruent with the Democratic party affiliation due to gendered stereotypes about party identification and its alignment with the female identity. Hence, female candidates who identify as Democrats suffer less from gendered stereotypes because they can lean into these gendered assumptions about party and gender identity congruence.

The communication literature also notes that gender identity may not be the only factor that predicts the outcome of elections, as political candidates may activate several social identities and may also choose which identity to emphasize or to conceal (Devine, 2015; Greene, 2004, Huddy, 2013). Therefore, another identity worth investigating is political candidates' partisan identity and its effects on voting behaviors.

SIT and Political Identity: Party Identification and Partisanship

Partisanship is argued to be an influential social identity that can have an impact on how voters evaluate political candidates (Campbell et al., 1954; Clifford, 2020; Greene, 2004; Iyengar et al., 2012). Further, Hayes (2005) argues that political candidates' traits are examined by voters through a lens of partisan stereotypes, meaning that stereotypes about partisan identity make individuals perceive Democratic candidates as more empathetic and caring, whereas Republican candidates are frequently thought of in terms of intelligence and leadership. Thus, one can argue that partisan bias may have an impact on how voters perceive political candidates due to preferential treatment of in-groups, based on SIT postulates (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). What is more, some individuals may choose to blur the lines between partisan labels or misrepresent one's partisan identity in hopes of avoiding the negative effects of partisan bias (i.e., claiming to be independent), which can be a strategic behavior to appear more likeable for out-group party members (Klar & Krupnikov, 2016). Abandonment, blurring, or misrepresentation of one's partisan identity undoubtedly demonstrates that this social identity may play a crucial role in evaluations of political candidates.

Further, merely being a member of a social group, such as, for example, identifying as a Democrat or Republican, does not often translate into individuals adopting particular political views or acting on behalf of such as social group (Huddy, 2013). Research shows that strong

social identity that aligns with group membership (i.e., a strong political identity) plays a significant role in politics and has an impact on voter behaviors. For example, strong party partisanship is frequently associated with increased likelihood of voting, engaging in various political activities, funding political campaigns, and volunteering for political candidates or political party (Fowler & Kam, 2007; Huddy, 2013). Further, Bartels (2000) argues that strong party partisanship can impact how voters evaluate political candidates. Namely, strong partisans tend to express partisan bias more than weak partisans when assessing presidential candidates in elections. Thus, partisanship may have a significant influence on individuals' voting behaviors. Some political candidates may choose to operate strategically when it comes to communicating their partisan identity in order to gain voter support.

The development of a strong social identity (i.e., strong party partisanship) can be partially explained by the notion of prototypical group membership. Prototypical group members define what the group, as a social category, is, the group's limits, as well as (in)appropriate social norms and group behaviors within the group (Turner et al., 1987). Further, prototypical group members may employ behaviors that may increase cohesion within such a social group. Therefore, one can say that group identity can be established and reproduced by group members who reference the beliefs and behaviors of prototypical group members. For instance, Huddy (2013) argue that political leaders (e.g., national leaders, party leaders, political candidates), who are typically referred to as prototypical group members, may have an impact on group members and their behaviors through the values and beliefs these political leaders communicate.

Furthermore, Hogg and Reid (2006) argue that the language political leaders adopt in their speeches is not accidental, and it frequently contains cues directed at increasing the political cohesiveness of social groups. Specifically, one of these indicators is the use of pronouns that

communicate a sense of commonality and unite individuals (i.e., “I”). For example, messages of political leaders (i.e., political candidates) as members of social groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), may increase the degree of civic engagement among U.S. citizens. As mentioned above, group members whose strength of social identity is higher, in this case, members that self-identify as strong party partisans, can be more easily impacted by the messages of prototypical group leaders (i.e., political candidates). Scholars also note that one’s attitudes towards policy issues can be swayed by political leaders, given that the strength of voters’ partisanship is great (Green & Gerber, 2010; Zaller, 1992). Thus, strength of one’s association with a specific political party may have a strong effect on voter behaviors, including perceptions and evaluations of political candidates, given the in-group versus out-group perspective that many voters may unintentionally adopt.

Additionally, scholars note that strong partisans may work hard to increase the chances of their candidate winning an election due to ingroup bias and the desire to increase positive self-esteem though their partisan identity (Andreychick & Gill, 2009; Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Fowler & Kam, 2007; Rydell et al., 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2008). One can explain how partisan identity functions through a comparison with football fans: just like football fans, who tend to identify closely with their sports teams, partisans identify with their political party closely through self-categorizing as members of that political party. As a result, they may experience ingroup bias and may take candidates’ electoral victories or losses to heart. Elections, for partisan voters, mean ensuring that their social group (i.e., political party) is in good standing compared to other groups (e.g., other political parties), and that membership in their social group is evaluated highly. Consequently, partisan identity drives individuals to defend their social group membership in elections and can even result in vilifying political candidates from

opposing political parties, if individuals' social identity (partisanship) is threatened (Mackie et al., 2000). One's strong partisanship identity also translates into excitement related to positive news exposure when this information pertains to group members and negative news about out-groups (Huddy, 2013).

Further, Huddy (2013) also adds that strong partisans are more prone to irrational behaviors. If a partisan's identity is undermined by a potential electoral loss (of their party candidate), this can change the course of an election by a decrease in political participation (i.e., to protect the sense of self-esteem resulting from one's group membership). However, strong partisans tend to be more politically active if their political candidates may lose the election to increase the likelihood of these candidates winning the race (Huddy, 2013). Cross-pressured voters, or conflicted partisan voters who do have limited ideological constraints and may self-identify with groups related to an opposing party (Powell Jr., 1986) demonstrate weak partisanship, and are less prone to cast their vote in an election. According to Gallego and Rodden (2016), cross-pressured voters are conflicted or undecided voters who may diverge on a range on political issues (e.g., cross-pressured voters can be liberal and supporting the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community and, at the same time, they can be pro-lifers, which is a conservative perspective, typically held by members of the Republican party). Therefore, these types of voters are the target of political campaigns that strive to change the preferences of named undecided voters so that their ideology and partisanship match (Krasa & Polborn, 2018).

This section explained that political communication scholars identify a connection between political candidates' partisanship, as a social identity category, and voting behaviors (Cohen, 2003; Malka & Lelkes, 2010). Thus, employing the notion of social identity to examine its effects on partisanship is crucial as it allows to explain how partisanship is developed, and

how voters behave based on the ideas of in-group and out-group belonging. However, gender and partisan identities are not the only factors that shape voting behaviors; it is necessary to examine the relationships between other identities, such as candidates' veteran identity and voting behaviors.

SIT and Veteran Identity

Military veteran status is one possible identity trait of political candidates that voters evaluate when they cast their ballot for a candidate in elections. Civilian identity significantly differs from military identity due to diverging values, views, beliefs, ideology, behaviors, and other aspects of these two cultures. These differences can be so impactful that some veterans are reported to experience an identity crisis upon transitioning back to civilian culture (Silverstein, 1994). Former servicemembers adopt the cultural aspects of military veteran identity as a result of basic training and military service. Upon exiting the military, this identity is not completely discarded, but rather transformed into something new and carried to one's civilian world (Howe, 2022).

Veterans are frequently referred to as an invisible minority given that their veteran identity may not be palpable to civilians. Thus, former servicemembers may employ various verbal and non-verbal cues that communicate to others their sense of belonging to the veterans' social group. For example, veterans may signal their veteran identity by using military jargon, unique military insignia and patches, and patriotic or veteran-made apparel. However, even though military veterans may share similar experiences as a result of their military service, not all veterans' identities are similar. For example, the war era in which they were involved, veterans' combat versus non-combat status, type and length of deployment, any sustained traumas and/or disability may have an impact on one's strength of association with the military

identity. Therefore, not all veterans may demonstrate the same degree of emotional attachment to the veteran identity, namely, veterans as a social group. This idea is crucial in terms of political candidates and voting behaviors, as veteran candidates can be strategic in how they communicate their degree of attachment to the veteran identity to increase their likelihood of winning a race.

Endicott (2022) examined one's veteran status from the perspective of social identity and discovered that some veterans may have a stronger sense of the veteran identity, meaning that they may strongly self-identify as veterans and also experience closeness with other veterans as a social group when compared to civilians. However, this is not always the case, not all veterans may demonstrate the same degree of emotional attachment with the veteran group. There was an exception, though, in that military-affiliated civilians also showed a high degree of connection with the veteran identity (Endicott, 2022). Thus, if civilians have relatives or friends who are veterans, then they probably categorize these veterans and themselves as members of one social group, and, therefore, experience a higher sense of belonging to the veteran identity. Further, Endicott also notes that there are additional factors that can strengthen the sense of belonging to the veteran identity. For instance, military combat experience and valuing time (i.e., a monochronic time orientation) signals an increased association with the veteran identity (Endicott, 2022; Hammond, 2016). Combat veteran identity, in other words, is an identity that is influenced by combat-related experiences and participation in combat for former military members (Austin, 2019).

Similar findings concerning the combat experiences of veterans in politics were reported by Best at al. (2021). Hunter and Best (2020) noted that women who adopt veteran identities may face reintegration challenges and can have their veteran identity undermined due to their gender by civilians, other veterans, and veteran-oriented organizations. Thus, some veterans may

anticipate these challenges and prefer to conceal their veteran identity to “fit in” with civilians and meet their expectations (Burkhart & Hogan, 2015). Further, the challenges that female veterans experience may threaten their professional career as well; female politicians who identify as non-combat veterans are perceived by voters as less credible than combat veteran female politicians (Best at al., 2021).

Additionally, female candidates who assume the veteran identity risk appearing either too masculine or not feminine enough for voters, which, in part, can be related to one’s gender identity being incongruent with the veteran identity. Scholars show concern that women may be less prone to self-identify as veterans, openly communicate belonging to this social group, and, ultimately, be deprived of any social rewards associated with military status by becoming “invisible” (Best et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2017). Bishin and Incantalupo (2008) refer to candidates who concealed their veteran identities as latent veteran identity individuals. To summarize, female candidates with both combat and non-combat veteran identity need to communicate openly their military veteran identity to voters not only to increase their chances of winning an election, but also to be able to break the social norm and normalize female veterans as a social group. Luckily, there are more and more female candidates who identify as military veterans and who proudly display their social identity, paving the road for the future generations of veterans (Shane III, 2022; Smith, 2022;).

As mentioned above, the military veteran identity plays a significant role in politics and electoral processes. Teigen (2007, 2013) argues that the military veteran identity is associated with higher levels of political participation and vote choice intent (Bishin & Incantalupo, 2008; Leal & Teigen, 2018). This scholarship also shows that both civilians and veterans tend to exhibit their partisan identities to the same degree. Further, another interesting finding reported

by Endicott (2022) shows that, for most veterans, the strength of one's attachment to the veteran identity supersedes the effects of partisan identity, which may influence voter perceptions of policy issues (e.g., military spending). Different levels of attachment to the veteran identity among veterans shows that, although there is a higher chance for the veteran population to cast their vote in elections, veterans may not vote as a single block, but rather rely on various social identities to make this decision. However, veteran candidates rarely tend to activate one social identity when they seek political office in elections.

To illustrate this point, Hardy et al. (2019)'s experiment examining the relationships between candidates' interactional identities—gender, political affiliation, and veteran status—and voter perceptions of candidates' military issue competence (i.e., defense, foreign policy) from a SIT perspective is relevant. Their results showed that the veteran identity benefitted political candidates and may put candidates with civilian identities at a disadvantage in respect to military issue competence (Hardy et al., 2019). However, one of the study's limitations was related to the student sample employed, which is not entirely representative of the typical U.S. population. Thus, it is crucial to examine further, with different samples, the role of political candidates' social identities when they interact, and the role that candidates' identity interactionality may play in shaping voter behaviors.

Intersectional and Interactional Identities

Many scholars have studied identity traits associated with political candidates and voting behaviors only separately, not accounting for possible interactions of such social identities. Namely, candidates' gender, or their political affiliation have been studied by scholars independently, overlooking the fact that candidates' social identities may potentially interlace and interact to affect voters' behaviors. According to Brown and Gershon (2016), the effects of

several identity traits of political candidates cannot be understood in terms of the "additive effect" of these identities but must be studied as a unique phenomenon.

Accounting for a combination of candidates' social identities and their effects on the outcome of an election based on candidates' interactional identities is possible as scholars now recognize that one's identity is a complex construct, composed of multiple social identity traits that can be activated at the same time. A perspective that explains how various identities may work in conjunction, influencing social perceptions, is intersectionality (Caballero, 2022; Weldon, 2008).

Intersectionality is a theoretical concept developed by Crenshaw (2017). It can be defined as the complex overlapping of social identities that are rooted in one's self-categorizations. Intersectional scholars study how a person's multiple social identities interact and, hence, may benefit or disadvantage individuals with such identities. Crucial to intersectionality is then this idea that certain identity traits, when combined, create situations of privilege or disadvantage. For example, race and sex create different realities, opportunities, and prejudice for a White woman, or a Black man. I recognize and emphasize the differences between the notion of intersectionality in its traditional sense, and the concept of interactional identities that is discussed in this dissertation in relation to political candidates' identities. Intersectionality informs my proposed concept of interactionality. I suggest that, similar to how intersectionality proposes that social identities interact, interactionality captures the complex nature of overlapping social identities of political candidates that interact with one another to create a candidate image for voters.

Schneider and Bos (2019) argue that media portrayals and perceptions of political candidates can be affected by identity traits other than the candidate's gender. Such identities

include, for example, a candidate's age, ethnicity, race (Bejarano et al., 2021), disability status, or political affiliation. The most prominent combination of identity factors that scholars have studied is the interaction of candidates' gender and race/ethnicity (Bejarano et al., 2021; Gershon et al., 2019; Montoya et al., 2022). When it comes to political candidates, the major political parties in the United States are seek political candidates that can represent members of marginalized communities, due to a high demand and changes in voters' demographics (Lucas & Silber Mohamed, 2021; Sanbonmatsu, 2020). In other words, political candidates that can combine various identities (i.e., check multiple boxes, such as, for example, vice-president Kamala Harris, who is a biracial woman), are more sought after, and are increasingly likely to pursue political office and participate in elections. Thus, candidates may have overlapping or interactional identity traits that can influence voters' perceptions of them. Therefore, this study proposes examining the relationships between one's gender, partisanship, and veteran identity as interactional identities and investigating further how these identities drive voter evaluations of political candidates.

SIT and Interactionality

Some scholars believe that multiple social identities function independently in respect to the influence of identity cues on one's views, beliefs, and behaviors. For example, Emerson and Murphy (2014) argue that people can switch between their social identities from time to time, as only one single identity can be activated at one time. There are other scholars, however, who recognize that people can activate multiple social identities at the same time, contrary to previously expressed beliefs that social identities can only function in isolation from one another (Ashforth, 2000). Thus, it is necessary to recognize this second assumption, that political candidates can activate several social identities at the same time, and that multiple social groups

identifications may increase or decrease their chances of winning a race, based on how voters perceive these social identities (Lau et al., 2020). For example, the studies that have examined the 2010 U.S. House and 2006 U.S. Senate elections showed that gender identity cues were a weak indicator of candidate evaluations compared with one's party identity (Dolan, 2014; Hayes, 2011). This means that stereotypes associated with one's gender identity do not always have a definitive impact on the outcome of elections when other social identity variables are present.

To illustrate this claim, Pradel (2021) argues that two or more candidates' social identity traits may influence how voters perceive candidates and how they cast their ballot. Specifically, both the political identity of a candidate and their gender identity matter for conservative female candidates, given that the interaction of these two social identity traits makes these candidates stand out from the rest of the candidates in an election (Evans, 2016; Ferree, 2006; Pradel, 2021; Wiliarty, 2010). In other words, the discrepancy caused by the incongruence of candidates' gender identity and political identity may place such candidates in the spotlight and may challenge their chances of winning a race because of this incongruence. For example, this discrepancy may raise questions about their competence and may elicit group bias.

Bankert (2021) attempted to examine the relationships between one's partisanship and gender identity to see how they functioned together. The results of that study showed that social identities (for example, gender) may have an impact on partisanship identity, meaning the two are interconnected. Specifically, the results showed that female Democrats may experience increased partisanship towards female politicians because these female politicians were perceived by participants as stereotypical party members. However, this may not be the case for female candidates who identify as Republicans, as they may need to navigate the challenges associated with gender and partisan identity simultaneously.

Further, Mason & Wronski (2018) examined the relationships between multiple interactional identities (race, religion, political ideology, party identification, and partisanship), and found that multiple identity convergence for participants was associated with stronger partisanship (Green et al., 2002; Krupnikov & Piston, 2015; Layman & Carsey, 2002; Mangum, 2013). Mason & Wronski (2018) note that voters are not simply partisans, but individuals who have complex social identities consisting of various dimensions. Therefore, authors argue that voters' social identities become increasingly connected with one another, a process that Mason & Wronski refer to as "social sorting," which generates strong affective response from partisans in respect to elections and political debates, which, in turn, may result in an increase in voter political engagement. For example, strong partisans may loathe political rivals and may react more enthusiastically to partisan messaging in political campaigns, especially in the face of a threat to their partisan candidate (i.e., threat to in-group identity from a non-partisan out-group). Therefore, one can say that multiple aligned social identities and strong partisanship can be related to greater expressiveness towards specific candidates or policies (Huddy, 2013). Overall, scholars emphasize that social sorting (aligning of multiple social identities) among some of the electorate members promotes nonstable voter responses, and, as a result, unstable voting behaviors, which may influence the outcome of elections.

Nevertheless, the scholarship that looks specifically at the interaction of gender identity, partisan identity, and veteran identity altogether, is scarce. Therefore, applying SIT to study how candidates' gender, partisanship, and veteran status impact voting behaviors in U.S. congressional elections can bring additional useful knowledge about candidates' identities and the electorate's behaviors.

In sum, this section discussed the notion of overlapping social identities that may inform candidates' interactional identities. It is also important to examine how the idea of one's social identity may drive social behaviors based on how individuals categorize themselves and others to reveal how these processes may influence one's voting behaviors.

Scholarship on Voting Behaviors

According to Nathan (2019), voting behaviors are "conventional means of expressing one's political preferences that can directly influence government" (p. 277). Voting behaviors allow citizens to execute their political rights and ensure via elections that the government and legislators address their concerns. At the same time, voting is another way of performing one's civic duty (Blais, 2000; Gerber et al., 2013).

Scholarship on voting behaviors is vast. For instance, scholars have examined aspects of voting behaviors that describe the identity of voters or their intrinsic motivations that drive their vote, some of the reasons why people decide to participate in elections as voters, or the ways one can increase voter turnout, among other key facets of voting (e.g., Campbell, 2006; Gerber et al., 2013; Green & Gerber, 2010; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Leighley & Nagler, 2013; Verba & Nie, 1987).

Some of the key studies that describe the state and nature of voting behaviors in the United States can be traced back to late 1940s. One of the seminal studies that represents this time period was Berelson et al.'s (1986) research that examined voting behaviors during the 1940 and 1944 U.S. presidential elections. Berelson and colleagues discovered that voters did not always make rational decisions (in terms of voting), which may explain the results of their voting behaviors. Further, scholars also indicate that this lack of rational decision-making in voting behaviors can be due to the fact that some voters may have limited political knowledge—limited

in size, range, and organization, according to Luskin (1987). Voters' limited knowledge about political candidates and the political process, in general, may impact their ability to cast an informed vote in elections (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993) and the state of democracy in the country (Wiman, 2015).

Specifically, it is important to learn how voters' behaviors and voter participation are shaped. Some voters may not be familiar with the specifics of the voting process (i.e., voting procedures), how to differentiate between political parties, or what are some of the political issues embraced by the candidates that voters plan to support (Arnold, 2012; Wiman, 2015). To illustrate this example, if voters' behaviors are rooted in faulty beliefs about or prejudice towards particular political candidates, then the value of such vote choices can be easily undermined. Further, one person relying on flawed perceptions of a candidate to guide their voting behaviors, may not have substantial effects on elections; however, if hundreds or thousands of people make a choice without careful consideration of their vote, then the quality of representation in the U.S. political institutions and the U.S. democracy, overall, can plummet (Brennan, 2011; Caplan, 2012; Wiman, 2015).

Other scholars suggest voters may bridge the political knowledge gap in relation to political candidates if they rely on heuristic cues (Lupia & McCubbins, 2000). Heuristic cues are "mental shortcuts that require hardly any information – to make fairly reliable political judgements," according to Lupia and McCubbins (2000). They aid voters in determining their vote choice based on subtle cues about political candidates, such as, for example, candidates' gender, partisanship, ideology, veteran status, and other identity traits. Fairly often, voters also rely on media to obtain information about the candidates that will determine their vote choice.

Information presented in the media may fashion political judgements about candidates (i.e., voter evaluations). For example, if voters were recently exposed to specific political issues (e.g., immigration), or images (Druckman, 2004) then they will be more likely to think about these issues and rely on this information to evaluate candidates. Moehler and Conroy-Krutz (2016) argue that pictures of political candidates implemented directly onto voting ballots make voters think about candidates' identity. Further, candidates' images may aid in forming certain perceptions towards candidates, as well as shaping various attitudes that may impact the character of vote choice (Conroy-Krutz et al., 2016). For example, some scholars have found that the halo effect influences candidates' performance (Banducci et al., 2008; Johns & Shephard, 2011), which, in turn, may present these candidates in a more positive light for voters, making the latter choose candidates based on their appearance. Further, some scholars have studied the role depictions of candidates' eyes in campaign materials may play in elections, namely, that some depictions of candidates' eyes may promote in-group loyalty (Moehler & Conroy-Krutz, 2016). Pictures communicate some identity cues about candidates that may be assessed by voters through a lens of intergroup communication. These cues communicated by political candidates eventually allow voters to make a decision and cast a vote for one candidate over another.

To summarize the above-mentioned scholarship on candidates' depictions in campaign materials, candidate representations play a key role in the electoral processes as they help to shape public opinions about politicians. More so, candidates' images are often carefully curated and typically emphasize candidates' strengths in order to influence voter perceptions positively. To do so, PR specialists and communication professionals that develop campaign materials carefully develop the content and mold the form of campaign messages that depict the candidate. Further, portraying candidates as likable, trustworthy, honest, and competent in their campaign

materials may result in more positive candidate evaluations and voter support. At the same time, highlighting candidates' negative traits could be damaging to them and may significantly reduce their chances of winning elections. Most importantly, not only do the content and form of the political campaigns matter, but also the communication channel used to transmit this information. In the next few paragraphs, I will talk about the different forms of political advertisements and the reason why I chose political mailers as the primary communication channel for this dissertation.

Political Mailers as a Form of Advertising

Political advertising is another complex facet of the electoral process, where the main goal is to craft an effective message and share it with voters through various communication channels in order to shape a desired image and outcome for the candidate and the party. Frequently, the overarching goal is to ensure positive evaluations of the above-mentioned political candidates and political parties (Stier et al., 2018). Political candidates, campaign managers, PR and communication experts, and other stakeholders involved in the electoral process may design political advertisements to influence the electorate's voting behaviors (i.e., to mobilize voters) by emphasizing a candidate's positive traits, background, accomplishments, past record, qualifications, and downplaying their opponent's achievements (Stier et al., 2018).

Political advertising entails various forms of communication and utilizes various communication channels to transmit these persuasive messages about candidates to audiences (Towner & Dulio, 2012). Political advertising takes many forms which include but are not limited to TV and radio advertisements, billboard advertising, phone calls, phone messaging (SMS), snail mail, social media marketing (i.e., Twitter, Instagram), and political email marketing (i.e., mailers) among others (Stier et al., 2018; Towner & Dulio, 2012; Vaccari, 2010).

Political email marketing became one of the more popular forms of political advertisements around the early 2000s, more specifically, around the 2008 U.S. Presidential election, that allowed candidates to explore and implement some of the principles of email marketing to connect with voters and attract campaign supporters (e.g., Bimber, 2014). Further, email political campaign marketing is a relatively affordable form of political advertising, as it allows candidates to craft personalized messages and share them directly with a large number of voters (or potential voters) to raise awareness about the campaign and the candidate or to engage in fundraising practices (Cogbutn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). According to Pack (2010), former president Obama built an impressive email list, and his political campaign communication experts developed over 7000 different types of political campaign messages (mailers) that then resulted in 1.2 billion emails sent to (potential) voters.

The success of political email marketing and mailers is, in part, defined by the decline in other forms of political campaign advertising, such as phone calling on behalf of the candidate (in part due to a decrease in landline use as well as due to specific government regulations; Michaelsen, 2015). Further, political canvassing as a method of political advertising is time consuming, physically strenuous, and may result in encountering individuals that are indifferent to elections. Mailers are not limited in their capacity to communicate information about the candidates and are less expensive compared to radio and TV advertisements. Mailers can also yield carefully crafted political messages about the candidates and can easily reach the desired target demographics.

Thus, political campaign mailers are an effective form of political campaign advertising, as they can reach the desired audiences, they are affordable, and can provide detailed information about the candidate and their political platform to engage with potential voters and existing

political candidate supporters. Therefore, based on the current political advertising scholarship and the fact that video stimuli may introduce additional bias, to avoid any additional candidate identity traits being captured in a video (e.g., age, race, attractiveness), I decided to limit the scope of the current study and implement political campaign mailers as the primary communication channel in the experimental stimuli for the study. Selecting mailers as the channel of communication between the hypothetical political candidate and participants allows me to examine the variables of interest in an appropriate manner, in a design that will control for the effects of other communication mediums by exposing participants to the same experimental stimuli.

In the following section I will detail the scholarship on vote choice and will provide a rationale as to why vote choice intent was chosen as one of the main variables for analysis.

Vote Choice

Vote choice or one's rational decision to cast a vote (Ensley, 2007) may be related to, for example, the presence or absence of information cues about political candidates and, consequently, voters' decision to cast a vote for a particular candidate either in the presence or scarcity of such cues. According to Berelson et al. (1986), most voters may lack information about candidates or fail to make fully rational voting choices in elections. At the same time, scholars have found that voters might be reluctant to cast their vote for a candidate with whom they are unfamiliar or for a candidate about whom they have little knowledge (Alvarez & Nagler, 1998; Alvarez & Franklin, 1994; Bartels, 1986, 1988).

Specifically, Popkin (1991) argues that one of the reasons why voters may lack information or do not always cast a rational choice is because they do not always research political candidates and their stance on policies thoroughly, given that there is little reward for

researching political information except for increasing knowledge about the candidates (Bernhard & Freeder, 2020; Downs, 1957). Bernhard and Freeder (2020) add that sometimes political campaigns can be too sophisticated for an average voter. Further, Nicholson (2021) echoes these authors by saying that some "citizens do not find politics important enough to expend the effort to stay informed and if they did, they would only attend to a few matters" (p. 54). Thus, the scholarship demonstrates that voting behaviors may not always be driven by some rational choices, but rather can be quite impulsive due to the lack of knowledge about the candidates.

Nevertheless, voters who try to fulfil their civic duties may try to investigate candidates either by searching information about them, or by relying on heuristic cues or various other cues that can inform them about candidates' identities (Bernhard & Freeder, 2020). Thus, political communication scholarship emphasizes the role of heuristics in voting behaviors—that is, reliance on various cues, sometimes in cases when political knowledge is not present or limited, in order to make an informed vote (Vis, 2019; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Such cues allow voters to use informational shortcuts to make a decision about a candidate and cast their ballot (Bernhard & Freeder, 2020).

For example, high-profile races (i.e., presidential elections) typically provide voters with more information cues about the candidates through the coverage and publications in the media. One of such cues can be candidates' partisanship, because media considers high-profile races to be more newsworthy (Meeks, 2012). On the contrary, lower-level races (i.e., local or non-partisan elections) may leave voters with only information pertaining to candidates' names and titles (Oliver & Ha, 2007). Further, scholars present mixed findings on whether heuristic cues actually benefit voters or not (Bartels, 1996; Vis, 2019; Gilens, 2011; Lupia, 1994). However,

scholars do show that sophistication aids voters in better use of heuristic cues in general (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). A sophisticated approach means a relevant, verifiable, and specific inquiry that seeks information about the candidates. Sophisticated voters tend to conduct a quick and effective inquiry about candidates that allows them to make a rational voting decision (Lau et al., 2020), whereas voters that lack sophistication mainly employ some unsuccessful tactics (personalistic considerations, generalized, unreliable, ambiguous or unrelated searches; Bernhard & Freeder, 2020) that can weaken political representation (Redlawsk, 2004). Lupia (1994) discovered that low informed voters or those voters who are unfamiliar with the subject may implement informational shortcuts to imitate more informed behavior about policies and cast their vote.

Some voters may expect candidates' information to provide the so-called "deal-breaker" heuristic cues or be able to meet key expectations (Bernhard and Freeder, 2020). If, based on "deal-breaker" heuristic cues, candidates demonstrate that they cannot meet these baseline expectations, then voters may penalize them. Further, Bernhard and Freeder (2020), McKelvey and Ordeshook (1986), as well as Bartels (1996), argue that voters may rely on party identification cues (i.e., party label, identified based on party's ideology; Downs, 1957) and retrospection (i.e., retrospective evaluations of candidates' past performance, for instance, their successes and failures in office; Fiorina, 1978) as shortcuts to make decisions about candidates. Voters may also rely on partisan cues (i.e., the degree of attachment to political party; Nicholson, 2021) and ethnic and racial cues (i.e., cues that signal or communicate ethnic and racial identity; Berinsky et al., 2020; Connaughton, 2013; McConnaughy et al., 2010; Valentino et al., 2018) that sometimes can be evoked by the candidates themselves to increase voters' knowledge about the candidates.

For example, Berinsky et al. (2020) argued candidates relied on associative cues that may trigger associations with racial groups. The authors corroborate this argument in their study by conducting two experiments with fictional campaign advertisements. Their results showed that racial and ethnic cues may be perceived by voters as more salient than other types of cues, which, in turn, may influence the voting behaviors of these individuals. Given that not all voters are willing to learn more about political candidates, voters may be at disadvantage due to lack of information about nominees. Some scholars have investigated this issue and showed how voting behaviors may change depending on the presence or lack of information about candidates (Lupia, 1994; Nicholson, 2021; Oliver & Ha, 2007; Shulman et al., 2022). Shulman et al. (2022) examined how information is presented on a ballot and what kind of information on the ballot may interfere with information-processing, influencing vote choice. More specifically, Shulman and colleagues discovered that the complexity of the information presented on voting ballots had an impact on how quickly voters processed this information, which, consequently, had an impact on people's voting behaviors. For instance, highly complex information presented on ballots was frequently opposed to or led to voting abstinence (Shulman et al., 2022).

To summarize, not only may the presence or absence of information pertaining to the political candidates influence voting behaviors, and, more specifically, vote choice, but also the complexity of the information presented on the ballot can have a significant impact on how voters may process information related to political candidates. The scholarship demonstrates why studying political communication is essential, and how voter information processing may lead to specific and tangible electoral outcomes. Therefore, candidates may want to communicate information about their social identities, their stances on political issues, as well as to engage

with voters by participation in political campaigns. Thus, current scholarship that examines how political campaigns may play a role in forming the electorate's voting behaviors is important.

Vote Choice Intent

Anticipated voting behaviors or vote choice intent indicates the likelihood or probability that an individual will cast their vote for a particular candidate (Bernstein, 1991). The literature that examines vote choice is vast. Scholars tend to label and define this theoretical concept quite differently: "anticipated voting behavior" (e.g., Golan et al., 2008), "propensity to vote" (e.g., Blais & St-Vincent, 2010; Serani, 2022), "voter turnout" (e.g., Clarke et al., 2004) to name a few. Vote choice is one of the variables that political communication scholars use to predict electoral outcomes. This concept is mainly focused on participants' preferences for one or another candidate (i.e., participants are typically asked to indicate which candidate they would vote for). In other words, vote choice captures the dichotomous intent to vote for a candidate, without any other indications about individuals' stance on that candidate. Therefore, expanding the concept of vote choice will allow me to learn more nuanced aspects about voters' intentions regarding a candidate, such as their support for the candidate but also the strength of this support To this end, I am proposing *vote choice intent* as a measure of individuals' intended voting behaviors, their desire to cast a vote for a particular candidate, and the strength of their preference for this candidate (i.e., hypothetical candidate in this dissertation's design). The variable is a continuous one instead of a dichotomous one. Therefore, I will be developing a new scale to measure this concept in the current dissertation.

Scholars tend to agree that there are multiple potential factors that determine the electorate's vote choice in elections. Blais (2006) summarized these ideas by deriving two main factors that may influence the electorate's voting choices: voters' political interest and their

sense of civic duty. Voters may think that the costs involved in the process of casting their vote for a candidate are less taxing than potential benefits, they may experience a strong urge to communicate their political beliefs by participating in elections, and they may also experience a desire to perform their civic duty and adhere to social norms (Blais, 2000, 2006; Blais & St-Vincent, 2011; Campbell et al., 1954). More specifically, Campbell et al. (1954) claim that other factors may also be related to one's vote choice intentions, such as voters' genuine interest in the political campaign, a distress that may be caused by some disturbing potential electoral outcome.

More so, Verba et al. (1995) echo that political interest plays a critical role in voting behaviors, since a lack of interest in politics may lead to a decrease in political engagement and participation, which further lead to a decline in the number of voters that cast their vote in elections. Clarke et al. (2004) echo Verba et al. (1995), but also add that scholars need to consider not only voters' interest in an election, but also trust in politicians, politicians' efficacy in the office, voters' civic duty, and partisanship of both voters and the candidates. Further, the analysis conducted by Clarke et al. (2004) showed that political interest and one's civic duty were the two factors that strongly influenced voting behaviors in political elections. Blais and St-Vincent (2010) conducted a survey that measured political attitudes of voters and their propensity to vote prior to elections. They found that vote choice intent was strongly linked to sense of civic duty and voters' political interest, revealing similarities between these two studies. If voters are engaged and elicit genuine interest in the political race, then their likelihood to participate in an election and cast their vote is high.

Thus, different variables may drive the electorate's likelihood to cast their vote in an election. An important consideration is the notion of descriptive representation, which may have a significant impact on how diverse voters perceive messages presented in electoral campaign

ads and how they view political candidates (Gevorgyan, 2010). McCarthy et al. (2016) claim that voters do recognize candidates' identity traits and may seek to support candidates that share certain identity traits (e.g., gender), rather than supporting candidates with particular stances on certain political issues. For example, some voters may strive to embrace cultural similarity and cast their vote for a candidate with a similar ethnic or racial background as theirs (Ansolabehere & Fraga 2016; Barreto, 2010; Burge et al., 2020; McConnaughy et al., 2010; Wamble, 2018). What is more, a degree of attachment to one's cultural identity (i.e., a degree of self-identification as belonging to a certain ethnic or racial cultural group) may influence perceptions and interpretations of political campaign messages as well as shape voters' behaviors (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Herd & Grube, 1996).

To elaborate this point, racially/ethnically diverse voters may not connect with political candidates who emphasize and target anti-immigrant initiatives in their political campaigns. But those voters who exhibit a high degree of connection with a political candidate on the basis of some shared values will likely express high support for the candidates and may try to actively promote such candidates in conversations with other individuals. Bishin and Klofstad (2009) report that, sometimes, political campaign ads target particular subgroups of ethnic voters (i.e., specific subgroups of ethnically or racially diverse voter populations). For example, candidates may strive to connect with specific subgroups of Latino/Latinx voters, in states where such groups may influence the electoral outcome (e.g., Florida). Nevertheless, some sources report that ethnically diverse individuals may struggle with political participation as a result of being disconnected from political talks and, in general, access or exposure to relevant political information (American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2006). As a result, a lack of connection with political messages may have a significant impact on individuals' voting

behaviors. Therefore, to overcome incongruence and to connect with diverse groups of voters, political candidates may intentionally draft messages for their campaign ads that convey cues related to cultural identity.

In sum, culture, and more specifically, one's cultural identity can have a strong impact on how voters may cast their ballot. In this sense, culture can be that power that guides voters to engage in particular electoral behaviors, including increased political participation and amplified candidate support. Political candidates need to acknowledge this force and strive to use strategic messaging in order to attract or to better connect with particular social and cultural groups of voters that could have the ability to change the course of elections. However, candidates also need to recognize cultural differences across the social groups of voters as well as acknowledge that there might be differences in voting behaviors within each group of voters.

Political Campaigns

Political campaigns frequently serve as a useful source of information and may help potential voters form their opinions about candidates (Donovan et al., 2020; Holbrook, 1996; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Farrel & Schmitt-Beck, 2003). The nature of political campaigns may decide whether or not people can engage in correct voting or "the likelihood that citizens, under conditions of incomplete information, nonetheless vote for the candidate or party they would have voted for had they had full information about those same candidates and/or parties" (Lau et al., 2020, p. 396). On the contrary, an incorrect vote occurs "when a voter supports a candidate or party in the choice set who holds positions further away from her own than does one of the other options" (Pierce & Lau, 2019, p. 3). Scholars have extensively studied this question at the individual and contextual levels (Ha & Lau, 2015; Lau et al., 2020; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; McClurg & Holbrook, 2009). Specifically, Nai (2015) examined political campaigns' nature and

content (i.e., intensity, negativity), and discovered that "correct" voting may depend on individual and contextual factors, namely, that political sophistication and use of heuristics may increase the likelihood of "correct" voting. Further, intense campaigns may spark voters' interest and have a motivating effect on their participation (Wolak, 2009).

Negative political campaigns are campaigns that purposefully spread negative information about candidates to degrade their image. In general, although, negative messages can draw public attention, the public tends to dislike such messages. Therefore, voters may disconnect from candidates who rely on negative campaigns (Nai, 2015). However, voters may exhibit a stronger reaction when exposed to negative messages compared to positive messages (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Negative political campaigns are associated with election outcomes (Mattes et al., 2010), more specifically, voter turnout (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Fridkin & Kenney, 2004; Nai, 2015), and the mobilization of voters (Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Fridkin & Kenney, 2004; Jackson & Carsey, 2007; Niven, 2006).

In particular, Mattes and colleagues (2010) argue that voters may be more prone to remembering negative information about political candidates in comparison with positive information. Furthermore, negative information may more easily leave a significant print onto voters' memory for a longer time and may be harder to transform or change in the future. In their study, the authors identified two negative candidate traits, deceit and threat, as their variables of interest. Their results indicate that negative perceptions of candidates that voters were unfamiliar with may shape negative perceptions of these candidates, which, consequently, may predict electoral outcomes (Mattes et al., 2010).

Thus, political campaigns are an important resource that can be used by voters to learn more about candidates' identity cues as well as to form impressions about the candidates. If the

campaigns present candidates in a certain light (i.e., negative or positive representations), these candidate representations may significantly influence the electorate's voting behaviors.

Candidate Evaluations and Candidate Vote Choice Intent

As described above, there are multiple factors that may determine the outcome of an election and guide voting behaviors. Although it is important to make an informed decision about candidates when casting a ballot, not all voters are able and willing to make a rational choice. The presence or absence of informational cues about the candidates, as well as the complexity and the tone of candidate representations that infuse political campaigns may play a key role in candidate evaluations. More specifically, when voters decide what candidate to support, they tend to evaluate the candidate's identity character traits, their ability to serve in office in the role these candidates are trying to fill, and their skills. Therefore, in what follows, I will review some of specific characteristics of political candidates, such as their perceived lik(e)ability and credibility, two important considerations in voters' decision-making processes.

Lik(e)ability

According to Lau and Redlawsk (2006), candidates' "likeability goes beyond the physical, including personality traits that may be explicitly or implicitly applied to a candidate, sometimes simply on the basis of physical appearance" (p. 189). Some scholars note that candidates' physical appearance and attractiveness certainly can play a crucial role in how candidates are evaluated by voters (Ottati, 1990). Banducci et al. (2008) argue that, when voters do not account for a lot of information about the candidate, they may rely on political candidates' physical appearances to draw conclusions about the candidates; the physically attractive politicians in their study were rated higher in comparison with the less attractive ones. Riggle et al. (1992) echo this statement and report very similar findings that corroborate this idea.

A candidate's likability is not always rooted in how politicians look, but it certainly may have an impact on how voters perceive candidates' character traits (Sigelman et al., 1987). Voters may consider candidates' personality and their unique identity traits when assessing a candidate's likability and deciding for whom to vote (Riggle et al., 1992). Consequently, to evaluate a candidate's likability, voters may gauge what makes a particular candidate fit for the political office they are running for and what distinguishes them from other candidates (Nai, 2015, 2022). Consequently, many scholars note that politics has become more personalized nowadays, wherein not only candidates' partisanship or ideological leanings may predict voting behaviors, but also their unique identity (personality) traits (e.g., Barbaranelli et al., 2007; Caprara et al., 2006; Nai, 2022; Roets & van Hiel, 2009; Todorov et al., 2005). Caprara et al. (2006), for instance, noted that some voters may cast their vote for candidates who possess identity traits that are similar to their own identity traits. Thus, examining the identity characteristics of political candidates can provide useful information about voting behaviors.

There are several identity traits that may either increase or decrease candidates' likability (Baum, 2005), which can shift the nature of the electorate's voting behaviors in an election (Meeks, 2012). Roets and van Hiel (2009) explain that voters typically seek candidates that portray traits such as friendliness, intellectual brilliance, Machiavellianism, and wit. Some scholars argue that low agreeableness (Ramey et al., 2022) and high psychopathy (Palmen et al., 2018) make candidates more effective in office. Thus, candidates' unique personality and identity traits can be key determinants of how likeable voters believe candidates to be. If candidates are perceived as highly likeable, then they will be viewed more positively by voters, which may increase the chances of voters supporting these candidates. In other words, positive evaluations of a candidate based on their likability may potentially lead to a candidate winning

the race, whereas an unlikeable candidate may end up receiving less electoral support, and risk losing the election.

Further, presidential political candidates who are perceived as narcissists can be less successful at crafting effective political policies while in office (Watts et al., 2013). At the same time scholars highlight that low courtesy, patience, or ability to compromise may lead to candidates' bills being vetoed or overruled by other legislators (Simonton, 1988). To assess candidates' likability, scholars study voters' attitudes towards the candidates (e.g., Roets & van Hiel, 2009; Wilcox et al., 1989). Therefore, likability will be used in this dissertation as a dependent variable and it will be examined as an outcome effect, assessed in relation to candidates' interactional identities, namely, gender, partisanship, and veteran status.

Perceived Candidate Credibility

Political communication recognizes and emphasizes a connection between political candidates, their image, and effects this image might have on how credible voters believe a candidate to be (Funk, 2007; Hovland et al., 1953; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; McCroskey, 1966; Page & Duffy, 2018; Yankelovich, 1991). More specifically, voters' evaluations of candidates' identity traits may influence their electoral decision-making behaviors (Brader, 2005; Campbell et al., 1954; Kinder, 1986).

A candidate's credibility consists of their *competence*, [strong moral] character or trustworthiness, and goodwill (Housholder & LaMarre, 2014; McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Other definitions of credibility may include competence, leadership, strength, integrity, trust, and empathy (Stokes, 1962; Todorov et al., 2005). A candidate's characteristics that inform credibility can be grouped along two lines: traits that are linked to the candidate's performance (i.e., competence and strength) and traits that are linked to the candidate's interpersonal

interactions with others (i.e., warmth and trust; Hovland et al., 1953; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Page & Duffy, 2018).

In respect to research findings regarding these characteristics, Page and Duffy (2018) reported that Republican voters valued candidates' strong moral character when making voting decisions in an election, which, as described above, is reflective of candidates' competence (Miller, 2013). Chen et al. (2014) echoed this argument and claimed that voters may derive their understanding of a candidate's credibility from simply observing the candidates' behaviors (Chmielewski, 2012; Hovland et al., 1953; Iyengar et al., 1987). Further, voters may develop understanding in relation to candidates' credibility through the latter's political campaign ads. More specifically, Benoit & McHale (2003), when analyzing electoral ads between 1952 and 2000, found that these political ads most frequently emphasized candidates' morality, which, as described above, can be linked to candidates' credibility.

Thus, the notion of credibility is a complex and multidimensional construct that is frequently studied in the field of political communication. Many scholars, including Chmielewski (2012), found that a candidate's credibility is strongly related to the electorate's voting preferences. Campaign messages convey ideas about candidates' identity traits and characteristics, which, in turn, shape voters' electoral behaviors (McHugo et al., 1985).

Perceived competence. Candidates' perceived competence, a sub-dimension of credibility, is one of the key characteristics in voters' perceptions and evaluations of political candidates (Castelli et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2012, 2014; Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske et al., 2007, 2007; Judd et al., 2005; Meng & Davidson, 2020; Sussman et al., 2013; Todorov et al., 2005; Wojciszke, 1994). A candidate's competence is related to their job performance and their ability to reach various goals. The perception that a candidate is worthy and competent to occupy office

and represent voters successfully may shape and drive the electorate's voting behaviors in relation to such a candidate (Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Chiao et al., 2008; Cuddy et al., 2009; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Rule & Ambady, 2009; Todorov et al., 2005).

Chen et al. (2012) differentiate between two different types of competence – a general idea of competence and social competence. General competence is a "basic ability in task functioning and involves traits such as efficiency, intelligence, and capability," whereas social competence is "the capacity to function effectively in social interactions and it involves qualities such as interpersonal skillfulness, social adaption, and sensitivity to social cues" (p. 1350). In this dissertation, a candidate's perceived competence is evaluated primarily in terms of their general competence.

Voters may assess a candidate's competence through various channels that typically involve observations of the candidate and the knowledge that may be generated as a result of media exposure and media portrayals of such candidates. More specifically, some scholars argue that voters may infer how competent a candidate is just by relying on the candidate's image (i.e., the candidate's appearance and, in particular, their face or facial features; Carpinella & Johnson, 2016; Castelli et al., 2009; Rule et al., 2010; Todorov et al., 2005; Willis & Todorov, 2006; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2008). For example, Todorov et al. (2005) examined voters' exposure to candidates' faces in the case of gubernatorial elections and found that one's face was a factor that could influence the outcome of an election, at least in lower-level races.

Perceived competence has also been strongly linked to better chances of winning in elections (Castelli et al., 2009; Funk, 2007). Studies show that political candidates' perceived competence (on par with the notion of candidates' perceived warmth) typically accounts for the most variance when it comes to evaluations of individuals (Castelli et al., 2009). However, Funk

(2007) found that only sophisticated voters preferred candidate competence (a personal trait linked to job performance) versus warmth when evaluating whether or not a candidate was suited for the political office for which they were running.

To sum up these ideas, a political candidate's perceived competence involves the candidate's perceived efficiency as a professional and their ability to function successfully in terms of job performance. A candidate's perceived competence is one of the central predictors that may guide the voting behaviors of individuals. Therefore, competence will be used in the dissertation as one of the dependent variables to examine how voter evaluations of a candidate's competence may be shaped based on the candidate's interactional identity traits.

Trustworthiness. In addition to competence, scholars argue that a candidate's trustworthiness is also among the key factors that can affect electoral outcomes (Brambilla et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2014; Fiske et al., 2007; Judd et al., 2005; Oosterhof & Todorov, 2009; Todorov et al., 2009; Wojciszke, 1994; 2005). Trustworthiness captures as person's sincerity and honesty (either in general or in relation to some specific subject). Thus, whether voters perceive a candidate to be trustworthy or not can affect whether they will vote for said candidate or not.

Brambilla et al. (2012) state that perceived trustworthiness is a fundamental characteristic that allows us to develop impressions about others. The decisions that voters make about a candidate's trustworthiness based on the latter's identity and identity traits can be almost instantaneous, meaning that it may not require a lot of time or information about the political candidates to make such decisions (Todorov et al., 2009). Furthermore, perceived trustworthiness is more tangible for in-group members as opposed to out-group members, based on, for example, demographic characteristics of individuals, such as their gender (Brewer, 1979; Levin et al., 2006; McAllister, 1995; Meng & Davidson, 2020). Thus, when it comes to political

candidates, trustworthiness may sway voters' electoral behaviors, depending on how sincere or honest the candidates may appear to the electorate.

Trustworthiness has been widely studied in the context of political elections. Some scholars have connected candidates' trustworthiness to other candidate characteristics and traits that may influence voting behaviors, such as political candidates' competence and warmth (Brambilla et al., 2011; Castelli et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Funk, 1996; Pancer et al., 1999; Poutvaara et al., 2009; Rule et al., 2010; Todorov et al., 2005; Van Vugt, 2006). Some scholars claim that individuals' trustworthiness may be determined by assessments of facial features and may influence some of the decision-making that voters engage in even more than a candidate's perceived intelligence or competence (Chen et al., 2014; De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999). In other words, if a person's face is deemed to be trustworthy, then others may be more willing to cooperate with such a person rather than with people who appear less trustworthy (Chen et al., 2014; van 't Wout & Sanfey, 2008).

The trustworthiness of political candidates may also be inferred from candidates' nonphysical characteristics (i.e., not from candidates' height or hair color, but rather some of the intangible traits that candidates may possess; Meng & Davidson, 2020). By the same token, evaluations of one's trustworthiness may indicate the degree of integrity of political candidates based on political campaigns and one's media depictions (Chen et al., 2014). Ultimately, perceived trustworthiness may result in more votes for a candidate that appears as more sincere in comparison with other political candidates, leading to substantial voter support. Thus, candidate's perceived trustworthiness is another central factor that guides individuals' voting behaviors. Therefore, it will be used in the dissertation as one of the dependent variables, too, to

examine how voter evaluations of a candidate's perceived trustworthiness may be shaped based on the candidate's interactional identities.

Goodwill. Goodwill is another sub-dimension of credibility that is linked to competence and trustworthiness and that political candidates often strive to foster throughout the course of their electoral campaigns (Shi et al., 2022). Goodwill is synonymous to the idea of caring or perceived caring, according to Teven (2008). Further, this concept alludes to Aristotle's idea of "intention toward [the] receiver" and "the degree to which an audience perceives the source caring for them and having their best interests at heart" (Teven, 2008, p. 386). In other words, when a candidate conveys the idea of goodwill, it may highlight the reputation of the candidate, the relationships between the candidate and the general public, based on the candidate's past voting record, and the promises politicians make, or how this voting record either aligns with or disconnects from political issues that concern voters. The goodwill of political candidates could be potentially measured as a degree of empathy (Aylor, 1999), sincerity, and genuine concern towards their constituents, as well as prioritizing voters' interests over benefits of the candidates.

If a candidate is rated by voters highly on goodwill, this could potentially mean that the candidate may promote legislations that will be perceived by voters as beneficial. For example, if a candidate that is rated high on goodwill talks about student debt relief, then they would be perceived as more caring and sincere by the electorate who is in favor of student debt forgiveness. In this example, hypothetical student voters will likely positively evaluate this candidate and their efforts to diminish the burden of federal student loans. At the same, if a candidate that is ranked low on goodwill communicates concern and support towards small businesses in their political campaign, then small business owners may be skeptical towards such a candidate, and potentially express less support for this candidate (i.e., since their promises may

be perceived as less genuine). These examples and current literature illustrate a strong connection between a candidate's goodwill and their perceived believability (Warner & Banwart, 2016).

One can say that it is crucial for candidates to create an image of a caring, empathetic politician that can communicate their goodwill to the electorate (Hacker, 2004). Scholars emphasize that politicians need to express empathy towards voters clearly in order to be evaluated high on goodwill (Warner & Banwart, 2016). If the electorate perceives the candidate as caring or having a significant amount of goodwill, it could positively distinguish this candidate from their political opponents. Teven (2008) also echoes this idea by arguing that goodwill plays a crucial role in evaluations, and, more specifically, in candidate evaluations, which play a key role in determining individuals' voting behaviors.

What is more, if political candidates clearly communicate the idea of goodwill in their political campaigns, their messages can be more persuasive and influential for the electoral decisions voters make (Shi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, in line with social identity research, some scholars have found that the in-group versus out-group perspective to evaluating candidates based on goodwill may be linked to greater bias and prejudice based on perceived identity similarities and differences between political candidates and voters. Nevertheless, goodwill plays an role, influencing candidates' perceived identities (i.e., image), which, in turn, may have a significant impact on vote choice intent for the candidate. Therefore, goodwill is also examined as a dependent variable in the current dissertation to capture how interactional identities affect evaluations of candidates' goodwill.

Candidate Evaluations as Mediators. I propose in this dissertation that candidate evaluations may mediate the relationships between a candidate's identity traits and the

electorate's vote choice intent for that candidate. Many politicians and political campaign managers understand the significance of the image political candidates develop, and the role this image plays in shaping voter evaluations (Warner & Banwart, 2016). According to Karlsen (2011), directly engaging in a dialogue with constituents through political campaigns allows politicians to present themselves in a favorable light and convey these positive characteristics to voters. Specifically, previous sections of the literature review have showed how voters evaluate candidates based on their identity traits, such as gender, age, racial/ethnic identity, partisanship, political ideology, or veteran status. At the same time, the literature review also emphasized how different characteristics that voters ascribe to political candidates are used to evaluate their fit for office and their ability to handle political issues (i.e., competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability of the candidates).

Nevertheless, although, there is a significant body of literature that examines the relationships between identity traits, perceived candidate evaluations, and their influence on the electoral outcome, not many studies test how perceived candidate evaluations functions as mediators in these relationships. Namely, how competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability of the candidates (or other alike variables) function to potentially mediate the relationships between a candidate's identity traits and the vote choice intent for the candidate is not examined. I propose that evaluations of a candidate have an important role as they nuance the relationship between identity characteristics and the outcome of voting (or not) for a said candidate. People form impressions and evaluate candidates' identity traits, and it is these impressions that affect whether they vote for a candidate or not, not just the candidate's traits. Thus, the current study proposes that competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability of the candidates mediate the relationships between gender, partisanship, and veteran status and vote

choice intent for this candidate. Given that there is not a lot of literature on this topic, this study would permit a better understanding of these relationships, which can provide a meaningful theoretical contribution to the field of political communication.

Additional Influences on Voting Behaviors (Covariates)

Scholars argue that voting behaviors are not monolithic among individuals, and may vary not only from one social group to another, but also based on a multitude of additional factors such as voters' age, their race/ethnicity, citizenship (or origin), religious beliefs, education, occupation, income, political ideology (i.e., where voters stand on the liberalism – conservatism continuum), political party affiliation, political involvement, trust in government, closeness with veterans, or affiliation with the military (military service: combat-non-combat).

Income plays a significant role in the voting behaviors of individuals. People who have limited means of existence (i.e., low income) may have difficulties making an informed decision about political candidates, since both access to information and education can be quite costly. Further, sometimes voting requires traveling to distant areas that not every person can afford. Akee et al. (2018) argue that income increases voter turnout, since well-established voters may have developed a better understanding of the political process and they also may not experience any restrictions in terms of hurdles associated with traveling to another area to cast their ballot. Thus, income can affect voting behaviors.

Further, Silver and Miller (2014) argue that voting behaviors are positively associated with voters' educational background, income, interest in politics, civic duty, and partisanship. Age may also significantly influence voting behaviors. Glasford (2008) reports that young adults (18-24 years old age bracket) vote less frequently compared to voters of other age groups. To illustrate this point, approximately 47% of young adults voted in the 2004 U.S. presidential

election (U.S. Census, 2004). Low voter turnout among this demographic may be related to low trust in the government (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Plutzer, 2002), which could translate into lack of future electoral involvement, and lower voter turnout in the future. In turn, political candidates may be less concerned with the issues that such young adults deem as important, such as, for example, student loans. Thus, age can be an important variable that can predict voting behaviors.

Furthermore, studies argue that the political sophistication and educational background of voters may impact how they research information about candidates (Lau et al., 2020). Level of education may influence the way people cast their vote: it has been found that those with a bachelor's degree or above are more likely to cast their vote for Democrats in the House election (Blais, 2006). Thus, education level should also be a consideration when examining voting behaviors.

Party affiliation (and partisanship) can be a significant predictor of voting behaviors. Some scholars have reported that voters exhibit the signs of increased loyalty to political party (Andreottola & Li, 2022). In particular, the electorate's political party loyalty may prompt voters to cast straight-tickets (i.e., straight party voting), with only 4% of voters splitting the vote between candidates from different political parties (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016; Bartels, 2000; Pew Research Center, 2021). Straight party voting is a tendency to choose the candidates from a single party for every office (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2022). This voting tendency is another signal of voter polarization along party lines.

Additionally, recent trends show that U.S. society has become more polarized, as less people hold mixed opinions about major political issues (Pew Research Center, 2017). In other words, there is a growing gap between liberals and conservatives, as the U.S. public tends to hold

either strictly conservative or strictly liberal views, which echoes the partisan division of the U.S. society. To illustrate this division, average Republicans are now more conservative than 97% of Democrats, and average Democrats are more liberal than 95% of Republicans (Pew Research Center, 2017). Hence, political affiliation or the partisanship of voters matters.

Further, the world has become increasingly interconnected, with many individuals traveling from one country to another due to a variety of push and pull factors (Ritzer & Dean, 2015). Not only can these individuals travel temporarily for leisure, but some people may also choose to move to another country permanently to pursue a job, academic career, marriage, or re-connect with members of their family. Such individuals may obtain the right to participate in elections, which means some voters have a different cultural background that can differ from local, host nationals and how they cast their vote (Piccoli & Ruedin, 2022). Further, an increase in immigrants can dissatisfy many individuals, and may prompt some politicians to adhere to right-wing conservative beliefs that could target like-minded local voters, perhaps, making them more engaged in the electoral process (Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). Thus, the scholarship shows that there are some additional factors that may have an impact on the electoral outcome, such as, for example, voters' age, their race/ethnicity, citizenship (of origin), religious beliefs, education, occupation, income, political ideology, and political party affiliation. I will examine whether any of these variables are significant when conducting analyses in this dissertation and control for those that are.

To summarize the literature review, the political communication scholarship that strives to investigate the evaluations of political candidates and how they impact voting behaviors in elections is ample. More specifically, the research shows that candidates not only should be concerned with political opponents, but more so, in some cases, they should stay focused on

voters and voting behaviors. Voters have certain expectations about political candidates and their office fit based on the different identity traits and characteristics candidates communicate to them. Ultimately, a lack of concern with perceived voter evaluations may cost candidates the election.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

In light of the arguments discussed above in the literature review, the following section presents the proposed hypotheses and research questions for this dissertation. First, a candidate's gender plays a crucial role in how voters evaluate candidates, with male candidates often being rated more positively than female candidates, given that politics is a very competitive field that is dominated by male politicians (e.g., Ditonto, 2017, Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Sigelman et al., 1987). Therefore, men can be perceived as more natural and better at handling politics that concern the society, compared with women (e.g., Meeks, 2012). At the same time, there is a growing body of political communication literature that indicates female candidates are rated on par or more positively than male candidates, meaning that, in some studies, female candidates received more positive evaluations from participants than male candidates (e.g., Bauer et al., 2022; Dolan, 2018; Funk, 2007; Kahn, 1996; Mattes et al., 2010; Piazza & Diaz, 2020; Schwenk, 2022). The gender gap in the field of politics is being reduced as more female politicians and legislators are elected to operate at high levels of political offices (GGGR, 2022), such as, for example, electing Kamala Harris as vice president of the United States.

However, the gender gap is very much still present in society; generally speaking, female candidates are frequently underrepresented at high levels of political offices (please refer to section on female candidate underrepresentation for more details). Given that candidate evaluations may stem from people's daily observations during which they observe more male

than female members are a part of the U.S. Congress, this underrepresentation can yield biased evaluations and perceptions of a candidate's gender. In other words, participants see more men in politics, and hence that becomes the perceived norm about who belongs in that context, leading to women being evaluated as not belonging or being out of their realm in politics more so than men.

What is more, participants may not suspect that they hold biased beliefs and attitudes towards female politicians. Therefore, evaluations of political candidates may be significantly impacted by such biases and intrinsic beliefs that voters associate with the gender identity of the candidates, where male candidates could receive more positive evaluations than female candidates. Thus, albeit previous literature has found some support for women being evaluated more positively than men, I contend that the gender gap, societal expectations and norms about gender roles, and perceptions about politics as a male domain will lead to men being evaluated more positively than women. To this end, I propose the following hypothesis:

> *H1: Male candidates will be evaluated by voters as (a) more competent, (b) more trustworthy, (c) having more goodwill, and (d) being more likeable than female candidates while controlling for voters' characteristics.*

Second, political candidates' partisan identity is another significant factor that influences voter evaluations. Partisanship signals the degree of association or strength of attachment with one political party or another. The U.S. political system is bipartisan, where voters associate different traits and characteristics to candidates based on the party label. The political communication scholarship includes mixed findings concerning voter evaluations of Republicans and Democrats. Some studies have reported that Republicans were rated more positively than Democrats on different traits, such as leadership and morale (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hayes,

2005; King & Matland, 2003), whereas other studies have reported that, Democrats were perceived and evaluated more positively than Republicans on a variety of variables, such as competence to handle various political issues (Dolan, 2014; Huddy & Capelos, 2002; Koch, 1999), and in respect to various identity traits (e.g., compassion, empathy; Hayes, 2005). The evaluation of political candidates may not depend solely on the identities of the candidates (i.e., their partisanship), but also on some other external factors. For example, a declining economy, inflation, unemployment, and involvement of the country in an armed conflict are some aspects that may impact candidates' evaluations. Currently, the U.S. is undergoing a severe recession, which may negatively reflect on the ratings of the current U.S. President, Joe Biden. More specifically, according to Reuters (2023), in April of 2023, slightly more than a half of Americans (54%) disapproved of Joe Biden and his efforts as a president. Further, Reuters (2023) explicitly states that Biden's rating decreased to 39%, which is considered "low by historical standards" (n.p.). This approval rate decline has been directly linked to the decline of the U.S. economy. Since voters may view Biden as the leader of the Democratic party, they could inadvertently transfer their negative evaluations of him onto Democratic political candidates, in general. Thus, shared partisanship would mean that other Democratic candidates would be linked to Biden and negative evaluations of Biden would be transferred onto the candidates, too. Therefore, I proposed the following hypothesis:

H2: Republican candidates will be evaluated by voters as more(a) more competent, (b) more trustworthy, (c) having more goodwill, and (d) being more likeable than Democrat candidates while controlling for voters' characteristics.

Next, I also wanted to examine how the background of candidates may impact voter evaluations. I selected a very distinct and unique social identity for these purposes – veteran

status. Being a veteran is frequently associated with leadership, attention to detail, and high achievements, which could affect voter evaluations, as the very same traits are often highly valued in politics and related to successful politicians. Therefore, veterans being viewed as experienced leaders and high achievers may lead to positive evaluations of veteran candidates. Further, military service can be perceived to offer an advantage in handling issues of national security as well as foreign policy, which may lead to veteran candidates being perceived as more competent during a period of time when the country is involved in international conflicts, compared to civilian political candidates. Since the United States is currently either directly or indirectly engaged in several armed conflicts (please see the section of veteran identity and military culture for more information), I predict that participants will evaluate veteran candidates more positively, as they can provide a sense of security and also have the ability to provide valuable leadership, whereas non-veteran candidates may not share similar experiences and competencies.

However, it is also important to note that the military communication literature acknowledges some problematic depictions of military veterans (e.g., Parrott et al., 2019a; 2019b; 2022a; 2022b). Thus, veteran status can also be associated with acute trauma, mental health issues, inability to transition from the military and adapt to civilian culture, as well as some controversial actions the military engages in overseas. Nevertheless, I believe that positive evaluations of the veteran candidates will outweigh negative aspects that can be associated with military veterans. The Veterans and Citizens Initiative (More in Common, 2022) reports that more than five in 10 Americans feel warmth towards veterans and believe that veterans "…are role models for good citizenship" and that they will "…do what is right for America" compared

with the work of U.S. congressmen and Supreme Court justices (n.p.). Thus, I developed the following hypothesis:

H3: Veteran candidates will be evaluated by voters as more(a) more competent, (b) more trustworthy, (c) having more goodwill, and (d) being more likeable than non-veteran candidates while controlling for voters' characteristics.

Finally, given that research on the interactional identity of political candidates that involves multiple identity traits is scarce, it is also important to investigate how overlapping social identities may interact with one another, and how this interaction may influence voter evaluations of the candidates. To this end, I asked the following research question:

RQ1: Is there an interaction effect between a candidate's gender, partisanship, and veteran status on their (a) competence, (b) trustworthiness, (c) goodwill, and (d) likability, as evaluated by voters, while controlling for voters' characteristics?

Further, one of the important aspects that this dissertation is concerned with is determining what can predict the electorate's intent to vote for a political candidate. As a reminder, the political communication literature has found mixed results in respect to candidate evaluations and voting behaviors based on a candidate's gender. For example, male and female candidates can be seen as more competent or qualified when it comes handling different policies. To further develop this idea, due to gender stereotypes, male candidates are traditionally viewed as more successful at handling issues associated with an agentic identity—the economy, defense, and foreign policy. Female candidates are viewed as more competent at handling issues informed by a communal identity—healthcare, education, and social welfare. According to Gallup (2023), 33% percent of Americans indicated in March 2023 that the economy is the nation's top significant issue at this time, followed by poor governmental leadership (20%), immigration

(11%), unifying the country (4%), crime (3%), and federal debt (3%). Given that the majority of the top issues that currently concern Americans are informed by agentic identity characteristics, male candidates are likely to be perceived as better at handling these political issues than female candidates. Therefore, I believe that participants in my study will also indicate their vote choice intent (i.e., propensity to support a candidate and cast their vote for that candidate) for male candidates over female candidates, as male candidates would be perceived to be better at handling these top issues. To examine this idea, I first propose the following hypothesis based on previous findings regarding voters' behaviors (i.e., vote choice intent) in respect to a candidate's gender:

H4: Vote choice intent for a political candidate will differ based on their gender so that, controlling for voters' characteristics, voters will be more likely to vote for male candidates than for female candidates.

What is more, I also wanted to examine similar relationships, but with partisan and veteran identity of the candidates. However, given that the scholarship that investigates these topics is rather inconclusive in the case of partisanship and very limited in terms of veteran status, I proposed the following research question:

RQ2: Does vote choice intent for a political candidate differ based on their a) partisanship or b) veteran status, while controlling for voters' characteristics?

Finally, in line with the argument proposed about candidate evaluations functioning as mediators that help nuance the relationship between identity traits and the vote choice intent for a political candidate, I proposed the following three hypotheses:

H5: (a) Competence, (b) trustworthiness, (c) goodwill, and (d) likability will mediate the relationships between a candidate's gender and vote choice intent for that candidate, while controlling for voters' characteristics.

H6: (a) Competence, (b) trustworthiness, (c) goodwill, and (d) likability will mediate the relationships between a candidate's partisanship and vote choice intent for that candidate, while controlling for voters' characteristics.

H7: (a) Competence, (b) trustworthiness, (c) goodwill, and (d) likability will mediate the relationships between a candidate's veteran status and vote choice intent for that candidate, while controlling for voters' characteristics.

CHAPTER 3: PILOT STUDY: MAILERS REALISM ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the pilot study was to evaluate the hypothetical political candidate mailers and their realism as well as gather participant input about ways to increase their realism. The following details the method for the pilot study as well as its results and a discussion of how these results influenced changes made to the experimental stimuli for the main dissertation study.

Participants

The researcher recruited a convenience sample of U.S. adults (100 men and 100 women) above the age of 18 from across the United States via the crowd-sourcing platform Prolific. Prolific allows scholars to recruit participants for social-scientific and experimental studies, and also allows researchers to implement various pre-screening options (e.g., nationality, age, willingness to participate in deception studies; Palan & Schitter, 2018). The eligibility criteria for Prolific workers included the request that individuals (a) self-identified as U.S. nationals, (b) were between 18 and 100 years old (c) had completed over 100 studies on Prolific before, (d) had at least a 99% approval rate for their previous Prolific submissions, and (e) were open to participate in deception studies. The sample was set up to be balanced by participants' sex (50% male, 50% female).

Initially, 222 Prolific participants were recruited and consented to participate in the pilot study. Out of these, 20 participants did not complete the study and returned their submission (any data from these participants was eliminated) and 18 responses were eliminated due to failed attention verification questions, yielding 184 valid responses that were used for subsequent analyses. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 78 years old (M = 38.41 years; SD = 13.25 years). Participants were mostly White (n = 132), and primarily resided in California (n = 18), Florida (n = 13), Ohio (n = 11), New York (n = 10), Texas (n = 10), and Illinois (n = 9). Participants

indicated their occupation via an open-ended response. Some of the occupations listed included: software developer, sustainability manager, customer service representative, HR manager, server, student aid, teacher, dental assistant, self-employed, retired, or unemployed. Detailed information about additional participant demographics is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics for Pilot Study: Prolific Sample (N = 184)

Demographic Information	*N*	(%)
Sex		
Male	94	(51.1%)
Female	87	(47.3%)
Intersex	0	(0%)
Non-binary	2	(1.1%)
Other	0	(0%)
Prefer not to answer	1	(0.5%)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	132	(71.7%)
Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx	9	(4.9%)
Black or African American	15	(8.2%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	(1.1%)
Asian	19	(10.3%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	(0%)
A combination of these	0	(0%)
Other	6	(3.3%)
Prefer not to answer	1	(0.5%)
Education		
High school degree or less	42	(22.8%)
Associate (2 year) degree	22	(12%)
Bachelor (4 year) degree	76	(41.3%)
Professional degree	6	(3.3%)
Graduate degree (e.g., MA, PhD)	32	(17.4%)
Other	5	(2.7%)
Prefer not to answer	1	(0.5%)
Political Ideology		
Very liberal	60	(32.6%)
Slightly liberal	56	(30.4%)

Moderate	34	(18.5%)
Slightly conservative	21	(11.4%)
Very conservative	8	(4.3%)
Other	2	(1.1%)
Prefer not to answer	3	(1.6%)
Party Identification		
Republican	26	(14.1%)
Libertarian	3	(1.6%)
Democrat	104	(56.5%)
Independent	45	(24.5%)
Other	3	(1.6%)
Prefer not to anwer	3	(1.6%)
Military Status		
Yes	7	(3.8%)
No	177	(96.2%)
Prefer not to answer	0	(0%)
Military affiliation		
Yes	24	(13%)
No	158	(85.9%)
Other	1	(0.5%)
Prefer not to answer	1	(0.5%)

Procedures

A recruitment message was posted on the Prolific website informing participants about the purpose of the pilot study to complete an online survey that would ask them questions to evaluate political candidates, which meant reading a political campaign mailer, answering questions about it, and providing demographic information. Interested Prolific workers who met the eligibility criteria for the study (described above) were able to accept the study on Prolific and access the online survey, which was hosted on the Qualtrics platform.

Participants who followed the study link from Prolific first reviewed an informed consent form, where they were informed about the purpose of the study, risks and benefits related to this study, and other aspects about their rights as a research participant. Individuals who consented to

participate in the study proceeded with the survey; individuals who declined participation were redirected to the end of the survey and were unable to access the survey.

Next, participants were randomly assigned to view one of the eight experimental campaign ads/mailers (See Appendix A). Note that the wording used in the pilot study was "ad," albeit "mailer" is a more accurate label for the materials participants saw. Participants were asked to read the information provided in the political campaign mailer carefully and pay attention to the details of the mailer as they would be asked questions about it later. Participants then completed manipulation check questions, and evaluated the realism of the mailers, followed by providing suggestions for improving the realism of the mailers.

As we did not disclose to participants that the mailers were hypothetical, at the end of the study, participants were debriefed, and this information was disclosed to them. They were then asked if they consented for their data to be used once they had learned about this concealment of the hypothetical nature of the mailers. All participants consented to the data they had provided being used. After the re-consent question, participants were redirected to Prolific where they could submit their task to receive compensation. The study took, on average, 9.11 minutes (*SD* = 4.48 minutes) and respondents were compensated $2.00 for their participation. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Oklahoma prior to any data collection activities.

Measures

Manipulation Checks

After being exposed to the randomly assigned political mailers, participants completed three manipulation check questions, presented to them in random order, to assess whether the manipulations worked. Specifically, participants were asked the following three multiple-choice

questions: “What was the gender of the Congressional candidate in the ad?”, “What was the political party affiliation of the Congressional candidate?”, and “What was the background of the Congressional candidate?”. The answer choices for gender condition were as follows: “The ad mentioned the candidate was male”, “The ad mentioned the candidate was female”, “Do not remember”, and “Other (Please specify)”. The answer choices for partisanship and veteran status conditions were worded in a similar manner.

Campaign Mailer Realism

The realism of the hypothetical campaign mailers was assessed in two ways: via closed-ended questions (a four-item scale) and via open-ended questions. The four-item realism scale was adapted from Cionea (2013). The scale contained four items that measured the degree to which the political mailers were viewed by participants as believable, realistic, credible, and reflective of a mailer that could be potentially used by a political candidate in real life (see the realism scale items in Appendix A). A sliding scale ranging from 0 to 100, where 0 meant *none at all*, and 100 meant *a great deal* was provided for participants to make their assessments.

Participants were also asked the following five open-ended questions to collect rich-detailed data and participants’ perspectives concerning the realism of the political mailers. These questions also permitted participants to make suggestions that allowed the researcher to improve the design of the experimental stimuli (i.e., mailers) for the main study. Examples of the open-ended questions include the following: “Did you find the campaign ad believable? Why or why not? Please explain.” and “What would you suggest be added or revised about the campaign ad to make it more realistic? Please explain.” Please see Appendix A for a full list of all open-ended questions.

Attention Verification Questions

To ensure that participants were focused on completing the pilot study, two attention verification questions were included in the survey, one among the realism scale items, and another one in the demographics section. Participants were asked to provide a specific answer, for example, “Mark not paying attention as the answer for this question.” Responses from those who answered any one or both attention verification questions incorrectly were eliminated from data analyses.

Demographic Information

Participants were also asked to indicate demographic information that was believed to be relevant for the pilot study. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their age (open-ended question), sex (multiple-choice question), racial/ethnic background (multiple-choice question), education (multiple-choice question), occupation (open-ended question), state of residence (multiple-choice question), political ideology (multiple-choice question), political party identification (multiple-choice question), military status (multiple-choice question), and any military affiliation (multiple-choice question). Demographics for the pilot study can be found in Table 1. The list of all demographic questions for the pilot study can be found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

Cross-Tabulation and Frequencies Analyses

Participants in the pilot study were randomly assigned to evaluate one mailer each. To analyze whether or not the manipulations of each independent variable (i.e., gender, party affiliation, and veteran status) worked, cross-tabulations analyses were conducted. Specifically, each of the three independent variables manipulated was matched with the respective manipulation check question asking about that independent variable. For instance, the gender

experimental condition was coded as “1” for the male candidate in the mailer and “2” for the female candidate in the mailer. The corresponding manipulation check question for gender that asked participants what gender the mailer mentioned the candidate had been coded “1” for “male,” “2” for “female,” “3” for “do not remember,” and “4” for “other”. These two variables were entered in a cross-tabulation analysis in SPSS as rows and columns. Row and column percentages and the corresponding chi-square statistic were then examined to identify whether participants correctly recognized the independent variable manipulation to which they had been randomly assigned.

For the gender condition, [χ^2 (3) = 160.104, $p < .001$], 87% of the participants who were assigned to a mailer depicting a male candidate recognized that the mailer mentioned the candidate was male. Of those assigned to a mailer depicting a female candidate, 85.9% of participants recognized that the hypothetical candidate was, indeed, female. For the political affiliation condition, [χ^2 (3) = 176.171, $p < .001$], 100% of participants who were assigned to a mailer depicting a Republican candidate recognized that the mailer mentioned the hypothetical candidate was Republican. Of those assigned to a mailer depicting a Democrat candidate, 94.6% of participants recognized that the mailer mentioned the hypothetical candidate was Democrat. For the veteran status condition, [χ^2 (3) = 157.118, $p < .001$], 98% of the participants who were assigned to a mailer depicting a military veteran candidate recognized that the mailer mentioned the candidate was a veteran, and 74.4% of participants who were assigned to a mailer that depicted a non-veteran candidate indicated correctly that the mailer did not mention the hypothetical candidate was a military veteran. Thus, participants were able to recognize correctly the candidate characteristics manipulated, in most cases, with the exception of the non-veteran condition for which the cross-tabulation analysis revealed the lowest percentage of participants

recognized the manipulated independent variable correctly. Although some participants failed to recognize some aspects of the hypothetical political candidate's identity in the stimuli, I decided to retain these responses to ensure data representativeness (Juan & Revilla, 2021). Furthermore, as opposed to attention checks, manipulation checks may signal incomprehension due to various reasons (i.e., educational and cultural background of participants, poor survey instrument design, etc.) and not necessarily inattentiveness (Babakhani et al., 2022). Therefore, I retained failed manipulation check responses to avoid biasing the sample (Babakhani et al., 2022).

Next, each one of the four realism scale items was analyzed to assess the realism of the political campaign mailers in several ways: the realism scores for each item, individually, the realism of the average composite of the four items, and the average composite split for each condition. In addition, the overall realism of the political campaign mailers across all conditions was also calculated.

Participants viewed the developed stimuli (i.e., political campaign mailers) as moderately credible (M = 66.15, SD = 24.37), indicating that further inquiry was needed to determine how the mailers could be improved. The analysis of the realism scores separated by each mailer revealed that the female, Republican, non-veteran mailer was rated the highest, followed by the mailer depicting a female, Democrat, veteran candidate. The analysis also showed that the mailer portraying a male Republican non-veteran candidate was evaluated as the least believable and credible mailer, with the mailer depicting a female Democrat non-veteran candidate being the next lowest. Tables 2 and 3 below contain detailed descriptive information for all realism scores.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Mailer Realism Scale

Mailer Realism Scale Items	*M*	*SD*
Composite aggregate realism (across all conditions)	69.72	18.80
Breakdown of realism scores, per item		
Realism item 1	71.27	22.13
Realism item 2	74.25	20.88
Realism item 3	66.15	24.37
Realism item 4	67.22	22.41
Composite aggregate realism scores, per mailer		
Mailer 1: Male, Republican, Veteran	67.28	19.53
Mailer 2: Male, Republican, Non-Veteran	60.42	21.59
Mailer 3: Male, Democrat, Veteran	72.85	14.80
Mailer 4: Male, Democrat, Non-Veteran	70.09	16.27
Mailer 5: Female, Republican, Veteran	68.82	19.90
Mailer 6: Female, Republican, Non-Veteran	77.69	13.73
Mailer 7: Female, Democrat, Veteran	73.84	15.41
Mailer 8: Female, Democrat, Non-Veteran	65.56	25.25

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Mailer Realism Scale, Each Item per Mailer

Mailer Realism Scale Items	*M*	*SD*
Mailer 1: Male, Republican, Veteran		
Realism item 1	69.64	20.95
Realism item 2	70.84	20.11
Realism item 3	63.00	24.59
Realism item 4	65.64	24.54
Scenario 2: Male, Republican, Non-Veteran		
Realism item 1	57.20	28.19
Realism item 2	69.45	22.81
Realism item 3	52.60	29.90
Realism item 4	62.45	26.27
Scenario 3: Male, Democrat, Veteran		
Realism item 1	75.36	17.13
Realism item 2	75.80	19.01

Realism item 3	72.32	17.52
Realism item 4	67.92	19.89
Scenario 4: Male, Democrat, Non-Veteran		
Realism item 1	72.77	16.21
Realism item 2	74.27	16.31
Realism item 3	66.04	21.36
Realism item 4	67.27	17.82
Scenario 5: Female, Republican, Veteran		
Realism item 1	71.16	23.56
Realism item 2	74.12	23.10
Realism item 3	64.66	24.36
Realism item 4	65.33	23.95
Scenario 6: Female, Republican, Non-Veteran		
Realism item 1	79.00	15.28
Realism item 2	86.40	10.09
Realism item 3	73.00	26.40
Realism item 4	72.36	20.78
Scenario 7: Female, Democrat, Veteran		
Realism item 1	76.25	21.51
Realism item 2	76.45	20.78
Realism item 3	68.91	24.33
Realism item 4	73.75	19.25
Scenario 8: Female, Democrat, Non-Veteran		
Realism item 1	66.72	27.79
Realism item 2	66.27	27.62
Realism item 3	66.90	24.07
Realism item 4	62.36	26.39

Finally, open-ended qualitative data was explored to gain a more nuanced understanding of the campaign mailers' realism, as evaluated by participants and to determine ways in which the mailers could be revised for the main study.

Interpretive Phronetic Iterative Analysis

Participants' open-ended responses were analyzed by using an interpretive perspective that centered around the unique situated understandings of the mailers by these individuals. Specifically, I relied on an interpretive phronetic iterative analysis to identify recurring patterns

in their responses that allowed me to derive some conclusions about the realism of each hypothetical campaign mailer. The open-ended questions data analysis was not linear, but cyclical in its nature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To conduct the phronetic iterative analysis, I read and re-read participants' qualitative responses several times, following Tracy's (2019) procedures for phronetic iterative analysis (i.e., alternation between considering existing theories and research questions as well as emergent qualitative data). Tracy (2019) suggests first organizing and labeling the qualitative data, then coding the data [i.e., "distilling empirical materials down to manageable conceptual categories" (p. 214)], moving back and forth between the codes and the data to make revisions to the existent coding scheme and development of new codes, as part of the phronetic qualitative data analysis, followed by writing up findings.

After familiarizing myself with the data, I proceeded with the analysis by reducing the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). This step entailed separating the data pertaining to questions about the realism of the political campaign mailers, and other data, which did not inform how the realism of the stimuli could be increased. To do so, I began the qualitative data coding to group and organize the responses based on codes derived from the data (Creswell, 2014; Tracy, 2019). A code, according to Saldaña (2020), is a symbolically assigned, summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. Thus, by coding the data, I mean actively identifying the qualitative data that belongs to or represents a particular phenomenon (Tracy, 2019). For the pilot study, this process of coding aimed to shed light onto participants' unique evaluations of the campaign mailers. Tracy (2019) suggests researchers conduct qualitative data coding as part of a phronetic iterative analysis in two steps: primary cycle coding (in which I grouped the data by descriptive first-level codes, then moved from the data and developed codes, iteratively, either to update the coding scheme or to develop

new codes), and secondary-cycle coding [in which I categorized the "first-level codes into larger axial or hierarchical codes that serve[d] as conceptual bins for emergent claims" (p. 232)].

In particular, I identified primary cycle codes in participants' responses, and found participant quotes that were used as examples and informed these descriptive first-level codes (i.e., quotes here served as raw data that helped illustrate codes). Specifically, I moved from the data to identified first-level codes iteratively, to revise existent codes and develop new codes, where necessary. As part of the coding stage of the analysis, I also identified and specified how different codes were interrelated. For example, if two codes identified as part of the coding stage of the phronetic iterative analysis were very similar conceptually (i.e., convergent), such codes were collapsed into one code. If, upon comparison, the codes diverged from one another, I created new codes, and specified conditions under which these new codes arose (Tracy, 2019). Consequently, I moved on to secondary-level coding, where I defined and explained the codes by developing analytic memos, which provided precise examples, detailed illustrations, and exhaustive explanations derived from the qualitative data concerning the codes (Tracy, 2019), transitioning to the final stages of the phronetic qualitative data analysis, and the write-up of the findings.

To ensure that the analysis was conducted properly, I read the responses in relation to the identified codes several times. Thus, participant quotes were assigned to specific codes upon careful analysis and deliberation. Further, some of the identified codes underwent transformation – several codes were united into one single code, whereas, in some other cases, the emergent codes were partitioned until all qualitative data was analyzed. Finally, to strengthen the preliminary claims I made based on the identified codes, following Tracy's (2019) suggestions, I purposefully sought and found responses that contradicted the claims made by participants (i.e.,

so-called negative case analysis that represents a variety of participants' voices and perspectives). After several rounds of secondary coding, I developed the claims that framed the phronetic qualitative data analysis, based on both previously established analytic memos and emergent codes that were informed by participants' responses to each open-ended question present in the pilot study.

Findings

Recall that participants were not told that the political campaign mailers they were asked to evaluate were not real. Some of them seem to have thought that the campaign mailers they viewed were genuinely authentic. Other participants noted ways in which the political campaign mailers could be improved to increase their realism. Detailed below are the key codes that emerged from participants' responses, upon conducting the analysis iteratively. Key codes that will be discussed in-depth below include but are not limited to campaign mailer believability and suggested mailer revisions.

Campaign Mailer Believability

Believable. The first question asked participants whether they found the political campaign mailer believable and asked them to explain why or why not. Participants found the mailer somewhat believable. One of the participants stated, "I found it believable because the mailer was it [sic] together professionally and the statements are we [sic] ones that a politician would say." Some other examples include the accounts below that talk about particular details in the political campaign mailers that made participants evaluate them as realistic:

> I found the mailer believable. Most people probably won't take the time to read the details below the two points that matter most: the candidate's name and the office sought. The name and desired office are big and bold at the top, so yeah, I find it believable.

or

> I did find the ad believable because there were not any outrageous claims being made -- everything that the candidate said to represent herself and her values was pretty run-of-the-mill. She mentioned being an American citizen and native to the state, as well as wanting to understand her constituency. To me, there [sic] are pretty typical things to hear from any political candidate.

Too Generic. Some participants indicated that the campaign mailer was not too believable because the information presented in the mailer was too formal or too generic. They also pointed out that the mailer did not contain unique information about the candidate that would allow voters to distinguish between different types of candidates. For example, one of the participants indicated the following: “I don’t believe a real letter would be quite as long as this one. It also sounded super generic.” Another participant claimed the following: “I did, but it was a bit of a commonplace story.” Here are some other accounts that identified the mailer as being generic as well:

> I [sic] was very generic, which I see a lot in campaign ads and websites. They didn't clearly provide any information about their beliefs, and a lot of politicians behave similarly, though usually they provide at least something that they plan on doing.

or

> The background and experience was [sic] very credible and could easily be refuted if it wasn't true. The mailer was very generic and vanilla overall; will work for all constituents, born and raised here, has the experience, believes in service, etc. It's like asking nicely for a vote without stating political intentions or goals. It wouldn't impress me as a voter. There's nothing compelling about it and it tells me very little information about her.

Political Opponents/Reaching Across the Aisle. Other participants raised concerns about the amicable language of the political campaign mailer, lack of remarks about political opponents, and the changing nature of political mailers in our society. Specifically, they noted that many political campaigns in society mention political opponents. However, the campaign mailer they were asked to evaluate did not contain this type of information. Thus, mentioning political opponents could make the mailers more realistic. Here are a few illustrative examples:

> I found the campaign as believable to a certain extent. I can imagine a Representative deciding to run for another office. The most unbelievable part of the mailer is that there are no disparaging remarks about other candidates or other potential candidates. I think it's idealistic and too nice of an idea to really be believable.

or

> Yes and No, It [sic] was what I would want in a representative, someone who serves my best interest. But that also makes it unbelievable, no polotician [sic] reaches across the aisle.

or

> Yes it comes across as someone who is looking for some grass roots support. While I think most mailers would be more polarizing these days, this one seems believable as someone who is trying to still collect some moderate votes.

Yet, one of the participants claimed that the lack of political attacks or slander in the mailer they read was somewhat appealing and genuine:

> It did [not] have any radical ideas and it didn't attack anyone or anything. It seemed a little unbelievable since a lot of politicians nowadays run their campaigns on attacking the opposition. This one seemed like a breath of fresh air and was somewhat believable for a politician trying to be different to the competition.

Suggested Mailer Revisions

The second question asked participants what they suggested be added or revised about the campaign mailer to make it more realistic. Some participants suggested that this political campaign mailer was appropriate just the way it was. For example, the following account illustrated this idea: “No it seemed very realistic. I would vote for her.” Another participant indicated the following:

> It was fine. It doesn't seem like the mailer was written far enough into the election to justify attack mailers or anything, so getting the candidates name out to the public without creating a negative buzz seems like a solid early plan.

Candidate Photo. Other participants highlighted that the campaign mailer needed to be further personalized to be more appealing to voters. For example, one participant stated, “make it more personal or something that would appeal to the people especially for a republican [sic].”

Participants suggested several ways for how to personalize the mailers so that voters could connect with the candidate better. Several participants suggested including an image of the candidate in the mailer: “I'd add a photo of the candidate, and a website showing photos of her further impact on her community, with family, in her jobs, etc...”, “It needs to be made in video form so people can connect with the candidate more. Nobody can connect with the candidate with just a bunch of text.”, and “A more realistic (better?) mailer, in my opinion, would include the candidate's photograph and would list some of her accomplishments and/or committee work, etc., while serving in the US House.”

Thus, many participants suggested including a picture of the candidate to make this candidate more appealing beyond plain text and a simple indication of the candidate’s status as a political candidate, their gender, partisanship, and veteran status.

Past Record and Experiences. Some other participants wanted to see the hypothetical candidate’s past experiences and record (in office) for the mailers to be more realistic. For instance, one participant said, “I would like to hear more about the candidate's record and experience as a current House Representative.” Other participants mentioned the following ideas: “I think that the mailer would be more realistic if it included a few bullet points about the candidates [sic] position of [sic] various issues or successes from their previous office”, “I think there could be more real-life examples of the female's past and present experiences. I think this would make her more human, interesting, and relatable,” and “More concrete facts and details about the candidates [sic] life and experiences.”

Stance on Political Issues. An overwhelming number of respondents claimed that, for the mailers to be more realistic, they should mention the candidate’s campaign goals as well as their stance on various political issues that are important in today’s society, such as the economy,

gun control, or immigration, to paint a better picture of the candidate. Participants emphasized the following: “Give us your views on the important issues,” or “I would say that specifying specific issues that are important to the candidate would make the mailer more realistic and help viewers/readers to understand what they can expect from her,” and “She needs to add more details about specific issues she would work on.” Another participant commented the following:

> Despite what I said above, it's also unusual for a political ad to not at least mention hot-button topics: schools, the economy, ect. [sic] It might seen [sic] a little more believable if one of those topics were at least mentioned.

Given all of the above, it appears important to highlight the role that a candidate’s stance on various social and political issues plays in voters’ evaluations of the candidates. These issues serve as a central piece of information that voters seem to need to determine whether they like the candidate or not, and whether they would vote for them or not.

Information about the Candidate

The third question asked participants whether they had enough information to be able to form an impression about the political candidate depicted in the mailers. Their answers showed mixed opinions regarding the presence/absence of information necessary to form an impression about the political candidate in the mailer. Some participants, indeed, indicated that the mailer they evaluated provided enough information about the candidate. For instance, one person said, “Yes I had enough information to see the background and party affiliation which would allow me to make a judgement,” and another one said, “Yes, they seemed to want to reach across the aisle.”

Candidate Platform. Other participants emphasized the role that information about the candidate’s perspective on political issues, policy positions, and their platform played in how these participants evaluated the candidate depicted in the mailers. This code echoes another code

that emerged from participants' responses to the second question, namely, the candidate's stance on political issues. An illustrative example from a respondent indicated, "No, they are just like everyone else with the amount of information I gathered. I know nothing of their integrity...they could just be another puppet."

Participants provided the following accounts that illustrate their stance on whether they were given enough information in the mailer to be able to form an impression about the candidate: "No, I do not have enough information. I do not know her background in politics and what her resume is like," followed by, "Not really. I am a Democrat, but I would not understand her platform from this," and "They literally didn't tell me anything about them, so no. But that in and of itself gives me a negative impression of the candidate."

Voting Record. Additionally, several participants mentioned that they were interested in the candidate's (past) voting record in order to form a thorough impression about the candidate. For example: "Nope. I don't know her voting record. I don't know where she falls on the political spectrum," or "Both matter more than the Rep/Dem label she chooses," and "Not really. He seems to want to know his constituents, but I have several issues that determine who I vote for. I would need to know where he stands on these issues and how he has voted in the past."

Additionally, one participant provided a very detailed response that illustrates why the voting record is crucial for voters and how it can be used to improve the believability of the political campaign mailers:

> I feel that I did not have enough information to form an impression of the candidate-- in order to do so, I would like to know more about their voting record and position on certain issues. However, I was encouraged by the candidate's willingness to hear from constituents of all political affiliations, so I would be motivated to learn more about them.

Thus, participants argued, the party label of the candidate did not always provide sufficient information that would allow individuals to make a voting decision. Participants were also

interested in candidates' political stances to determine whether the candidate's platform aligned with their political beliefs.

Suggestions for Revisions

The fourth question inquired what participants suggested adding to the campaign mailers to ensure others who read them would have sufficient information about the candidate. Participants mentioned various suggestions that included and/or echoed some of their previous suggestions (i.e., candidate photo stances on political issues) – namely, "Add additional facts on candidates experience."

Candidate's Accomplishments. Some participants specified that it was necessary to include information about the candidate's accomplishments in the political campaign ad for them to be able to evaluate the candidate. For instance, one participant said that the mailers need to include "Examples of what she would try to accomplish if elected." Some additional examples from other participants stated the following: "A bit about their professional career and a small preview of the items they would like to accomplish if elected to the position. Their beliefs regarding the US constitution would be helpful as well," or "The candidate should give some more specific points about what they are looking to accomplish if they win," and "Listing their accomplishments in previous fields would give people a better understanding of who they are voting for."

Background. Other participants seemed very vocal about the fact that the political campaign mailer they were asked to evaluate lacked specific biographical details about the candidate (e.g., marital status, children, education). They suggested to include such information; for instance, one of the participants said, "More background of her family and work she has already done in politics." Other participants echoed this response and suggested including the

following information in the mailers: “Add proof to their claims. On second thought it might be detrimental to add an anecdote, maybe something more biographical,” or “More background, more specific views and video in addition to the text of the ad,” and “Educational background, work history, political beliefs.”

Other Recommendations

The fifth open-ended question asked whether there was anything else the researchers could do to improve the political ad. In other words, participants were asked to include any relevant information that might help improve the mailer that had not been mentioned before. Several participants emphasized past responses, for instance, “add her priorities and make it somthinng [sic] that a lot [sic] of people are dealing with and offer a solution” or “As I said more background information about the candidate.”

Design/ Miscellaneous. Some participants included ideas pertaining to the design of the campaign mailers, such as how to make the mailer, overall, more appealing to participants. Some participants found the mailer to be too long and suggested it be shorter, limiting the word count of the text present in the mailer. Other participants found the mailer to be too brief – “Just more information – seemed a little short.” Yet, other participants made comments about the color scheme (“Many things, but the main things [sic] would be changing of the graphic color scheme so that it is not too on the nose”) as well as the graphic images used in the mailer: “Try including better graphics (not just a flag, as was shown).”

Negative Case Analysis. A thorough analysis of the data revealed several negative cases, where participants did not suggest any improvements. Participants in these instances suggested that the stimuli materials were believable and realistic as they were.

Thus, participants suggested many helpful ideas about the mailer and/or message as illustrated by the following responses as well: “A minor point, but there was an instance in the mailer when the word "representative" probably should not have been capitalized ...,” “Less word [sic] and more picture [sic],” as well as “The mailer was a little plain in terms of aesthetics. Adding more detail and colors to the mailer might make it look less general and more attention-grabbing.”

Discussion

The aim of the pilot study was to test the experimental materials (i.e., mailers) to assess their realism and to identify ways in which these stimuli could be revised for the main study to make them more authentic. Participants in the study were randomly assigned to one of the eight political campaign mailers and asked to read it and assess it in several ways.

The first aspect examined based on the collected data was whether the manipulations worked, and participants were able to correctly recognize the independent variables in each mailer. The results of the cross-tabulation analysis for gender, partisanship, and veteran status revealed that gender references in the campaign mailers were recognized by almost all, if not all, participants. The same was true for partisanship. Given that the pilot study sample was mostly Democrat, it was interesting to see that 100% percent of participants recognized that the mailer mentioned the hypothetical candidate was Republican. For veteran status, although the majority of the pilot study participants recognized that the background of the political candidate in the mailer was veteran, fewer participants noticed that the hypothetical candidate in the mailer was non-veteran. This was likely due to the lack of an explicit non-veteran reference (i.e., we did not explicitly mention in the campaign mailers’ scenario that the hypothetical candidate was not a

veteran). Consequently, the non-veteran condition manipulation, albeit statistically significant, was not as successful as the other manipulations and needed to be analyzed further.

In addition, participants assessed the realism of their assigned hypothetical political candidate mailer. On average, the mailers were perceived as moderately realistic. More in-depth analyses revealed that participants evaluated the mailer containing descriptions of a female, Republican, non-veteran candidate and the one describing a female, Democrat, veteran candidate as the most realistic, believable, and credible. One potential explanation for these results is that the language used in the initial pilot campaign mailers was neutral, and it aligned the most with the communication style used by female politicians; in other words, it was amicable and collaborative. Such language employed by female politicians is consistent with communal traits, frequently assigned to female politicians, and it aligns with gender norms that define how females are expected to act and behave in society (Meeks, 2012). Therefore, it does not create a dissonance between female gender identity and the hypothetical politicians' communication style employed in the pilot study campaign mailers. Hence, the two above-mentioned campaign mailers may have been viewed by participants as the most realistic. It is important to mention that, after conducting the pilot study, the type of language employed in the mailers for the main study was not changed; it was kept as gender-neutral as possible. Additionally, participants may have evaluated the two above-mentioned scenarios that mentioned female candidates as more realistic given the sample was mostly Democrat, and Democrats tend to view female politicians who run for Congress more positively than Republicans do (Pew Research Center, 2018). The analysis also showed that the mailer depicting a male Republican non-veteran candidate was evaluated as the least believable and credible of all mailers. Given the discussion above concerning gendered language and communication style, it is possible that the mailer was not

deemed as authentic by participants because it did not demonstrate salient agentic language that can be typically associated with male political candidates.

To understand participants' ratings for the realism of the mailers further, the results of the open-ended data phronetic iterative analysis were also examined. Findings revealed that many participants sought information related to political candidates' political stance and their specific positions concerning political issues that dominate the U.S. society nowadays, such as the economy or healthcare. Upon several rounds of deliberations with experts, namely, Dr. Cionea and Dr. Meeks, it was decided to revise the mailers for the main study to include some general mentioning of political issues to make the stimuli more realistic. It was decided that the described issues to be added would be constant across all eight mailers and would not explicitly indicate ideological leanings of the political candidates. For example, one of the additions made would be "…one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family." This language was meant to show that the hypothetical candidate tackled the issue of the economy, recognized it as important and salient in U.S. society nowadays, but they did not demonstrate a polarized perspective vis-à-vis this issue, keeping the information regarding the economy neutral.

Other comments made by participants indicated that the political campaign mailers also needed to be more personalized. Participants mentioned that the mailers needed to include aspects such as the hypothetical candidates' (past) voting record or additional information pertaining to the candidates' background (i.e., where they grew up, their family). Again, upon consulting with the above-mentioned experts, the text of the mailers was revised and general information that would give participants more clues concerning the hypothetical candidate's background and voting record were added to increase the mailers' realism. These additions

would also be kept across all eight mailers and would include general references to candidates' backgrounds to reduce possible bias. For example, the following text would be added: "I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate" and "As a little boy/girl, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country."

A few participants suggested including a photo or a picture of the candidate to make the candidate more appealing, and, therefore, make the campaign mailer more realistic. However, including a picture of the candidate would introduce additional confounding factors (i.e., candidate's age, race/ethnicity, attractiveness) that are beyond the scope of this experiment and that could interfere with the experimental design. Therefore, it was decided not to include any pictures in the mailers to maintain the experimental control sought in the initial study research design that focused on isolating and testing the effects of the three independent variables (gender, partisanship, and veteran status).

Finally, participants indicated that the design of the mailers could be revised to make them more attractive and realistic. I reviewed existent political campaign mailers and consulted with an undergraduate political science major who has worked as a political campaign manager and who has design expertise to examine whether the design, font, color scheme, and text placement could be improved. This person reviewed the mailers, provided feedback about possible design improvements, and helped design new candidate campaign logos for each mailer. The new logos matched the color scheme of the mailers (white, blue, and red), and added another gender reference as they included the first and last names of the hypothetical political candidates.

Overall, then, based on results from the pilot study and consultations with experts, the experimental stimuli were revised for the main study. First, the content of the mailers was

updated to highlight the hypothetical candidate's personal references (i.e., past voting record) and to mention more explicitly their stance on some political issues, albeit in a neutral manner. Second, the design of the mailers was updated to include a logo. Some of the text formatting in the mailer was also adjusted. Finally, stimuli references to "ads" were changed to "mailers," the candidate's description was changed from "Representative" to "Senator," and the wording in each mailer was revised to ensure it had a roughly equal number of identity references (gender, partisanship, and veteran status).

CHAPTER 4: MAIN STUDY METHOD AND RESULTS

The purpose of the main study was to measure how participants evaluated hypothetical political candidates based on their gender, partisanship, and veteran status that created candidate interactional identities, communicated in the campaign mailers that were revised based on the pilot study's results. The following details the method for the main study as well as its results.

Participants

I recruited a convenience sample of U.S. adults (250 men and 250 women) above the age of 18 from across the United States via the crowd-sourcing platform Prolific. The eligibility criteria for Prolific workers were the same as for the pilot study. Specifically, participants needed to (a) self-identify as U.S. nationals, (b) be between 18 and 100 years old, (c) have completed over 100 studies on Prolific before, (d) have at least a 99% approval rate for their previous Prolific submissions, and (e) were open to participate in deception studies. In addition, participants who completed the pilot study were not eligible to sign up for the main study. The sample was set up to be balanced by participants' sex (50% male, 50% female).

Initially, 524 Prolific participants were recruited and consented to participate in the pilot study. Almost all participants consented for their data to be used when debriefed about the study involving concealment of the true nature of the mailers (i.e., hypothetical, not real). One person declined to consent and their response was eliminated from further analyses. Responses from participants who did not complete the study or failed attention verification questions (described in the results, data analyses section below) were eliminated (n = 64). An additional 55 cases were eliminated during data analyses due to normality concerns, described below in the results, data analyses section as well. Thus, the final sample for analyses was 404 participants.

Participants' age ranged from 18 to 76 years (*M* = 37.63; *SD* = 12.9). Participants were mostly White (*n* = 289), and primarily resided in California (*n* = 50), Pennsylvania (*n* = 30), Texas (*n* = 28), Florida (*n* = 23), New York (*n* = 21), and Illinois (*n* = 18). Participants indicated their occupation via an open-ended response. Example occupations include nurse, office manager, librarian, writer, customer service representative, graphic designer, assistant manager, retired, small business owner, master's student, accountant, and construction worker. Detailed information about additional participant demographics is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Sample Characteristics for the Main Study: Prolific Sample (N = 404)

Measures	*N*	(%)
Sex		
Male	188	(46.5%)
Female	202	(50%)
Intersex	1	(0.2%)
Non-binary	7	(1.7%)
Other	1	(0.2%)
Prefer not to answer	5	(1.2%)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	289	(71.5%)
Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx	34	(8.4%)
Black or African American	15	(3.7%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	(0.5%)
Asian	37	(9.2%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	(0%)
A combination of these	22	(5.4%)
Other	2	(0.5%)
Prefer not to answer	3	(0.7%)
Education		
High school degree or less	124	(30.7%)
Associate (2 year) degree	49	(12.1%)
Bachelor (4 year) degree	163	(40.3%)
Professional degree	5	(1.2%)
Graduate degree (e.g., MA, PhD)	51	(12.6%)

Other	9	(2.2%)
Prefer not to answer	3	(0.7%)
Political Ideology		
Very liberal	120	(29.7%)
Slightly liberal	117	(29%)
Moderate	80	(19.8%)
Slightly conservative	59	(14.6%)
Very conservative	23	(5.7%)
Other	3	(0.7%)
Prefer not to answer	2	(0.5%)
Party Identification		
Republican	60	(14.9%)
Libertarian	5	(1.2%)
Democrat	206	(51%)
Independent	119	(29.5%)
Other	10	(2.5%)
Prefer not to answer	4	(1%)
Military Status		
Yes	16	(4%)
No	385	(94.8%)
Prefer not to answer	3	(0.7%)
Military affiliation		
Yes	69	(17.1%)
No	329	(81.5%)
Other	1	(0.2%)
Prefer not to answer	5	(1.2%)

Procedures and Experimental Design

Similar to the pilot study, participants were recruited from the crowd-sourcing platform Prolific. A recruitment message was posted on Prolific, informing participants about the purpose of the main study, which was to complete an online survey that would ask them to evaluate political candidates after reading a political campaign mailer, answer questions about it, and provide information about their voting behaviors as well as their demographic information. Interested Prolific workers who met the eligibility criteria for the study (described above) were

able to accept the study on Prolific and access the online survey, which was hosted on the Qualtrics platform.

Those participants who opted to participate in the study and clicked on the link from Prolific, reviewed an informed consent form first, where they could read additional information about the purpose of the study and their rights as a research participant. Participants who gave their consent to participate in the study proceeded with the survey; those who declined participation were directed to the end of the survey and were unable to access and complete the survey. Next, participants were asked questions about their political beliefs and behaviors that could potentially inform their voting behaviors: their political participation, trust in the government, and sexist attitudes. These three sets of questions appeared in separate blocks (one block per scale), which participants viewed in random order. Further, all the questions within each block were also displayed in randomized order. Each block of questions included an attention verification check that aimed to ensure participants were paying attention to the study. Examples of attention verification questions included, "Please select 'always' as your answer for this question" or "Please select 'strongly disagree' as your answer here."

Upon completing these scales, participants were randomly assigned to view one of the eight experimental campaign mailers (See Appendix B for the main study mailers). Specifically, the experimental design for the study was a 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (partisanship: Republican vs. Democrat) x 2 (veteran status: veteran vs. non-veteran) between-subjects experimental design. Thus, there were eight total experimental conditions, each containing a hypothetical political candidate mailer. Similar to the pilot study, participants were asked to read the information provided in the political campaign mailer carefully and pay attention to the details of the mailer as they would be asked questions about it later. Participants then completed

manipulation check questions, which were the same questions as the ones used in the pilot study. The order of presentation for the three manipulation check questions was randomized.

After being exposed to the experimental stimuli, participants were asked to indicate the likelihood of voting for the hypothetical candidate depicted in the mailer. These questions were included in one block in the survey and also presented in random order. Participants also evaluated the candidate's perceived credibility (i.e., competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill) and indicated whether the candidate was likeable. Statements measuring each variable (credibility or likability) were included in a separate block and presented to participants in random order. The order in which the two blocks were presented was also randomized.

Finally, participants provided their demographic information and were debriefed about the concealment used in the study. Similar to the pilot study, it was not disclosed to participants in the beginning of the study that the mailers were hypothetical; therefore, participants were re-consented at the end of the study, once this information was shared with them. As a reminder, only one person did not re-consent and their response was eliminated from further analyses. Participants were then redirected to Prolific where they could submit their task to receive compensation. The study took, on average, 12.47 minutes (*SD* = 13.9 minutes), and respondents were compensated $3.00 for their participation. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Oklahoma prior to any data collection activities.

Measures

Political Participation

Participants' political participation was measured with 18 items from the political participation scale developed by Gopal and Verma (2018). Items measured how frequently participants engaged in the behaviors listed, which captured various forms of political

involvement. Examples include, “I work for a political party or candidates during elections,” “I always vote in elections,” or “I discuss politics with my friends, relatives, and colleagues” (see Appendix B for all scale items). Items were measured on a Likert scale from 1 = *Never true* to 7 = *Always true*. Higher scores on this variable indicate more political participation.

Trust in Government

Trust in government was measured with three items adapted from standard ANES trust (in the national government) scale (Gershtenson & Plane, 2006). The items were meant to capture participants’ perception of how trustworthy the U.S. government was. Examples of the scale items include, “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?” and “How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?” (see Appendix B for the complete scale). Item were measured on a Likert scale from 1 = *Never* to 7 = *Always*. Higher scores on this variable indicate more trust in the government.

Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes

Participants’ attitudes towards men and women and their roles in society were measured with 10 items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory by Glick and Fiske (1996). The construct consists of two dimensions: benevolent sexism (measured with five items) and hostile sexism (also measured with five items). Examples include, “Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste” (benevolent sexism) and “When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against” (hostile sexism; see Appendix B). Items were measured on a Likert scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Higher scores on this variable indicate more sexist attitudes.

Vote Choice Intent

Participants' intent to vote for the hypothetical candidate in their assigned mailer was measured with seven items that I developed for this dissertation in consultation with Dr. Cionea. Examples of the scale items include, "How likely are you to vote for this candidate in the upcoming election?" and "How strong is your preference for this political candidate?" (see Appendix B for the full scale). Items were measured on a Likert scale from 1 = *Extremely unlikely* to 7 = *Extremely likely*. Higher scores on this variable indicate higher vote choice intent for the candidate.

Likability

The perceived likability of the hypothetical candidate was measured with a 9-item Likert scale adapted from Reysen (2005) for this dissertation. Examples include, "The political candidate is friendly," and "This political candidate is knowledgeable" (all scale items can be found in the Appendix B). Items were measured on a Likert scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Higher scores on this variable indicate more candidate likability.

Perceived Credibility

The perceived credibility of the hypothetical mailer candidate was measured with an 18-items semantic-differential 7-point scale from Teven and McCroskey (1997). The scale captures three sub-dimensions: competence (measured with six items), goodwill (measured with six items as well), and trustworthiness (also measured with six items). Participants were asked to identify how well each pair of adjectives provided for each of the items corresponded with their impressions of the candidate. Examples of items include: "Intelligent-Unintelligent" (competence), "Has my interests at heart – Doesn't have my interests at heart" (goodwill), and "Honest-Dishonest" (trustworthiness; see all scale items in Appendix B). Higher scores on this

variable indicate higher perceived credibility (i.e., higher perceived competence, higher perceived goodwill, and higher perceived trustworthiness).

Manipulation Checks

Similar to the pilot study, after being exposed to the randomly assigned political mailers, participants completed three manipulation check questions. The multiple-choice questions were: "What was the gender of the Congressional candidate in the mailer?", "What was the political party affiliation of the Congressional candidate?", and "What was the background of the Congressional candidate?". The answer choices for the gender condition were as follows: "The mailer mentioned the candidate was male", "The mailer mentioned the candidate was female", "Do not remember", and "Other (Please specify)". The answer choices for the partisanship and veteran status conditions were worded in a similar manner.

Attention Verification Questions

To ensure that participants paid attention to the study, six attention verification questions were included in the survey, interspersed with each scale items, and presented in randomized order. Participants were asked to provide a specific answer, such as, "Please select 'Very uninterested' as your answer for this statement." Responses from those who answered these attention verification questions incorrectly were eliminated from data analyses.

Demographic Information

Participants were also asked to indicate demographic information that was believed to be relevant for the main study. Similar to the pilot study, participants were asked to indicate their age (open-ended question), sex (multiple-choice question), racial/ethnic background (multiple-choice question), education (multiple-choice question), occupation (open-ended question), state of residence (multiple-choice question), political ideology (multiple-choice question), political

party identification (multiple-choice question), military status (multiple-choice question), and any military affiliation (multiple-choice question). The list of all demographic questions for the main study can be found in Appendix B.

Data Analyses

Data Cleaning

As mentioned above, 524 Prolific participants were initially recruited to participate in the main study. One participant did not re-consent after the study concealment was revealed, and, thus, their response was eliminated from the study. Next, 64 other responses were eliminated: 16 participants did not complete the study and returned their submission (these responses were eliminated from data analyses), 48 responses were rejected due to failed attention verification questions, and seven responses timed-out (i.e., participants did not complete and submit the study in the allotted time). If any of the participants who did not finish the study completed more than 50% of the survey (four participants), they received compensation, but their responses were not used in data analyses. Thus, 459 valid responses were retained from the initial number of participants.

An additional 55 cases were eliminated due to concerns regarding the normality of their scores' distribution. An initial examination of participants' responses indicated that the data was not normally distributed. The data was examined for both univariate and multivariate outliers by (a) converting continuous variables into Z-scores (standardized scores) and then sorting these scores by both ascending and descending values (Polit & Beck, 2010), and (b) examining the Mahalanobis distance statistic. Responses that were either above 3.29 or below -3.29 were treated as outliers, and, according to Tabachnick et al. (2018), were eliminated from the sample. This procedure significantly improved the normality of the data's distribution. Finally, there

were several cases that contained missing data. Upon closer examination, it was determined that the data were missing completely at random (Kline, 2013). Therefore, the missing values were imputed with the series mean (Tabachnick et al., 2018). Thus, the final sample for analyses following these procedures consisted of 404 responses that did not contain any missing data, nor any significant outliers, and were distributed approximately normally in terms of skewness and kurtosis.

Results

Cross-Tabulation and Frequencies Analyses

To analyze whether or not the manipulation of each independent variable (i.e., gender, party affiliation, and veteran status) worked, cross-tabulations analyses were conducted. Similar to the pilot study, each of the three independent variables manipulated was matched with the respective manipulation check question asking about that independent variable. Cross-tabulation chi-square statistics as well as row and column percentages were then examined.

For the gender condition, [χ^2 (3) = 365.132, $p < .001$], 99.4% percent of the participants who were assigned to a mailer depicting a male candidate recognized that the mailer mentioned the candidate was male. Next, for the mailer portraying a female candidate, 100% percent of participants recognized it as such. For the partisanship condition, [χ^2 (3) = 397.600, $p < .001$], 100% percent of participants who were assigned to a mailer describing a Republican candidate recognized that the mailer mentioned that the hypothetical candidate was Republican. Of those participants who were assigned to a mailer representing a Democrat candidate, 100% percent of participants recognized that the mailer stated that the hypothetical candidate was Democrat as well. Finally, for the veteran status condition, [χ^2 (3) = 314.969, $p < .001$], 92.3% percent of the participants who were assigned to a mailer depicting a military veteran candidate indicated that

the mailer mentioned the candidate was a veteran, and 97.9% percent of participants who were assigned to a mailer that depicted a non-veteran candidate stated correctly that the mailer did not mention the hypothetical candidate was a military veteran. In sum, participants were able to recognize correctly the candidate characteristics manipulated in almost all cases. Notably, for the non-veteran condition the percentage showed a significant improvement, compared to the pilot study, where participants recognized the non-veteran candidate for only 74.4%. Similar to the pilot study, participants who failed to recognize/recall the independent variable manipulated in their assigned mailer were retained in the study given this was a small number of responses and given that retaining them would ensure more data representativeness.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were conducted for each scale in the MPlus software version 8.8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2022). The cleaned and raw data with imputed missing values was exported to a .csv format file, then used by the MPlus software to generate a covariance matrix for analyses. Maximum likelihood estimation was used for all analyses. The metric assumption was implemented by the software with the first item in each scale set as the marker indicator. The initial model fit for each scale was assessed according to the guidelines proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999): RMSEA $\leq .06$, CFI $\geq .95$, and SRMR $\leq .08$. However, some researchers recognize that the standards recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999) may be too stringent. Thus, although it is preferable that a model meets these fit guidelines, it is still appropriate for models with fit indices' values that are "close to" (Brown, 2015, p. 74) Hu and Bentler's (1999) standards to be deemed suitable.

The initial model fit indices did not meet Hu and Bentler's (1999) standards for most of the scales, except vote choice intent and trustworthiness, which fit acceptably (see fit statistics in

Table 5 below). Therefore, for each scale, I examined the factor loadings and residuals to identify potential localized areas of strain that affected model fit (Brown, 2015). Several items had low path coefficients connecting the latent factor and these respective items, which can worsen model fit, especially the CFI. Therefore, items whose standardized path coefficients were < .50 (Hair et al., 2020, 2021) were dropped, iteratively. Next, also for each scale, I reviewed the modification indices to establish whether the model fit could be improved by allowing some of the errors of indicators to covary. Error covariances were permitted when items were theoretically justifiable because they were worded in a similar manner (Brown, 2015). The procedures described above significantly improved model fit for each of the scale—the values of the goodness of fit statistics for each scale were consistent with or close to the standards put forth by Hu and Bentler (1999). Revised model fit indices after these modifications were implemented are presented in Table 5 below, for each scale.

Table 5

CFA Model Fit Results

Model	χ^2	*df*	*p*-value	RMSEA [90% CI]	CFI	SRMR
Initial model Political Participation	1,118.46	135	< .001	.13 [.127; .142]	.68	.10
Revised model Political Participation[a]	49.59	12	< .001	.09 [.063; .144]	.97	.02
Initial model Sexism (Hostile and Benevolent factors separately, covarying)	1,067.84	35	< .001	.27 [.256; .284]	.61	.18
Revised model Sexism (Hostile and Benevolent factors separately, covarying)	436.33	34	< .001	.17 [.157; .186]	.85	.08
Initial model Vote Choice Intent	47.43	14	< .001	.07 [.054; .102]	.99	.01
Initial model Likability	291.39	27	< .001	.15 [.140; .172]	.90	.04
Revised model Likability[b]	50.42	21	< .001	.05 [.038; .080]	.99	.02
Initial model Competence	78.34	9	< .001	.13 [.111; .167]	.95	.03
Revised model Competence[c]	37.08	8	< .001	.09 [.066; .127]	.98	.02
Initial model Goodwill	72.56	9	< .001	.13 [.105; .161]	.96	.03
Revised model Goodwill[d]	28.41	8	< .001	.07 [.049; .112]	.98	.02
Initial model Trustworthiness	345.979	130	< .001	.06 [.056; .072]	.96	.03

Notes:

[a] Items 10, 14, 3, 4, 16, 15, 1, 6, 9, 18, and 17 dropped. Covariances permitted between the errors of items 8 and 13, items 2 and 7, items 2 and 5.

[b] No items were dropped. Covariances permitted between the errors of items 5 and 7 6 and 7, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 5 and 8, and 6 and 8.

[c]No items were dropped. Covariances permitted between the errors of items 1 and 6.

[d]Covariances permitted between the errors of items 5 and 6.

Cronbach Alpha Reliability

Next, I created composite variables for each scale by computing the mathematical average of all retained items for each scale in SPSS. I also calculated the reliability of each scale, which revealed that all scale had good reliability (see Table 6 below which contains descriptive statistics calculated based only on the retained items after CFAs).

Table 6

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability Scores for Study Variables

Scale	*Cronbach's α*	*M*	*SD*
Political Participation	.88	6.31	0.77
Trust in Government	.96	3.18	1.16
Benevolent Sexism	.84	3.63	1.27
Hostile Sexism	.92	2.45	1.24
Vote Choice Intent	.99	4.05	1.72
Likability	.93	4.57	1.04
Competence	.92	5.42	0.96
Goodwill	.92	4.66	1.15
Trustworthiness	.95	4.94	1.18

Covariate Analyses

Further, I conducted a preliminary multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in SPSS to examine whether or not participants' demographic characteristics (i.e., sex, race/ethnicity, education, state, income, religion, political ideology, party identification, military status, military affiliation) yielded differences on the main study variables. The main study variables (likability, competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and vote choice intent) were entered as dependent variables, and participants' demographics were entered as the independent variables. The multivariate tests were not significant for any of the demographics: sex, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(5, 342) = 1.50$, $p = .13$, $\eta^2 p = .02$; race/ethnicity, Wilks' Lambda = .95, $F(5, 344) = 0.86$, $p = .64$, $\eta^2 p = .01$; education, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(5, 344) = 0.63$, $p = .89$, $\eta^2 p = .01$; state,

Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(5, 343) = .20$, $p = 1.00$, $\eta^2p = .00$; religion, Wilks' Lambda = .93, $F(5, 344) = 1.31$, $p = .16$, $\eta^2p = .02$; political ideology, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(5, 343) = 1.01$, $p = .45$, $\eta^2p = .02$; party identification, Wilks' Lambda = .95, $F(5, 343) = 1.26$, $p = .22$, $\eta^2p = .02$; military status, Wilks' Lambda = .97, $F(5, 341) = 2.02$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2p = .03$; and military affiliation, Wilks' Lambda = .97, $F(5, 342) = .98$, $p = .463$, $\eta^2p = .01$. I also conducted additional post-hoc multiple comparisons with Tukey's honest significant difference test enabled to examine further any possible differences between groups. These analyses revealed no significant information, meaning that none of the demographics produced any meaningful differences for the main variables of interest. Therefore, demographics were not included in any subsequent analyses as covariates.

In addition, I conducted a second multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in SPSS to examine whether or not participants' communicative behaviors and attitudes (i.e., political participation, trust in government, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism) differed based on the above-mentioned participant demographic variables (sex, race/ethnicity, education, state, income, religion, political ideology, party identification, military status, military affiliation). Participants' demographics were entered as independent variables and participants' communicative behaviors and attitudes were entered as dependent variables. The multivariate tests were significant for race, Wilks' Lambda = .91, $F(4, 345) = 2.07$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2p = .02$; education, Wilks' Lambda = .92, $F(4, 345) = 1.82$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2p = .02$; and political ideology, Wilks' Lambda = .89, $F(4, 344) = 3.43$, $p = < .001$, $\eta^2p = .04$. Tables 8-10 below contain the results of the univariate tests for each significant multivariate test, detailing the mean difference comparisons and their significance (conducted based on the Bonferroni option). I also correlated these communicative behaviors and attitudes with the main variables of interest in the study

(likability, competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and vote choice intent) to examine the magnitude of their associations. Several moderate correlations were identified (See details in Table 7 below).

Table 7

Correlations for Likability, Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Vote Choice Intent

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Political Participation								
2.Trust in Government	-.070							
3.Benevolent Sexism	.076	.005						
4.Hostile Sexism	.248***	-.157**	.328***					
5.Likability	.004	.280***	.161***	-.022				
6.Competence	.096	.161***	.113*	-.074	.702**			
7.Goodwill	.028	.231***	.076	-.041	.766***	.691***		
8.Trustworthiness	.072	.234***	.113*	.032	.745***	.732***	.839***	
9.Vote Choice Intent	-.018	.136**	.129**	.011	.704***	.619***	.625***	.634***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Based on all these results, political participation, trust in government, and both sexism sub-dimensions were included as covariates in subsequent analyses to control for voters' characteristics that could affect the hypothesized relationships.

Table 8

Mean Differences for Trust in Government Based on Race

Variable		*Race*	*M*	*SE*	*Mean Diff*	*p*
Trust in Government		White	3.28	0.07		
	White	Hispanic	2.92	0.22	0.36	.45
		Black	2.73	0.32	0.55	.29
		Asian	3.59	0.21	-0.31	.24
		Other	2.32	0.25	0.96	<.001
	Hispanic	Black	2.73	0.37	0.19	.95
		Asian	3.59	0.29	-0.67	.05
		Other	2.32	0.32	0.60	.46
	Black	Asian	3.59	0.37	-0.86	.04
		Other	2.32	0.39	0.41	.97
	Asian	Other	2.32	0.31	1.27	<.001

Table 9

Mean Differences for Trust in Government and Benevolent Sexism Based on Education

Variable		*Education*	*M*	*SE*	*Mean Diff*	*p*
Trust in		High School	2.95	0.11		
Government	High School	Associate	3.53	0.20	-0.58	.03
		Bachelor	3.17	0.14	-0.22	.46
		Graduate	3.48	0.19	-0.53	.03
		Other	3.31	0.34	-0.36	.75
	Associate	Bachelor	3.17	0.19	0.36	.39
		Graduate	3.48	0.23	0.01	1.00
		Other	3.31	0.37	0.22	.99
	Bachelor	Graduate	3.48	0.19	-0.31	.39
		Other	3.31	0.34	-0.14	.98
	Graduate	Other	3.31	0.36	0.15	.99
		High School	3.93	0.12		
Benevolent	High School	Associate	3.68	0.21	0.25	.64
Sexism		Bachelor	3.58	0.15	0.35	.20
		Graduate	3.17	0.21	0.76	<.001
		Other	3.23	0.37	0.70	.29
	Associate	Bachelor	3.58	0.20	0.10	1.00
		Graduate	3.17	0.25	0.51	.36
		Other	3.23	0.39	0.45	.81
	Bachelor	Graduate	3.17	0.20	0.41	.23
		Other	3.23	0.36	0.35	.82
	Graduate	Other	3.23	0.39	-0.06	1.00

Table 10

Mean Differences for Political Participation, Benevolent Sexism, and Hostile Sexism Based on Political Ideology

Variable	*Ideology*		*M*	*SE*	*MD*	*p*
Political Participation		Liberal	6.14	0.06		
	Liberal	Moderate	6.54	0.10	-0.42	<.001
		Conservative	6.56	0.10	-0.45	<.001
		Other	6.14	0.44	-0.03	1.00
	Moderate	Conservative	6.56	0.12	-0.03	.96
		Other	6.14	0.44	0.40	.81
	Conservative	Other	6.14	0.44	0.43	.77
Benevolent Sexism						
		Liberal	3.38	0.08		
	Liberal	Moderate	3.84	-0.46	0.16	0.29
		Conservative	4.20	-0.82	0.16	<.001
		Other	2.67	0.71	0.70	.74
	Moderate	Conservative	4.20	-0.36	0.20	.19
		Other	2.67	1.17	0.72	.36
	Conservative	Other	2.67	1.53	0.72	.13
Hostile Sexism						
		Liberal	1.99	0.07		
	Liberal	Moderate	2.91	0.15	-0.92	<.001
		Conservative	3.35	0.14	-1.36	<.001
		Other	2.47	0.63	-0.48	.86
	Moderate	Conservative	3.35	0.18	-0.44	.05
		Other	2.47	0.64	0.44	.93
	Conservative	Other	2.47	0.64	0.88	.55

Tests for Hypotheses and Research Questions

Main Effect of Gender

H1 predicted that male candidates would be evaluated by voters as (H1a) more competent, (H1b) more trustworthy, (H1c) having more goodwill, and (H1d) being more likable than female candidates, while controlling for voters' characteristics. The hypothesis was tested by using a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), with gender of the candidate as the independent variable (along with partisanship and veteran status, detailed below), and competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability as dependent variables, while voters' political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes as covariates. Box's *M* test was not significant, $F(70, 21{,}0241.46) = 1.18$, $p = .14$. The multivariate test was significant, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(4, 389) = 3.66$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 p = .04$. Univariate tests revealed a significant main effect of gender on candidate's competence, $F(1, 392) = 3.91$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 p = .01$. Post-hoc multiple comparisons of means conducted with the Bonferroni adjustment revealed that participants evaluated female candidates ($M = 5.52$, $SE = 0.07$) as more competent than male candidates ($M = 5.34$, $SE = 0.07$). Thus, H1a was not supported as initially formulated; albeit significant, the difference in competence based on gender was in the opposite direction than predicted.

There was also a significant effect of gender on trustworthiness, $F(1, 392) = 11.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 p = .03$. Participants also evaluated female candidates ($M = 5.13$, $SE = 0.08$) as more trustworthy than male candidates ($M = 4.76$, $SE = 0.08$). Thus, H1b was also not supported as initially formulated as results indicated a significant difference in trustworthiness based on gender but in the opposite direction than predicted.

Additionally, the main effect of gender on likability was also significant, $F(1, 392) = 4.11$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 p = .01$. Female candidates ($M = 4.68$, $SE = 0.07$) were evaluated as more likable than male candidates ($M = 4.48$, $SE = 0.07$). Thus, the same pattern of results in which a significant difference existed but in the opposite direction than predicted occurred for H1d.

Finally, H1c was not supported. The difference in goodwill between male candidates ($M = 4.57$, $SE = 0.08$) and female candidates ($M = 4.76$, $SE = 0.08$) was not significant at $p < .05$, albeit marginally significant ($p = .09$), suggesting no main effect of gender on goodwill, $F(1, 392) = 2.90$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 p = .01$.

Main Effect of Partisanship

H2 predicted that Republican candidates would be evaluated by voters as (H2a) more competent, (H2b) more trustworthy, (H2c) having more goodwill, and (H2d) being more likable than Democrat candidates, while controlling for voters' characteristics. The hypothesis was tested by using the same MANCOVA described above for H1. The multivariate test was significant, Wilks' Lambda = .92, $F(4, 389) = 8.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 p = .08$. Further, results of the univariate tests indicated there was a significant main effect of partisanship on the candidate's competence, $F(1, 392) = 20.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 p = .05$. Democratic candidates ($M = 5.64$, $SE = 0.07$) were perceived by participants as more competent than Republican candidates ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 0.07$), meaning that H2a was not supported as initially proposed as findings were in the opposite direction than predicted.

There was also a significant main effect of partisanship on the candidate's trustworthiness, too, $F(1, 392) = 25.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 p = .06$. Democratic candidates ($M = 5.22$, $SE = 0.08$) were perceived by participants as more trustworthy than Republican candidates ($M = 4.66$, $SE = .078$), meaning that H2b was also not supported as initially phrased.

There was also a significant main effect of partisanship on the candidate's goodwill, with Democrats (M = 4.90, SE = 0.08) being perceived as showing more goodwill than Republicans (M = 4.44, SE = 0.08), $F(1, 392) = 16.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 p = .04$. These results, albeit significant, were contrary to what was hypothesized in H2c.

Finally, there was also a main effect of partisanship on candidate likability, with Democratic candidates (M = 4.84, SE = 0.07) being perceived as more likable than Republican candidates (M = 4.32, SE = 0.07), $F(1, 392) = 28.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 p = .07$. These findings were also in the opposite direction from what was predicted. In other words, H2a, H2b, H2c, and H2d were all not supported as initially proposed. A significant effect of partisanship on how participants evaluated Republican and Democrat candidates was found, but with the Democratic candidates in the stimuli being rated higher on competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability than the Republican candidates.

Main Effect of Veteran Status

H3 predicted that veteran candidates would be evaluated by voters as (H3a) more competent, (H3b) more trustworthy, (H3c) having more goodwill, and (H3d) being more likable than non-veteran (i.e., civilian) candidates, while controlling for voters' characteristics. The hypothesis was tested with the same MANCOVA as for H1 and H2. The multivariate test was significant, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(4, 389) = 3.82$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 p = .04$. The univariate tests, however, were not significant. In other words, there was no significant effect of veteran status on the candidate's competence [veteran: M = 5.46, SE = 0.06, non-veteran: M = 5.39, SE = 0.07; $F(1, 392) = 0.58$, $p = .45$, $\eta^2 p = .00$]; trustworthiness [veteran: M = 5.00, SE = 0.08, non-veteran: M = 4.88, SE = 0.08; $F(1, 392) = 1.35$, $p = .25$, $\eta^2 p = .00$]; goodwill [veteran: M = 4.61, SE = 0.08, non-veteran: M = 4.72, SE = 0.08; $F(1, 392) = 0.90$, $p = .35$, $\eta^2 p = .00$); and likability

[veteran: M = 4.54, SE = 0.07, non-veteran: M = 4.62, SE = 0.07; $F(1, 392) = 0.72$, $p = .40$, $\eta^2 p = .00$]. Thus, H3 was not supported.

Gender, Partisanship, and Veteran Status Interactions

RQ1 asked whether or not there was an interaction effect between a candidate's gender, partisanship, and veteran status on their (RQ1a) competence, (RQ1b) trustworthiness, (RQ1c) goodwill, and (RQ1d) likability while controlling for voters' characteristics. The research question was explored by using the same MANCOVA as for H1-H3. The multivariate tests were not significant for any of the interactions (two-way or three-way). There was not a significant interaction effect between the candidate's gender and partisanship [Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(4, 389) = 0.96$, $p = .43$, $\eta^2 p = .01$]; the candidate's gender and veteran status [Wilks' Lambda = 1.00, $F(4, 389) = 0.46$, $p = .76$, $\eta^2 p = .01$]; the candidate's partisanship and veteran status [Wilks' Lambda = 1.00, $F(4, 389) = 0.41$, $p = .80$, $\eta^2 p = .00$]; and the candidate's gender, partisanship, and veteran status [Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(4, 389) = 0.61$, $p = .66$, $\eta^2 p = .01$]. Thus, the multivariate analysis revealed that there was no significant interaction effects between a candidate's gender, partisanship, and veteran status on their competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability while controlling for voters' communicative behaviors and attitudes.

Effects of Gender on Vote Choice Intent

H4 predicted that vote choice intent would differ based on the candidate's gender, so that, controlling for voters' characteristics, voters will be more likely to vote for male candidates than for female candidates. A hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted in SPSS to test this hypothesis, with vote choice intent entered as the dependent variable, political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes as covariates in the first block, and the candidate's gender entered as the independent variable in the second block. The overall regression model for

the first block (covariates) was significant. The addition of gender did not significantly change the model nor did gender significantly predict vote choice intent (See Table 11 below for all regression results). Thus, H4 was not supported.

Table 11

Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Gender on Vote Choice Intent

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	*SE*	*β*	*B*	*SE*	*β*
Political Participation	-0.04	0.11	-.17	-0.04	0.11	-.02
Trust in Government	0.20**	0.07	.13**	0.20**	0.07	.14**
Benevolent Sexism	0.18**	0.07	.13**	0.18**	0.07	.14**
Hostile Sexism	-0.01	0.08	-.01	-0.02	0.08	-.01
Gender				0.24	0.17	.07
Adjusted R^2		.03			.03	
R^2 Change		.04**			.01	
F-test value		3.67***			3.35**	

Note: **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

Effects of Partisanship and Veteran Status on Vote Choice Intent

The proposed RQ2 asked whether vote choice intent would differ based on (RQ2a) a candidate's partisanship and (RQ2b) a candidate's veteran status, while controlling for voters' characteristics. Two similar hierarchical regression analyses as for H4 were conducted in SPSS to explore this research question. For RQ2a, vote choice intent was entered as the dependent variable, political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes were entered as covariates in the first block, and partisanship was entered as an independent variable in the second block. The addition of partisanship in the covariates regression model led to a significant change in the percentage of explained variance in vote choice intent (See Table 12 below for all regression results). Thus, in response to RQ2a, vote choice intent for a candidate did, indeed, differ based on the candidate's partisanship, with respondents being significantly more likely to vote for Democratic candidates than for Republican ones.

For RQ2b, vote choice intent was entered as the dependent variable, political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes were entered as covariates in the first block and veteran status was entered as an independent variable in the second block of the regression analysis. The overall regression model for the first block (covariates) was significant. The addition of veteran status, however, did not significantly change the model nor did veteran status significantly predict vote choice intent (See Table 13 below for all regression results).

Table 12

Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Partisanship on Vote Choice Intent

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	*SE*	*β*	*B*	*SE*	*β*
Political Participation	-0.04	0.11	-.02	0.02	0.10	.01
Trust in Government	0.20**	0.07	.13**	0.12	0.07	.08
Benevolent Sexism	0.18**	0.07	.13**	0.20**	0.06	.15**
Hostile Sexism	-0.01	0.08	-.01	0.01	0.07	.01
Partisanship				1.47***	0.16	.43***
Adjusted R^2		.03			.20	
R^2 Change		.04**			.18***	
F-test value		3.67**			21.66***	

Note: **$p \leq .01$; ***$p \leq .001$.

Table 13

Hierarchical Linear Regression Results for Veteran Status on Vote Choice Intent

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	*SE*	*β*	*B*	*SE*	*β*
Political Participation	-0.04	0.11	-.02	-0.04	0.11	-.02
Trust in Government	0.20**	0.07	.13**	0.20**	0.07	.13**
Benevolent Sexism	0.18**	0.07	.13**	0.18**	0.07	.13**
Hostile Sexism	-0.01	0.08	-.01	-0.01	0.08	-.01
Veteran Status				0.02	0.17	.01
Adjusted R^2		.03			.02	
R^2 Change		.04**			.00	
F-test value		3.67**			2.93*	

Note: **$p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Mediation Analyses

Scholars argue that there are several approaches to identifying whether mediation has occurred (i.e., Barron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; James & Brett, 1984; Kenny, 2008). According to Kenny (2008), scholars need to ensure that that a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables; that the independent variable is also correlated with the mediator; further, that the mediator has an effect on dependent variable; and, finally, that the addition of the mediator suppresses the relationship between dependent and independent variables completely (i.e., the path coefficient is reduced to zero). However, Hayes (2018) approaches the requirements for mediation differently: he suggests any mediation, even a partial one, should count as mediation (in other words, the mediation does not have to be full to be considered mediation). Upon analyzing different approaches to mediation described above, it was deemed reasonable to view mediation as present in this dissertation when any mediation, even a partial one, was encountered, following Hayes's (2018) suggestions. During analyses, the indirect effects were deemed statistically significant when the 95% confidence interval for a test did not include zero in it, which would imply that the indirect effects are statistically different from zero (Hayes, 2018).

Mediation Between Gender and Vote Choice Intent. H5 predicted that (H5a) competence, (H5b) trustworthiness, (H5c) goodwill, and (H5d) likability would each mediate the relationships between a candidate's gender and vote choice intent, while controlling for voters' characteristics. H5 was tested in the PROCESS v4.2 software (Hayes, 2023). The pre-set Model 4 was used, with 10,000 bootstrapping and 95% accelerated confidence intervals. The gender of the candidate was entered as the independent variable, likability, competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill were entered as mediators, and vote choice intent was entered as the dependent

variable. Political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes were entered as covariate variables. Table 14 below contains the values of all path coefficients, significance levels, and confidence intervals for this analysis.

Analysis of the output revealed that the model capturing the direct effects of gender on vote choice intent (while controlling for voters' characteristics) was significant, $F(5, 398) = 3.35$, $p = .01$, $R^2 = .04$. However, the gender of the candidate did not significant predict vote choice intent for the candidate. The models with gender as the predictor and communicative behaviors and attitudes as covariates were significant when predicting competence, [$F(5, 398) = 6.10$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .07$], trustworthiness [$F(5, 398) = 8.66$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .10$], goodwill [$F(5, 398) = 5.88$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .07$], and likability [$F(5, 398) = 10.26$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .11$]. Thus, gender significantly predicted all mediators but goodwill, which was marginally significant, as $p = .09$. Next, the overall model (containing all independent variables, mediators, and covariates) predicting vote choice intent was also significant, $F(9, 394) = 52.47$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .55$. Further investigation of the output showed that competence and likability significantly predicted vote choice intent, but trustworthiness and goodwill did not. Finally, the investigation of the indirect effects of gender on vote choice intent revealed that gender had a significant indirect effect, through competence and likability, on vote choice intent. Thus, H5a and H5d were supported, whereas H5b and H5c were not.

Table 14

Direct and Indirect Effects of Gender on Vote Choice Intent through Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Likability

Path	*Effect*	*b*	*t*	*p*	*SE*	*95% CI*	
Gender→Competence		0.18	1.97	.05	0.09	0.00	0.37
Gender→Trustworthiness		0.37	3.25	.00	0.11	0.15	0.59
Gender→Goodwill		0.19	1.68	.09	0.11	-0.03	0.41
Gender→Likability		0.20	2.00	.05	0.10	0.00	0.39
Gender→Vote Choice Intent		-0.06	-0.46	.64	0.12	-0.29	0.18
Competence→Vote Choice Intent		0.33	3.38	.00	0.10	0.14	0.52
Trustworthiness→Vote Choice Intent		0.20	1.93	.05	0.10	-0.00[a]	0.40
Goodwill→Vote Choice Intent		0.09	0.87	.38	0.10	-0.11	0.29
Likability→Vote Choice Intent		0.74	7.50	.00	0.10	0.54	0.93
Gender→Competence→Vote Choice Intent	0.06				0.04	0.00[b]	0.14
Gender→Trustworthiness→Vote Choice Intent	0.07				0.05	-0.00[c]	0.19
Gender→Goodwill→Vote Choice Intent	0.02				0.02	-0.02	0.07
Gender→Likability→Vote Choice Intent	0.15				0.07	0.00[d]	0.30

Notes:
[a]Value with more decimals was -0.0034.
[b]Value with more decimals was 0.0005.
[c]Value with more decimals was -0.0029.
[d]Value with more decimals was 0.0033.

Mediation Between Partisanship and Vote Choice Intent. H6 predicted that (H6a) competence, (H6b) trustworthiness, (H6c) goodwill, and (H6d) likability would each mediate the relationships between a candidate's partisanship and vote choice intent for that candidate, while controlling for voters' characteristics. H6 was tested in the same manner as H5 above, but replacing the independent variable with partisanship. Table 15 below contains the values of all path coefficients, significance levels, and confidence intervals for this analysis.

The model capturing the direct effect of partisanship on vote choice intent (while controlling for voters' characteristics) was significant, $F(5, 398) = 21.66$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .46$. Partisanship of the candidate significantly predicted vote choice intent for that candidate, too. Furthermore, the models with partisanship as the predictor and communicative behaviors and attitudes as covariates were significant when predicting competence [$F(5, 398) = 9.62$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .11$], trustworthiness [$F(5, 398) = 11.61$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .13$], goodwill [$F(5, 398) = 8.91$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .10$], and likability [$F(5, 398) = 15.79$, $p =.00$, $R^2 = .17$]. Partisanship significantly predicted all four mediators, competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability. Finally, the overall model (containing all independent variables, mediators, and covariates) predicting vote choice intent was also significant, $F(9, 394) = 66.40$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .60$. Further investigation of the output showed that competence and likability significantly predicted vote choice intent. Investigation of the indirect effects of partisanship on vote choice intent revealed that partisanship had a significant indirect effect on vote choice intent, through competence and likability. Thus, H6a and H6d were supported, whereas H6b and H6b were not.

Table 15

Direct and Indirect Effects of Partisanship on Vote Choice Intent through Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Likability

Path	*Effect*	*b*	*t*	*p*	*SE*	*95% CI*	
Partisanship→Competence		0.42	4.52	.00	0.09	0.24	0.60
Partisanship→Trustworthiness		0.55	4.92	.00	0.11	0.33	0.77
Partisanship→Goodwill		0.46	4.13	.00	0.11	0.24	0.68
Partisanship→Likability		0.52	5.36	.00	0.10	0.33	0.71
Partisanship→Vote Choice Intent		0.87	7.57	.00	0.12	0.64	1.10
Competence→Vote Choice Intent		0.31	3.38	.00	0.09	0.13	0.49
Trustworthiness→Vote Choice Intent		0.14	1.45	.15	0.10	-0.05	0.33
Goodwill→Vote Choice Intent		0.13	1.35	.18	0.10	-0.06	0.32
Likability→Vote Choice Intent		0.65	7.05	.00	0.09	0.47	0.83
Partisanship→Competence→Vote Choice Intent	0.13				0.05	0.04	0.24
Partisanship→Trustworthiness→Vote Choice Intent	0.08				0.06	-0.03	0.22
Partisanship→Goodwill→Vote Choice Intent	0.06				0.05	-0.03	0.16
Partisanship→Likability→Vote Choice Intent	0.34				0.08	0.19	0.50

Mediation Between Veteran Status and Vote Choice Intent. Finally, H7 predicted that (H7a) competence, (H7b) trustworthiness, (H7c) goodwill, and (H7d) likability would each mediate the relationships between a candidate's veteran status and vote choice intent for that candidate, while controlling for voters' characteristics. The same PROCESS model analyses as described above were used to test this hypothesis too, using veteran status as the independent variable. Table 16 below contains the values of all path coefficients, significance levels, and confidence intervals for this analysis.

The results revealed that the model capturing the direct effect of veteran status on vote choice intent (while controlling for voters' characteristics) was significant, $F(5, 398) = 2.93$, $p = .01$, $R^2 = .04$. However, veteran status of the candidate did not significantly predict vote choice intent. The models with veteran status as the independent variable and communicative behaviors and attitudes as covariates were significant when predicting competence [$F(5, 398) = 5.38$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .06$], trustworthiness [$F(5, 398) = 6.64$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .08$], goodwill [$F(5, 398) = 5.47$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .06$], and likability [$F(5, 398) = 9.53$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .11$]. However, veteran status did not significantly predict any of the four mediators (competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability). Next, the overall model (containing all independent variables, mediators, and covariates) predicting vote choice intent was significant, $F(9, 394) = 52.42$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .55$. Further investigation of the output showed that competence and likability significantly predicted vote choice intent for the candidate. Finally, investigation of the indirect effects of veteran status on vote choice intent revealed none of the indirect effects were significant. Thus, H7 was not supported.

Table 16

Direct and Indirect Effects of Veteran Status on Vote Choice Intent through Competence, Trustworthiness, Goodwill, and Likability

Path	*Effect*	*b*	*t*	*p*	*SE*	*95% CI*	
Veteran Status→Competence		-0.07	-0.71	.48	0.09	-0.25	0.12
Veteran Status→Trustworthiness		-0.13	-1.10	.27	0.11	-0.35	0.10
Veteran Status→Goodwill		0.11	0.96	.34	0.11	-0.11	0.33
Veteran Status→Likability		0.09	0.86	.39	0.10	-0.11	0.28
Veteran Status→Vote Choice Intent		0.00	-0.03	.98	0.12	-0.24	0.23
Competence→Vote Choice Intent		0.33	3.38	.00	0.10	0.14	0.52
Trustworthiness→Vote Choice Intent		0.19	1.86	.06	0.10	-0.01	0.39
Goodwill→Vote Choice Intent		0.09	0.91	.36	0.10	-0.11	0.30
Likability→Vote Choice Intent		0.73	7.47	.00	0.10	0.54	0.93
Veteran Status→Competence→Vote Choice Intent	-0.02				0.03	-0.09	0.04
Veteran Status→Trustworthiness→Vote Choice Intent	-0.02				0.03	-0.10	0.02
Veteran Status→Goodwill→Vote Choice Intent	0.01				0.02	-0.02	0.06
Veteran Status→Likability→Vote Choice Intent	0.06				0.07	-0.08	0.21

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This dissertation focused on evaluations of interactional identity traits (gender, partisanship, and veteran status) and their effects on voting behaviors in U.S. congressional elections. The importance of congressional elections can sometimes be dwarfed by the mainstream media compared with elections that involve presidential and/or vice-presidential appointments. Nevertheless, the House of Representatives and the Senate serve one of the key roles in the political system—to ensure that the political process in the country is democratic, meaning that the system of checks and balances is in place to prevent the abuse and the unequal distribution of power in the government (U.S. Government, 2022).

Political candidates who participate in U.S. races have become more diverse, as they embrace and communicate not only their gender identity or their party label, but also information related to their race/ethnicity, religious beliefs, political ideology, as well as their background, among other traits and characteristics, which signals a change of the current political landscape in the United States (Bejarano et al., 2021). For example, veteran political candidates illustrate how U.S. politics has become more diverse nowadays. In 2022, many former servicemembers decided to resume their service to the country by participating in U.S. congressional races, which showcases a noteworthy increase in the number of veteran candidates who took part in U.S. elections since 2012 (Shane III, 2022). As voters become more diverse as well, they tend to seek and support political candidates that resemble them both identity-wise (i.e., share similar gender, ethnic or racial background, political ideology) as well as candidates that share voters' perspectives on how key salient political issues should be handled in the U.S., which include but are not limited to politicians' stances on the economy, taxes, foreign politics, health, education, women's rights, and so on.

Some of these above-mentioned identity traits and characteristics do not simply appear as an array of separate factors that may decide the outcome of a political race, but tend to morph, blend, fuse, and cluster together, creating new and complex forms of overlapping social identities that are difficult to separate from one another, resulting in interactional identities. Therefore, one of the main aims of this dissertation was to examine how political candidates with such interactional identities (gender, partisanship, and veteran status) are evaluated by voters in respect to their competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability, and, in turn, how these evaluations affect the intent to vote for such candidates.

To accomplish these goals, the dissertation relied on a 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (partisanship: Republican vs. Democrat) x 2 (veteran status: veteran vs. non-veteran) between-subjects experimental design in which participants were exposed to one of eight hypothetical political candidate mailers and were asked to evaluate the depicted candidate. Mailers were selected as they are a well-known and frequently used form of advertisements in political campaigns. They are also effective at transmitting information about a political candidate to voters.

In what follows, this chapter will first summarize and explain the main findings of the dissertation in relation to gender, partisanship, and veteran status and their effects on voter evaluations (i.e., candidates' competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability), as well as on voting behaviors (i.e., vote choice intent for the candidate). Next, this chapter will then address theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the above-mentioned findings. Finally, the chapter will discuss the limitations of the study conducted and propose several lines of future research directions that have emerged based on this dissertation.

The Effects of Gender on Candidate Evaluations

Based on previous literature (e.g., Pradel, 2021), it was proposed that the gender of candidates would reveal differences in how voters evaluated political candidates. Specifically, it was hypothesized that male candidates would be evaluated by voters as more competent, more trustworthy, having more goodwill, and being more likeable than female candidates while controlling voters' characteristics. Nevertheless, the opposite was found as participants in this study rated female candidates significantly more positively than their male counterparts on competence, trustworthiness, and likability, which challenges but at the same time supports some previous findings in political communication research as described in the next few paragraphs below. Several previous studies have found female candidates were evaluated lower than male candidates by voters (e.g., Ditonto, 2017, Dolan, 2004; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Sigelman et al., 1995, etc.). Specifically, studies have reported that female candidates were typically rated lower than male candidates on competence (e.g., Ditonto, 2017, Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Sigelman et al., 1987) due to the fact that female candidates are typically viewed through a lens of gendered stereotypes (e.g., Dolan, 2004; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Scholars have also argued that communal characteristics that are ascribed to female political candidates make them be perceived as being able to handle "feminine" political issues or issues that involve "compassion"—healthcare, education, childcare (e.g., Alexander & Andersen, 1993) better than men.

The current dissertation study also aligned with some other studies that have found that female candidates were perceived by voters as more competent than male candidates on unique occasions and in specific contexts (e.g., Bauer et al., 2022; Dolan, 2018; Funk, 2007; Kahn, 1996; Mattes et al., 2021; Piazza & Diaz, 2020; Schwenk, 2022, etc.). For example, Piazza and

Diaz (2020) found that female politicians were evaluated as more competent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, since this issue is primarily linked to healthcare, and, thus, can be referred to as a "feminine" issue. These results from previous studies help to explain the results I have found in this study based on the relationships between a candidate's gender identity and voter evaluations of the candidate's traits and characteristics (i.e., competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability), based on voter interpretations of candidates' abilities to handle political issues (e.g., Bauer et al., 2022; Dolan, 2018, etc.).

However, it is also important to mention that, when gender identity cues are present but any other information about the candidates except for information about their competence is lacking, voters may evaluate both female and male political candidates as equally competent. To illustrate this example, Ditonto (2014, 2017) conducted an experimental study in which participants needed to evaluate female and male candidates on competence. The experimental conditions for male and female candidates included competent and incompetent information. Ditonto (2014) found that, when participants were assigned to a condition in which female candidates were ascribed competent information, participants evaluated female candidates on par with male candidates on competence. My dissertation findings can supplement Ditonto's study (2014), in that both female and male voters in my study were depicted as equally competent at handling various political issues. This may be why female candidates were evaluated not only on par with male candidates, but, actually more positively than male candidates.

In addition, findings from my dissertation study showed that female candidates were evaluated as more trustworthy and honest compared with male candidates, which supports most of the political communication literature that has shown a similar trend (Dolan, 2014; Funk, 2007; Kahn, 1996; Mattes et al., 2021; Piazza & Diaz, 2020; Schwenk, 2022). Specifically,

political communication scholars argue that perceived trustworthiness is directly related to a candidate's identity (Brambilla et al., 2012), and, more specifically, a candidate's gender (e.g., Meng & Davidson, 2020). Trustworthiness of the candidate communicates to voters ideas about the candidate's integrity (Chen et al., 2014; van 't Wout & Sanfey, 2008), which, then, can be directly linked to voter positive evaluations of the candidates. Overall, it also translates to an increase in voter support (Chen et al., 2014). In other words, for the most part, female politicians are evaluated as more honest and trustworthy, a body of knowledge to which this dissertation's findings contribute, reinforcing this idea.

Political communication literature posits that candidates' competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness are strongly linked to a candidate's likability (Teven, 2008). Therefore, I expected that participants would evaluate political candidates on competence, goodwill, trustworthiness, and likability in a similar manner. More specifically, it was hypothesized that participants would rate male candidates higher on likability than female candidates. However, the opposite was found in that participants rated male candidates on likability significantly lower than female candidates. One of the possible explanations for this finding is that political communication literature has sometimes connected the concepts of likability and trustworthiness, in that both likability and trustworthiness can be associated with a notion of warmth (Meng & Davidson, 2020). In other words, the likability of a candidate can be viewed by voters through a lens of gendered stereotypes and linked to ideas of warmth and trustworthiness that signal feminine traits and characteristics. Furthermore, a candidate's traits and characteristics are not neutral concepts, they are value-laden, and can communicate information about femininity and masculinity to the extent that a candidate who is viewed as warm, trustworthy, and likable can be

viewed through a prism of femininity, regardless of their gender (i.e., it applies to both female and male candidates).

Overall, then, in respect to the effects of gender, most of the proposed relationships in the first hypothesis were not supported as originally posited. One of the possible explanations as to why participants rated male candidates more negatively on competence, trustworthiness, and likability compared to female candidates, may be due to the fact that these traits inadvertently communicate feminine traits (i.e., signal a female gender identity – see more above in the previous paragraph). In other words, the traits and characteristics candidates were evaluated on have embedded values that may elicit associations with a specific gender identity – masculine or feminine. Because of that, participants may develop an implicit bias towards the candidates depicted in the mailers, based on these identity traits and characteristics that are linked to evaluations. Thus, when participants were asked to evaluate male candidates on such feminine traits and characteristics, they did, indeed, rate male candidates lower compared to female candidates due to incongruent perceptions. Female candidates may have been considered gender-congruent with feminine traits and characteristics, whereas male candidates were viewed negatively because of their gender being incongruent with such traits and characteristics. More specifically, female candidates may have been evaluated as more competent in this scenario due to the unique context of the stimuli. For instance, both female and male candidates in the mailer explicitly communicated about the political issues they fought for in Congress, which included the economy, healthcare, and education. Two of these three political issues often elicit associations with the feminine identity (see conversation about the relationships between a candidate's gender and ability to handle specific types of political issues), which could have potentially outweighed the conversation about the economy.

Further, as mentioned above, politics is becoming more diverse, with more female politicians who win high-stake races and stand against tough and unique challenges (e.g., Krook & O'Brien, 2012). More specifically, Aldrich and Lotito (2020) corroborate the idea that female political leaders have handled healthcare and public conversations about the COVID-19 pandemic better. Aldrich and Lotito (2020) note that female politicians had a better approach at navigating the crisis caused by the pandemic, compared to male politicians who have shown ineffective responses related to this political issue. Thus, female candidates may have been evaluated as more competent and trustworthy due to the political issues described in the experimental stimuli.

The Effects of Partisanship on Candidate Evaluations

Based on current scholarly literature (e.g., King & Matland, 2003), it was proposed that Republican candidates would be evaluated by voters as more competent, more trustworthy, as having more goodwill, and as being more likeable than Democratic candidates, while controlling for voters' characteristics. Nevertheless, participants in this study evaluated Democratic candidates higher than Republican candidates on all these characteristics. One possible explanation for these results is that, according to Green and Gerber (2010), voters may hold political candidates' competence up to different standards, based on the partisanship of the voters. However, given than participants' own party label and political ideology did not yield any significant differences in the preliminary MANOVA, another possible explanation is needed.

Understanding of what voters consider to be competence for Democrats and Republicans may differ significantly; in some instances, perhaps, it may reflect some of the implicit values and beliefs that are attached to each party. For example, participants may view Republican candidates as more competent when it comes to their ability to handle political issues that are

frequently associated with the Republican party (e.g., the economy, crime, foreign relations). By the same token, participants may view Democrats as more competent when it comes to their ability to handle political issues that are traditionally associated with the Democratic party, such as education, healthcare, and women's issues. Gerber et al. (2013) argue that the ratings of political candidates' competence may be different when their competence explicitly mentions specific political issues, such as the economy (i.e., economic competence). Given that the stimuli materials explicitly mentioned candidates' concern with the economy, healthcare, and K-12 education, this could have led participants to evaluate Republican candidates lower on competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability, compared to Democratic candidates.

Another reason why participants may have rated Democratic political candidates higher on competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability, could be due to the fact that, currently, the leader of the country, Joe Biden, is a Democrat. Therefore, participants evaluated hypothetical candidates through the prism of the current composition of the U.S. government. In other words, Biden, as a political leader and a Democrat, significantly influenced how people perceived hypothetical Democratic candidates when it comes to competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability. Consistent with Huddy (2013), Biden, as a Democrat, could be viewed by participants as the prototypical group leader who communicates values and beliefs of the Democratic party to voters. Biden regularly addresses the nation, and although his overall approval ratings have decreased in the last year, the public, nevertheless, has lauded his efforts to combat the effects of the pandemic and maintain the White House administration's communication channels open and transparent (Pew Research Center, 2022). In other words, Biden's approach aligns with the Democratic party's values and beliefs and shows success in the area of healthcare (i.e., competence) as well as the ability to set up and upkeep candid

communication between U.S. administration and U.S. citizens (i.e., honesty, trustworthiness). This can be interpreted by the audience as congruent with the approach traditionally adopted by the Democrats and could be read as being likable and caring. Therefore, Biden's positive efforts and achievements may be ascribed to other members of the Democratic party as well—that is, voters may be "influenced" by the weight of the prototypical party leaders (Huddy, 2013). Therefore, they may view the rest of the Democratic candidates (i.e., Democratic party identity label) positively as well.

Alternatively, according to the political communication literature, Democrats and Republicans are perceived in different ways by the electorate, with the Republican party being typically associated with the masculine gender and conservative ideology and the Democratic party being viewed as embracing liberal values and beliefs that strongly connect with the female (or feminine) gender identity (e.g., Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Lim & Lee, 2016; Petrocik, 1996). In addition, as explained above, people associate competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability with feminine traits—warmth, empathy, and compassion that could signal to participants feminine traits and a feminine gender identity. So, participants may identify congruence or incongruence between the partisan identity of the candidate and the traits that I was asking them to evaluate about participants. Therefore, participants could have linked competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability with the Democratic party as feminine-congruent (i.e., both feminine). Thus, they rated Democrats higher on these traits compared to Republicans, who would not be viewed as congruent with feminine traits.

However, it is important to note that participants may also like the idea of Democrats embracing feminine traits, regardless of the candidate's gender identity, which could explain why participants rated Democrats higher than Republicans. Although this line of reasoning could

lead to a conclusion that there would be interaction effects between a candidate's party and gender, no significant interaction effects were found. However, although participants rated the hypothetical female candidates higher than the hypothetical male candidates on competence, trustworthiness, and likability, these high evaluations do not always translate to results in actual elections. In other words, individuals may appreciate the idea of supporting a candidate with a feminine identity, but, perhaps, only when those traits are embodied by a male candidate. For example, Cooper (2009) brings up the example of Barack Obama and how his identity as a Democratic candidate encompassed not only masculine, but also feminine traits and communication style. Perhaps, similar effects also translate to evaluations of Joe Biden and hypothetical Democratic candidates from my dissertation stimuli materials. What is more, this explanation could be further bolstered by the significant findings of both benevolent and hostile sexism projected by participants towards the candidates according to the study's findings. In other words, the study supports some of the political communication scholarship that emphasizes the role of sexist attitudes and the impact these attitudes may have on voting behaviors and candidate evaluations.

Overall, then, a candidate's partisanship affected the evaluations of this hypothetical person, albeit in the opposite direction than predicted initially. Additionally, it is important to note that the partisanship condition had the largest effect size compared to the effect of the gender and veteran status conditions, which highlights the importance of partisanship in voters' evaluations. This finding is also consistent with the current literature that argues political candidates' partisanship plays a central role in shaping voting behaviors and evaluations of a political candidate.

The Effects of Veteran Status on Candidate Evaluations

Based on the literature on veteran evaluations (e.g., Endicott, 2022; Hardy et al., 2019; Leal & Teigen, 2018), I hypothesized that participants would rate veteran candidates higher on competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability compared to non-veteran candidates, while controlling for voters' characteristics. The results showed that none of the evaluations differed significantly between veteran and non-veteran candidates. One of the possible explanations for these findings is that the observed power for the MANOVA univariate results for veteran status was very low, ranging from .12 to .21, which suggest a severely underpowered analysis. Thus, the analysis did not appear to have had a sufficiently large sample size to test this hypothesis, meaning these findings are inconclusive. Different results may be found in a future study. Nevertheless, this result may be bolstering previous findings and political communication scholarship that suggest society is polarized along party lines more so than across any other candidate identity traits or characteristics. Therefore, veteran status may have been overshadowed by a candidate's partisanship, which significantly impacts voter evaluations and the way people support one candidate over another based on their party label.

Interaction Effects of Gender, Partisanship, and Veteran Status on Candidate Evaluations

The dissertation also inquired into whether gender, partisanship, and veteran status would affect how voters evaluated candidates' competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability, while controlling for voters' characteristics. The analysis revealed that there was not a significant interaction between any of these three identity traits. One of the potential reasons for no interaction effects being detected between these three variables is that there was not enough power to detect any such effects—for all interactions, observed power ranged from .05 to .40. Another potential explanation for these results is that partisanship and partisan identity

frequently outweigh other potential factors in political communication research (Campbell et al., 1954; Clifford, 2020; Greene, 2004; Iyengar et al., 2012), potentially minimizing the effects of other variables. In other words, partisanship may have suppressed any potential other effects that gender and veteran status could have brought to the forefront when participants evaluated hypothetical candidates.

What Predicts Intent to Vote for A Candidate?

In addition to the main effects of the three identity characteristics selected (gender, partisanship, and veteran status), the dissertation also inquired whether these characteristics would predict participants' vote choice intent. I predicted that this vote choice intent would differ based on a candidate's gender so that, controlling for voters' characteristics, voters would be more likely to vote for male candidates than for female candidates. In addition, given the scarcity of literature on this topic, I asked whether participants' vote choice intent would differ based on a candidate's partisanship or their veteran status, while controlling for voters' characteristics.

Results indicated that gender did not significant predict vote choice intent, which may be due to the overwhelming effect that partisanship had, as partisanship significantly predicted vote choice intent, with a substantial path coefficient (standardized $\beta = .43$); partisanship also explained roughly 18% of the variance in vote choice intent, which is a notable finding that aligns with the current literature (Campbell et al., 1954; Clifford, 2020; Greene, 2004; Iyengar et al., 2012).

Similarly, veteran status did not predict vote choice intent for a candidate. Once again, perhaps, partisanship carries overwhelming effects in individuals' decisions about whom they will vote for, that obscure other characteristics, such as a candidate's military background. Another potential explanation may be the fact that the U.S. has been actively involved in many

armed conflicts, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and other geographic areas in the world, which could affect how participants evaluated veteran candidates. Participants in this study had an average age of 36-37 years old; thus, these are individuals who have lived with armed conflicts around the globe in which the United States has been involved for at least thirty years, since 1991. Therefore, they may be familiar with military veterans as individuals who engaged in a special type of service, compared to previous generations for whom military service was mandatory. In current times, veterans may have become a normal part of U.S. society and daily conversations, without necessarily standing out as an identity as salient as one's political party. Veterans are also often overlooked, and the general public does not usually fully understand the veteran experience. In other words, civilians may be too indifferent to veteran status in everyday life, which translates into politics, where this lack of awareness means they do not recognize the leadership potential of veteran political candidates that was once the distinctive trait of military service.

The Mediating Effects of Candidate Evaluations on Vote Choice Intent for a Candidate

Following another line of thinking, I examined whether competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, and likability may mediate the relationships between candidates' gender, partisanship, and veteran status and the vote choice intent for that candidate, while accounting for voters' characteristics. Results from several mediation models revealed that some candidate evaluations (i.e., competence and likability) mediated the relationship between gender and vote choice intent, and between partisanship and vote choice intent. Such results suggest that how individuals wish to vote depends, at least in part, on how they evaluate the candidate in regard to their competence and likability.

It may also be possible that the language used to describe these abstract hypothetical candidates in the experimental stimuli prompted unique associations of competence or likability attached to the partisan identity of each candidate, which then significantly influenced the likelihood to cast the ballot for such a candidate. To specify, the stimuli mentioned hypothetical candidates' past voting record and their achievements when it comes to several political issues that included, but were not limited to the economy, which is currently ranked as one of the top policies that concern the general public in the Unites States (Gallup, 2023). Conversations about a candidate's competence regarding the economy (i.e., a candidate's ability to handle the economy in light of current challenges, such as economic recession) may have been linked to struggles that the average U.S. citizen experiences, as well as explicit references that could be linked to one's family. The phrasing used in the mailers may have suggested that the hypothetical candidates were "caring" and "empathetic" not only towards constituents and their families, but also transparent about being "competent" and successful in handling tough political issues. Given that these hypothetical candidates were perceived as "caring" and "empathetic," they could also have been rated high on competence and likability.

Likability and competence may also be related to implicit evaluations of the candidates based on their specific identity traits, such as gender. Or, to speculate, perhaps the idea of casting the ballot for a particular candidate is intrinsically linked to concepts of likability and competence as two universal measuring sticks that apply to all political candidates, by default, by voters, regardless of their gender, partisanship, or veteran status. Voters care about descriptive representation, but they are also concerned with a candidate's fit for office—their ability to handle specific political issues and how pleasant these candidates must be. Perhaps, the next logical question would be what comes first: the chicken or the egg? Researchers need to identify

the primacy of the factors that determine vote choice intent—that is, whether the effects of social identity (i.e., partisanship) override voters' expectations about a candidate's competence and likability, or, perhaps, that these two act in conjunction when it comes to voter evaluations.

Positive evaluations of candidates play a crucial role in how voters cast their ballot, so that candidates deemed unlikable or incompetent will likely gain less voter support. In other words, candidates who explicitly make a case for their office fit are evaluated as more competent by voters, leading to higher voter support and vote choice intent for this candidate. Candidates who make explicit claims in their campaign materials are perceived as more likable. This helps them make a solid case for their candidacy to be evaluated positively, have a better chance of getting substantial voter support, which translates into a stronger intent to vote for such candidates compared to their counterparts.

Communicative Behaviors and Attitudes and their Effects on Voter Evaluations

The study also revealed that participants' demographic characteristics did not influence the main variables of interest in the study. Although the political communication literature acknowledges the role that voters' gender, racial/ethnic background, income, religion, and veteran status, among other identity traits, play in predicting voting behaviors, these considerations did not affect candidate evaluations and vote choice intent in this study. What mattered, however, were other factors—participants' self-reported political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes. These variables were controlled for in all main study analyses. These communicative behaviors and attitudes demonstrate voters' degree of political awareness and sophistication (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Lau et al., 2020; Plutzer, 2002). If voters maintain low political sophistication and are not involved in politics to a great extent, they may make an uninformed decision about a candidate. Disengaged voters who score low on political

participation and trust in government may not even be concerned with politics or elections. Further, such disconnected voters may form their judgements and evaluations about candidates based on easily available information about the candidates, such as their demographics, and not go beyond these surface clues to conduct additional research about a candidate's stances, past voting record, and their achievements (Lau et al., 2020). Further, participants who score low on political participation and trust in government may theoretically endorse elections and support diverse candidates due to social desirability but may not cast a vote in elections at all.

Further, the analyses revealed the significant impacts of sexist attitudes on voter evaluations of the candidates, which I also controlled for during analyses. Both benevolent and hostile sexism had several significant effects in the regression and mediation analyses conducted. These effects reflect patronizing, condescending, and dismissive attitudes that are rooted in and related to candidates' gender identity. Because of these sexist attitudes, some voters may exhibit preferences for candidates of a certain gender and may evaluate some candidates as not entirely fit for office based on their identity. Thus, although female politicians were evaluated high on these traits and characteristics in this study, these evaluations may not directly translate to candidate vote choice in everyday elections where sexist attitudes may overtake other considerations.

Theoretical Implications

This study used the theoretical framework of social identity theory, drawing on the concepts of identity, interactional identity, and the role of politicians' identity characteristics in voter evaluations. This theoretical approach has been used previously in intercultural and intergroup communication as well as political communication. Implementing the concept of interactional identities to study complex issues associated with diverse candidate and voter

identities in U.S. elections provides a novel approach to understanding this phenomenon. Therefore, one of the study's theoretical implications pertains to expanding the idea of interactional identities. Expansion to a new context speaks not only to the heuristic value of this theoretical concept, but also may shed light onto the strengths of partisan identity in shaping voter evaluations and voters' vote choice, in comparison with gender and veteran identity. More specifically, this study adds value to political communication research as it emphasizes the role that underlying ideals and beliefs tied to partisan identity carry in shaping voting behaviors. This approach reveals that voters tend to exhibit greater attachment to a social identity such as partisanship that explicitly communicates social values and beliefs, versus gender and veteran group identity, that have not divided and polarized society to the same extent, due to the lack of these implicit values and beliefs embedded. In other words, gender identity and veteran status are not as salient as partisan identity for voters. Partisanship can lead to a more affective approach to candidate evaluations and voting behaviors (Peacock et al., 2021).

This dissertation also built on and expanded some of the current literature on the gender identity of political candidates, more specifically evaluations of gendered traits and characteristics in political communication literature. The study showed that, in some instances, voters may rate female candidates higher on competence, trustworthiness, and likability compared to male political candidates. These results may be a sign of changing social norms—the majority of political communication studies that were conducted in the 20th century found that male politicians were evaluated higher than female politicians. Since then, many diverse and minority candidates have begun to participate in high-level races and to even outbid traditional male candidates in U.S. elections. Perhaps, then, American politics is drifting away from being a "boys only club" or a "male domain," which was previously synonymous to the male gender.

Further, another theoretical implication for political communication pertains to the form of the message used to convey identity in the campaign materials. Specifically, the stimuli developed for the study suggest that gender- and party-congruent messaging is, indeed, crucial for political candidates with interactional identities as such messaging is linked to positive evaluations of the candidates. The stimuli were written in a neutral, non-belligerent tone that, perhaps, evoked feminine-like impressions. Thus, message congruence is valuable when it comes to candidates with interactional identities, and it may significantly impact how voters perceive and support such candidates.

Results of this study also suggest some implications for measurement and the theoretical underpinnings of scale development. Political participation, one of the covariates in the dissertation study, was measured with a classic scale (Gopal & Verma, 2018) that has been used frequently in political communication research. Nevertheless, when subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis, the scale performed poorly, with multiple items displaying low standardized path coefficients. I dropped 11 items out of the total 18 items, and the scale still had some room for improvement in terms of the CFA model fit. Several items did not appear to be capturing the same conceptual domain as other items in the scale. These issues suggest there may be problems with the measurement of the concept of political participation. On the one hand, these results may be a fluke due to sample characteristics. However, none of the other scales in the study showed such severe problems during the CFA. On the other hand, the political participation scale may be a poor measure of the concept it intends to capture and may need to be revised for better psychometric properties. The scale may not reflect the plethora of online behaviors and digital communication patterns pertaining to online political participation (e.g., reposting and liking messages, creating digital content, or other forms of online activism). Therefore, it would be

beneficial to, perhaps, revise the scale to include more modern-day political participation behaviors.

Next, vote choice (sometimes referred to as intent to vote) has been traditionally captured in the political communication literature either as a dichotomous “yes” or “no” option or by utilizing two-three items and asking participants to pinpoint, retroactively, the candidate they chose to support. Such a measure is limited in its ability to capture individuals’ intentions and nuanced decision-making processes related to voting for a candidate. Furthermore, such a measure can be problematic in more complex analyses given the small number of items it contains. Another contribution of this study is the development of a continuous measure that assesses individuals’ vote choice intent via seven items, which has shown great promise in the initial scale assessment tests conducted in this dissertation. The scale could be further validated in subsequent studies. This new scale could become a useful tool for scholars not only in the field of communication, but also political science, international relations, and any other interdisciplinary specialists that would be interested in measuring the people’s intent to vote for a political candidate.

Practical Implications

One of the practical implications of this study pertains to the lessons that can be learned regarding political candidates in modern times and how candidates can manage their campaigns and navigate future elections in the United States. Findings from this dissertation could prove beneficial for determining how to negotiate political identities over the course of congressional campaigns. More specifically, some of the dissertation’s findings could support female candidates who are running for U.S. congressional elections as well as political consultants who work as aides to political candidates and design campaigns messages, such as political mailers.

Results from this study could help empower female politicians and help them learn how to construct their image in political campaigns more effectively to elicit positive responses from the electorate. Specifically, one of the recommendations to female candidates based on this dissertation's findings would be to highlight and not downplay their achievements to appear more competent, trustworthy, and likable to voters. It could be beneficial for female candidates to lean into their gender identity, while employing a non-belligerent communication style in their written campaign materials (i.e., mailers). Female candidates could embrace a feminine-like communication style that does not openly call out their political opponents, but rather acknowledges differences in party labels and political ideologies as an attempt to "reach across the aisle." A gender identity that is congruent with the feminine communication style could aid female candidates gain support from voters compared to a masculine communication style that could be interpreted by voters not as competitiveness, but rather as emotional instability.

Further, to appear more competent, trustworthy, and likable to voters, female candidates need to establish their competence in political issues that are typically perceived by voters as traditionally feminine—education, healthcare, human rights, childcare, and so on. Trying to step up onto a different playground and showcase their expertise and achievements in relation to clearly masculine issues, for instance, the economy, foreign relationships, and crime may be interpreted by voters through a lens of bias. Specifically, the political communication literature bolsters this point: if the gender identity of a candidate is incongruent with the type of political issue the candidate is communicating about, then the candidate's claims can be interpreted by voters as not genuine or inauthentic. In other words, female candidates would benefit from either highlighting their experience and past record in relation to feminine political issues or expressing a neutral stance on masculine political issues in written political campaign messaging. In the

stimuli used for this study, both female and male candidates commented on “strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare” as well as “fighting in Congress to bring down inflation.” The examination of message congruence with the candidate’s gender- and partisan-identity congruence is another way to explain why sometimes female candidates are evaluated lower by voters than male candidates (see above). More so, this approach may also explain how candidates can craft successful messages for their political campaigns to overcome these barriers and be able to bridge the gender gap not only in low-stake elections (i.e., local, district, clerical, elections) but also for high-level races (i.e., House of Representatives, Senate). Practical implications concerning partisanship also indicate that female candidates need to embrace an amicable approach to political opponents as well as opposite party voters to gain more positive evaluations, even if it means lack of confrontation or evoking negative evaluations towards political opponents based on their partisanship.

In contrast, male candidates would benefit from explicitly using a male communication style and emphasizing competence related to clearly masculine issues—the economy, foreign relationships, and crime. Using neutral language and a vague stance on the economy for male political candidates in this study did not work well. So, a more masculine communication style in regard to their stance on political issues could benefit male political candidates. Another practical implication related to male politicians and partisanship, perhaps, is to embrace ambition and directly confront political opponents in their campaign as a communication strategy.

To summarize this subsection, the practical implications of this dissertation study lie within the area of gender and partisan identity evaluations and how they are related to voter evaluations and voter support. Additionally, some of the findings regarding gender, identity, and leadership can be further applied not only in politics but in other industries as well, including the

corporate world, private businesses, and STEM, where women could also learn how to appear more competent, trustworthy, as having more goodwill, and being more likable to others, and, thus, advance their careers or secure their desired positions.

Limitations

One of the main limitations related to this study is its sample. Prolific samples typically tend to have more female than male participants, and also more liberal than conservative participants (Palan & Schitter, 2018), which was the case in this study's sample as well in respect to political ideology. Both the pilot study and the main study were balanced so that a roughly equal number of men and women were selected given that this feature is an option offered to researchers by Prolific. However, there were no additional criteria that could be imposed to balance the study based on political partisanship and veteran status at the same time. Balancing partisanship may have been possible by creating multiple postings and having the study open for longer. However, veteran status would not have been feasible to balance. Veterans are a minority to begin with in the broader U.S. demographics (6.4% of the U.S. population according to the U.S. Census, 2020). There is a very small sample of veterans available on Prolific; thus, having the study open until a balanced veteran-non-veteran sample would have been gathered was not feasible also due to time constraints for the completion of this dissertation. As a result, the sample gathered was not a representative one, nor does it have an equal number of participants for each of the two variables of interest (partisanship, veteran status).

Another limitation of this study was the design of the stimuli materials. Some of the participants in the pilot study reported that they would have liked to see photo and video portrayals of the candidates in the mailers to determine whether or not they would like to support these candidates. Although the decision not to include such portrayals was due to the

experimental design and the desire to reduce possible confounding variables, this choice may have affected how participants perceived the mailers, and, subsequently, the candidates depicted in them. In addition, the message of the mailers and the information contained in the mailers was written in a neutral language that was perceived by some participants in the pilot study as "not genuine." This language choice may have affected how participants evaluated the candidates, especially in respect to the congruency between language and style of communication, gender, and partisanship.

Finally, one of the drawbacks of an experimental design is that it is conducted in a controlled environment, where scholars cannot account for all extraneous various factors that are present outside the research setting. Therefore, applying the results to actual political campaigns may have unforeseen effects. For example, there are myriad of factors scholars cannot control for in case of political campaigns and elections such as participants' demographics, voters' biases and attitudes that will generate partial evaluations of the candidates. Further, I did not account in this dissertation study for the role that political opponents' campaign materials and media would play in depicting these candidates in the case of everyday elections. For example, political opponents may design negative political campaigns aimed at tainting a candidate or present them in an unfavorable light. What is more, American society is divided across party lines, and this translates to media outlets that support specific candidates that share the views and beliefs of the media source (i.e., that align in partisan identity with the media outlet). Finally, more and more individuals now have access to social media and are free to express their opinions about candidates on the Internet. These candidate evaluations could go viral, which could either significantly bolster the chances of a candidate winning the race or could completely destroy their image. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the drawbacks of the experimental design

used, and keep in mind additional factors that may influence how voters evaluate political candidates based on their gender, partisanship, veteran status, and beyond.

Directions for Future Research

This dissertation study illuminated several interesting aspects about the ways in which gender and partisanship influence voting behaviors, opening the door for further research on several of these topics. One of the potential lines of research suggested by the discussions above would include experimental message design that explicitly communicates gender-congruence or gender-incongruence as related to a candidate's identity, including but not being limited to candidates' gender and partisanship. Such an experimental study would evaluate candidates based on the language used in the stimuli materials that pertains to specific stances on political issues that the U.S. society considers significant nowadays.

Further, another line of the research could center on the veteran status of the candidate, since the study I conducted in this dissertation was severely underpowered in respect to veteran status. Recruiting more veterans and replicating the study with a balanced sample – 50% veterans, 50% non-veterans may yield different and interesting findings. Specifically, the communication literature shows that veterans and non-veterans not only differ based on culture, but they also differ when it comes to partisanship and political ideology. Therefore, it is important to examine how veteran candidates evaluate political candidates based on their gender, partisanship, and veteran status compared to non-veterans, and how these evaluations may translate into vote choice intent for the candidate. In other words, this line of the research would allow me to learn more about veterans as a social group that is marginalized in the U.S. society and would also help predict voting trends for this unique voter population.

Next, another line of research could further investigate the effects of the interactional identity of political candidates given that the current study found no interaction effects between a candidate's gender, partisanship, and veteran status identity. One of the approaches to test whether these interactional identity factors do, indeed, interact, would be to design a study that accounts for a representative sample. Another option would be to conduct further qualitative research and ask participants whether and how interactionality occurs in their evaluations of political candidates.

Another direction for future research would be to include other dependent variables such as ones that would be clearly associated with the masculine gender (e.g., competitiveness) to examine how evaluations of candidates would differ (if they did) in such instances. Along the same lines, future studies could also include other independent variables that go beyond interactional identities related to gender, partisanship, and veteran status. For instance, campaign mailers could include specific stances on political issues that can be clearly associated either with the male or female gender. Alternatively, the type of election the candidates are running for could also be manipulated since type of election has also been shown to affect how voters evaluate candidates (e.g., Meeks, 2020). Another noteworthy independent variable to include in future research would be a candidate's incumbency, as it has proven to be a strong predictor of voter preference and support (e.g., Shair-Rosenfield & Hinojosa, 2014). In other words, adding these new dependent and independent variables would allow researchers to make better predictions about the trends in U.S. elections and how such variables may shape voting behaviors. These new studies would also help political candidates and their campaign aides to adopt specific strategies that would allow these candidates to improve their electoral outcomes and also avoid some common pitfalls related to campaign messaging.

Furthermore, future research could examine the role that the interactional identity of political candidates has on voting behaviors for specific groups of voters—for example, ethnic groups, such as the main four ones in the U.S. (White, Hispanic/Latino, Black, and Asian voters). The main reason why this type of research is important is because different groups of voters may exhibit different voting patterns that could help predict effective campaign messages to target specific ethnic/racial groups of voters.

For example, the Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest-growing U.S. ethnic/racial community and a serious political force that may have a deciding vote in the upcoming elections. However, it is crucial to note that the Hispanic/ Latino population is not homogenous, and it is represented by diverse ethnic and racial groups that vary by language, culture, origin, religion, background, and other identity traits. Therefore, it is essential for politicians to differentiate between various Hispanic/Latino social groups. Knowing these cultural and ethnic differences might aid political candidates in developing persuasive political messages to appeal best to this population. More specifically, political candidates may need to learn how to better understand the concerns and priorities of Hispanic/Latino population, which may differ depending on the intersecting identity traits in order to gain more voter support and improve the chances of winning the election. Thus, some of the future directions that this dissertation may take involve studying the voting behaviors of the Hispanic/Latino voter and the role intersectionality plays for vote choice intent in the election.

Another key category of voters that could be studied further to understand the effects of certain identity characteristics is military veterans. As discussed in the literature review section, military veterans are a small but mighty group of U.S. voters that exhibits unique voting behaviors. Military veterans, as a social group, are often overlooked and understudied, so

conducting additional research with this group would help expand current communication literature on veterans from the perspective of political, intercultural, and military communication.

Finally, as discussed above, additional research could include further scale development and validation studies for the new scale created to measure vote choice intent. This new scale could supplement or replace the original vote choice scale currently used widely in political communication research. Several additional studies would be needed to test the factor structure and validity of this new scale, though, but results from this study show great promise for the scale.

Conclusion

To summarize, the results of this dissertation study demonstrate support to a certain degree for existing literature, while, at the same, challenge the way scholars approach gender evaluations in political communication research. Specifically, the dissertation found that voters evaluated female candidates and Democrats higher on competence, trustworthiness, and likability compared to males and Republicans, which supports some previous research but also challenges other findings from the literature. The likability of a candidate may have been viewed by voters through a lens of gender-related stereotypes and linked to ideas of warmth and trustworthiness that signal feminine traits and characteristics.

Consistent with the current political communication literature, partisan identity significantly influenced perceptions about a candidate's competence, trustworthiness, and likability. Participants in the study may have evaluated hypothetical candidates through the prism of the current composition of the U.S. government. The former and latter evaluations, in turn, had a significant impact on participants' vote choice intent for the candidate they evaluated. Unfortunately, no significant differences emerged in respect to the role of veteran status or any

interactions between gender, partisanship, and veteran status on candidate evaluations and their effects on vote choice intent for such candidates.

The study also revealed that voters' demographics do not always influence the evaluations of candidates, nor do the demographics of voters always impacts voting behaviors. Political communication scholarship recognizes the role of participants' gender, racial/ethnic background, income, religion, and veteran status (among other identity traits) in predicting voting behaviors and electoral outcomes. However, there may be other more influential factors that significantly impact the relationship between a candidate's identity traits and voter's intent to vote for that candidate. In particular, the study found that political participation, trust in government, and sexist attitudes may have important influences on candidate evaluations, more so than participants' demographics.

The study expands scholarship regarding evaluations of political candidates based on their social identities, namely, gender, partisanship, and veteran status. The study also offers theoretical implications concerning the role of social identity in political communication research as well as some practical implications to political candidates and political campaign advisors for how to construe political campaign messaging to gain positive evaluations and voter support.

References

Abele, A. E., & Wojciszke, B. (2007). Agency and communion from the perspective of self versus others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *93*(5), 751-763. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.5.751

Aberbach, J. D. (2015). Understanding American political conservatism. *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource*, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0373

Abramowitz, A. I., & Webster, S. (2016). The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of US elections in the 21st century. *Electoral Studies*, *41*, 12-22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.11.001

Abramson, P. R., & Aldrich, J. H. (1982). The decline of electoral participation in America. *American Political Science Review*, *76*(3), 502-521. https://doi.org/10.2307/1963728

Acker, J. (1992). From sex roles to gendered institutions. *Contemporary sociology*, *21*(5), 565-569. https://doi.org/10.2307/2075528

Aday, S. (2010). Chasing the bad news: An analysis of 2005 Iraq and Afghanistan war coverage on NBC and Fox News Channel. *Journal of Communication*, *60*(1), 144-164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01472.x

Aichholzer, J., & Willmann, J. (2020). Desired personality traits in politicians: Similar to me but more of a leader. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *88*, 103990. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2020.103990

Akee, R., Copeland, W., Holbein, J. B., & Simeonova, E. (2020). Human capital and voting behavior across generations: Evidence from an income intervention. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 609-616. https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305541900090X

Alexander, B. (2005). Good money and bad money: Do funding sources affect electoral outcomes? *Political Research Quarterly*, *58*(2), 353-358. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290505800214

Alexander, D., & Andersen, K. (1993). Gender as a factor in the attribution of leadership traits. *Political Research Quarterly*, *46*(3), 527-545. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299304600305

Aldrich, A. S., & Lotito, N. J. (2020). Pandemic performance: Women leaders in the Covid-19 crisis. *Politics & Gender*, *16*(4), 960-967. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000549

Algra, G., Elands, M., & Schoeman, J. R. (2007). The media and the public image of Dutch veterans from World War II to Srebrenica. *Armed Forces & Society*, *33*(3), 396-413. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X06297240

Allport, F. H. (1954). The structuring of events: Outline of a general theory with applications to psychology. *Psychological Review*, *61*(5), 281-303. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0062678

Alvarez, R. M., & Franklin, C. H. (1994). Uncertainty and political perceptions. *The Journal of Politics*, *56*(3), 671-688. https://doi.org/10.2307/2132187

Alvarez, R. M., & Nagler, J. (1998). Economics, entitlements, and social issues: Voter choice in the 1996 presidential election. *American Journal of Political Science*, *42*(4), 1349-1363. https://doi.org/10.2307/2991862

Andersen, J. J., Fiva, J. H., & Natvik, G. J. (2014). Voting when the stakes are high. *Journal of Public Economics*, *110*, 157-166. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2013.10.003

Anderson, C. J., & Singer, M. M. (2008). The sensitive left and the impervious right: Multilevel models and the politics of inequality, ideology, and legitimacy in Europe. *Comparative political studies*, *41*(4-5), 564-599. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414007313113

Andreottola, G., & Li, C. (2022). Polarization and policy design. *SSRN* (Advanced online publication). http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4156903

Andreychik, M. R., & Gill, M. J. (2009). Ingroup identity moderates the impact of social explanations on intergroup attitudes: External explanations are not inherently prosocial. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *35*(12), 1632-1645. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209345285

Ashley, W., & Brown, J. C. (2015). The impact of combat status on veterans' attitudes toward help seeking: The hierarchy of combat elitism. *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, *12*(5), 534-542. https://doi.org/10.1080/15433714.2014.992695

Ansolabehere, S., & Fraga, B. L. (2016). Do Americans prefer coethnic representation? The impact of race on house incumbent evaluations. *Stanford Law Review*, *68*(6), 1553-1594.

Ansolabehere, S., & Iyengar, S. (1995). *Going negative*. Free Press.

Ansolabehere, S., Iyengar, S., Simon, A., & Valentino, N. (1994). Does attack advertising demobilize the electorate? *American Political Science Review*, *88*(4), 829-838. https://doi.org/10.2307/2082710

Anzia, S. F., & Berry, C. R. (2011). The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson effect: Why do congresswomen outperform congressmen?. *American Journal of Political Science*, *55*(3), 478-493. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00512.x

Archer, C. (2013). Military spending and the UN's development agenda. *Peace Review*, *25*(1), 24-32. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2013.759757

Arnold, J. R. (2012). The electoral consequences of voter ignorance. *Electoral Studies*, *31*(4), 796-815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2012.06.003

Ashforth, B. (2000). *Role transitions in organizational life: An identity-based perspective.* Routledge.

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (n.d.). *About*. https://www.aaldef.org/about/

Austin, T. (2019). *GI Jane'fem'etran goes corporate: An exploration of post-9/11 female combat veterans' transitioning to a civilian career* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Brandman University.

Aylor, B. (1999). Source credibility and presidential candidates in 1996: The changing nature of character and empathy evaluations. *Communication Research Reports*, *16*(3), 296-304. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824099909388729

Babakhani, N., Paas, L., & Dolnicar, S. (2022). Do instructional manipulation checks measure inattention or miscomprehension?. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2111064

Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence: An essay on psychology and religion*. Rand McNally.

Ballew, C. C., & Todorov, A. (2007). Predicting political elections from rapid and unreflective face judgments. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *104*(46), 17948-17953. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0705435104

Ballotpedia. (n.d.). *United States Congress elections*, 2021. https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Congress_elections,_2021

Banducci, S. A., Karp, J. A., Thrasher, M., & Rallings, C. (2008). Ballot photographs as cues in low-information elections. *Political Psychology, 29*(6), 903-917. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2008.00672.x

Bankert, A. (2021). Negative and positive partisanship in the 2016 US presidential elections. *Political Behavior, 43*(4), 1467-1485. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09599-1

Banwart, M. C. (2010). Gender and candidate communication: Effects of stereotypes in the 2008 election. *American Behavioral Scientist, 54*(3), 265-283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210381702

Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., Vecchione, M., & Fraley, C. R. (2007). Voters' personality traits in presidential elections. *Personality and Individual Differences, 42*(7), 1199-1208. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.09.029

Barber, M., Butler, D. M., & Preece, J. (2016). Gender inequalities in campaign finance. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science, 11*(2), 219-248. http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/100.00015126

Barker, D. C., & Tinnick, J. D. (2006). Competing visions of parental roles and ideological constraint. *American Political Science Review, 100*(2), 249-263. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055406062149

Barnsley, J. (2010). The causes of bi-partisan votes in the US Congress. *Polis, 3,* 1-42.

Barreto, M. A. (2010). *Ethnic cues: The role of shared ethnicity in Latino political participation*. University of Michigan Press.

Barreto, M. A., Fraga, L. R., Manzano, S., Martinez-Ebers, V., & Segura, G. M. (2008). "Should they dance with the one who brung'em?" Latinos and the 2008 presidential election. *PS:*

Political Science & Politics, *41*(4), 753-760. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096508080967

Barron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychology research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical consideration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *51*(6), 1173-1182. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.51.6.1173

Bartels, L. M. (1986). Issue voting under uncertainty: An empirical test. *American Journal of Political Science*, *30*(4), 709-728. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111269

Bartels, L. M. (1988). *Presidential primaries and the dynamics of public choice*. Princeton University Press.

Bartels, L. M. (1996). Uninformed votes: Information effects in presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *40*(1), 194-230. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111700

Bartels, L. M. (2000). Partisanship and voting behavior, 1952-1996. *American Journal of Political Science*, *44*(1), 35-50. https://doi.org/10.2307/2669291

Bauer, N. M. (2017). The effects of counterstereotypic gender strategies on candidate evaluations. *Political Psychology*, *38*(2), 279-295. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12351

Bauer, N. M. (2020). Shifting standards: How voters evaluate the qualifications of female and male candidates. *The Journal of Politics*, *82*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1086/705817

Bauer, N. M., & Santia, M. (2022). Going feminine: Identifying how and when female candidates emphasize feminine and masculine traits on the campaign trail. *Political Research Quarterly*, *75*(3), 691-705. https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129211020257

Baum, M. A. (2005). Talking the vote: Why presidential candidates hit the talk show circuit. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(2), 213-234. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.t01-1-00119.x

Bedolla, L. G., & Michelson, M. R. (2009). What do voters need to know? Testing the role of cognitive information in Asian American voter mobilization. *American Politics Research, 37*(2), 254-274. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X08320844

Bejarano, C., Brown, N. E., Gershon, S. A., & Montoya, C. (2021). Shared identities: Intersectionality, linked fate, and perceptions of political candidates. *Political Research Quarterly, 74*(4), 970-985. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912920951640

Benoit, W. L., & McHale, J. P. (2003). Presidential candidates' television spots and personal qualities. *Southern Journal of Communication, 68*(4), 319-334. https://doi.org/10.1080/10417940309373270

Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & McPhee, W. N. (1986). *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. University of Chicago Press.

Berinsky, A. J., de Benedictis-Kessner, J., Goldberg, M. E., & Margolis, M. F. (2020). The effect of associative racial cues in elections. *Political Communication, 37*(4), 512-529. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1723750

Bernhard, R., & Freeder, S. (2020). The more you know: Voter heuristics and the information search. *Political Behavior, 42*(2), 603-623. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9512-2

Bernick, E. M., & Heidbreder, B. (2018). Disproportionately overrepresented: Women in local elected offices. *State and Local Government Review, 50*(3), 165-176. https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X18813641

Bernstein, R. A. (1991). Strategic shifts: Safeguarding the public interest? US Senators, 1971-86. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *16*(2), 263-280. https://doi.org/10.2307/439981

Best, R. H., Hunter, K., & Thomas, K. H. (2021). Fighting for a seat at the table: Women's military service and political representation. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *7*(2), 19-33. http://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v7i2.266

Beukeboom, C. J., & Burgers, C. (2019). How stereotypes are shared through language: A review and introduction of the social categories and stereotypes communication (SCSC) framework. *Review of Communication Research*, *7*, 1-37. https://doi.org/10.12840/issn.2255-4165.017

Bibby, J. F., & Maisel, L. S. (2003). *Two parties-or more?: the American party system*. Westview Press.

Bimber, B. (2014). Digital media in the Obama campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the personalized political communication environment. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *11*(2), 130-150. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2014.895691

Bisbee, J., & Honig, D. (2022). Flight to safety: COVID-induced changes in the intensity of status quo preference and voting behavior. *American Political Science Review*, *116*(1), 70-86. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000691

Bishin, B. G., & Incantalupo, M. B. (2008). *From bullets to ballots? The role of veterans in contemporary elections*. University of California, Riverside. https://themonkeycage.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/veterans.paper.named.pdf

Bishin, B. G., & Klofstad, C. A. (2009). Deceit, diversity, or mobilization?: Intra-ethnic diversity and changing patterns in Florida's Hispanic vote. *The Social Science Journal*, *46*(3), 571-583. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2009.04.017

Blackstone, A. M. (2004). Sociability, work, and gender. *Equal Opportunities International, 23*(3/4/5), 29-44. https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150410787710

Blair, T. (2007). A battle for global values. *Foreign Affairs, 86*(1), 79-90. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20032212

Blais, A. (2000). *To vote or not to vote? The merits and limits of rational choice theory.* University of Pittsburgh Press.

Blais, A. (2006). What affects voter turnout? *Annual Review of Political Science, 9*, 111-125. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.070204.105121

Blais, A., & Dobrzynska, A. (1998). Turnout in electoral democracies. *European Journal of Political Research, 33*(2), 239-261. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.00382

Blais, A., & St-Vincent, S. L. (2011). Personality traits, political attitudes and the propensity to vote. *European Journal of Political Research, 50*(3), 395-417. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2010.01935.x

Blais, A., Gidengil, E., Dobrzynska, A., Nevitte, N., & Adeau, R. (2003). Does the local candidate matter? Candidate effects in the Canadian election of 2000. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique, 36*(3), 657-664. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423903778810

Blashill, A. J., & Powlishta, K. K. (2009). Gay stereotypes: The use of sexual orientation as a cue for gender-related attributes. *Sex Roles, 61*(11-12), 783-793. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9684-7

Bligh, M. C., Schlehofer, M. M., Casad, B. J., & Gaffney, A. M. (2012). Competent enough, but would you vote for her? Gender stereotypes and media influences on perceptions of

women politicians. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42*(3), 560-597. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2011.00781.x

Bobo, L., & Gilliam Jr., F. D. (1990). Race, sociopolitical participation, and black empowerment. *American Political Science Review, 84*(2), 377-393. https://doi.org/10.2307/1963525

Boen, F., & Vanbeselaere, N. (2002). The impact of election outcome on the display of political posters: A field study during communal elections in Flanders. *Political Psychology, 23*(2), 385-391. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00286

Boldry, J., Wood, W., & Kashy, D. A. (2001). Gender stereotypes and the evaluation of men and women in military training. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(4), 689-705. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00236

Bolsen, T., & Druckman, J. N. (2018). Do partisanship and politicization undermine the impact of a scientific consensus message about climate change?. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *21*(3), 389-402. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430217737855

Bosson, J. K., Taylor, J. N., & Prewitt-Freilino, J. L. (2006). Gender role violations and identity misclassification: The roles of audience and actor variables. *Sex Roles, 55*, 13-24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9056-5

Brader, T. (2005). Striking a responsive chord: How political ads motivate and persuade voters by appealing to emotions. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(2), 388-405. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.00130.x

Bradford, A. C. (2021). Latinx veterans, outsider patriotism and the motives behind minoritized military service. *Journal of Veterans Studies, 7*(3). http://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v7i3.272

Brambilla, M., Sacchi, S., Rusconi, P., Cherubini, P., & Yzerbyt, V. Y. (2012). You want to give a good impression? Be honest! Moral traits dominate group impression formation. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 51*(1), 149-166. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2010.02011.x

Brands, C., Kruikemeier, S., & Trilling, D. (2021). Insta(nt)famous? Visual self-presentation and the use of masculine and feminine issues by female politicians on Instagram. *Information, Communication & Society, 24*(14), 2016-2036. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1962942

Bratton, M. (2004). The "alternation effect" in Africa. *Journal of Democracy, 15*(4), 147-158. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2004.0059

Brennan, J. (2011). The right to a competent electorate. *The Philosophical Quarterly, 61*(245), 700-724. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9213.2011.699.x

Brewer, M. B. (1979). In-group bias in the minimal intergroup situation: A cognitive-motivational analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 86*(2), 307-324. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.86.2.307

Brians, C. L. (2005). Women for women? Gender and party bias in voting for female candidates. *American Politics Research, 33*(3), 357-375. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X04269415

Brown, T. A. (2015). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research*. Guilford publications.

Brown, N. E., & Gershon, S. A. (2016). *Distinct identities: Minority women in US politics.* Routledge.

Brown, N. E., & Gershon, S. A. (2017). Examining intersectionality and symbolic representation. *Politics, Groups, and Identities, 5*(3), 500-505. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1321995

Brown, N. E., & Lemi, D. C. (2021). *Sister style: The politics of appearance for Black women political elites*. Oxford University Press.

Brownson, C. (2014). The battle for equivalency: Female U.S. marines discuss sexuality, physical fitness, and military leadership. *Armed Forces & Society, 40*(4), 765-788. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X14523957

Bullock, J. G., & Lenz, G. (2019). Partisan bias in surveys. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *22*, 325-342. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-050904

Burge, C. D., Wamble, J. J., & Cuomo, R. R. (2020). A certain type of descriptive representative? Understanding how the skin tone and gender of candidates influences Black politics. *The Journal of Politics*, *82*(4), 1596-1601. https://doi.org/10.1086/708778

Burkhart, L., & Hogan, N. (2015). Being a female veteran: A grounded theory of coping with transitions. *Social Work in Mental Health, 13*(2), 108-127. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2013.870102

Burrell, B. (2014). *Gender in campaigns for the US House of Representatives*. University of Michigan Press.

Bystrom, D., & Dimitrova, D. V. (2014). Migraines, marriage, and mascara: Media coverage of Michele Bachmann in the 2012 Republican presidential campaign. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *58*(9), 1169-1182. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213506221

Caballero, G. (2022) Toward intersectionality. A review. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *43*(1), 107-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2022.2007468

Caddick, N., Cooper, L., Godier-McBard, L., & Fossey, M. (2021). Hierarchies of wounding: Media framings of ‘combat’ and ‘non-combat’ injury. *Media, War & Conflict, 14*(4), 503-521. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635219899110

Cain, B. E. (1988). Asian-American electoral power: Imminent or illusory? *Election Politics*, *5*(2), 27-30.

Callaghan, K., & Schnell, F. (2005). *Framing American politics*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & Miller, W. E. (1954). *The voter decides.* Row, Peterson, and Co.

Campbell, D. E. (2006). Religious "threat" in contemporary presidential elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *68*(1), 104-115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00373.x

Campbell, D. T. (1967). Stereotypes and the perception of group differences. *American Psychologist*, *22*(10), 817-829. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0025079

Cancela, J., & Geys, B. (2016). Explaining voter turnout: A meta-analysis of national and subnational elections. *Electoral Studies*, *42*, 264-275. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.03.005

Canon, D. T. (1999). Electoral systems and the representation of minority interests in legislatures. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *24*(3), 331-385. https://doi.org/10.2307/440349

Caplan, B. (2012). The myth of the rational voter and political theory. In H. Landemore & J. Elster (Eds.), *Collective wisdom: Principles and mechanisms* (pp. 319-337). Cambridge University Press.

Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Steca, P., & Malone, P. S. (2006). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as determinants of job satisfaction and students' academic achievement: A study at the school level. *Journal of School Psychology*, *44*(6), 473-490. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.001

Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K. W., Mays, V. M., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 10*(2), 303-312. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X13000349

Carnaghi, A., Stragà, M., Coladonato, R., Bianchi, M., & Piccoli, V. (2020). Extrapolating stereotypical information on sexual orientation from race categories: The case of Black and Asian men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities, 21*(2), 224-234. https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000225

Carney, J., & Adragna, A. (2022, August 1). *Senate GOP backtracks after veterans bill firestorm*. Politico. https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/01/senate-gop-veterans-bill-00049124

Carpinella, C. M., & Johnson, K. L. (2016). Visual political communication: The impact of facial cues from social constituencies to personal pocketbooks. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 10*(5), 281-297. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12249

Carroll, S. J. (1994). *Women as candidates in American politics*. Indiana University Press.

Carroll, S. J., & Sanbonmatsu, K. (2013). *More women can run: Gender and pathways to the state legislatures*. Oxford University Press.

Casad, B. J., Franks, J. E., Garasky, C. E., Kittleman, M. M., Roesler, A. C., Hall, D. Y., & Petzel, Z. W. (2021). Gender inequality in academia: Problems and solutions for women faculty in STEM. *Journal of Neuroscience Research, 99*(1), 13-23. https://doi.org/10.1002/jnr.24631

Castelli, L., Carraro, L., Ghitti, C., & Pastore, M. (2009). The effects of perceived competence and sociability on electoral outcomes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*(5), 1152-1155. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.06.018

Caverley, J. D., & Krupnikov, Y. (2017). Aiming at doves: Experimental evidence of military images' political effects. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *61*(7), 1482-1509. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715605634

Center for American Women and Politics. (n. d.) *50 years of CAWP. Defining the past. Building an equitable future*. https://cawp.rutgers.edu/

Chaney, L. H., & Green, C. G. (2004, July). Differences in verbal and nonverbal communication styles of military and nonmilitary personnel: A comparison of two populations. In *Allied Academies International Conference. Academy of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict. Proceedings*, *9*(2), 5-9. https://www.proquest.com/docview/192410828?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true

Chen, F. F., Jing, Y., & Lee, J. M. (2012). "I" value competence but "we" value social competence: The moderating role of voters' individualistic and collectivistic orientation in political elections. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *48*(6), 1350-1355. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.07.006

Chen, F. F., Jing, Y., & Lee, J. M. (2014). The looks of a leader: Competent and trustworthy, but not dominant. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *51*, 27-33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.10.008

Chiao, J. Y., Bowman, N. E., & Gill, H. (2008). The political gender gap: Gender bias in facial inferences that predict voting behavior. *PloS One*, *3*(10), e3666. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0003666

Chmielewski, T. L. (2012). Applying the elaboration likelihood model to voting. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences: Annual Review*, *6*(10), 33-48. https://doi.org/10.18848/1833-1882/CGP/v06i10/52160

Cho, W. K. T. (1999). Naturalization, socialization, participation: Immigrants and (non-) voting. *The Journal of Politics*, *61*(4), 1140-1155. https://doi.org/10.2307/2647557

Cho, W. K. T., & Cain, B. E. (2001). Asian Americans as the median voters: An exploration of attitudes and voting patterns on ballot initiatives. In G. H. Chang (Ed.), *Asian Americans and politics: Perspectives, experiences, prospects* (pp. 133-152). Stanford University Press.

Choi, S. (2006). *The Korean War caught in history and memory: Examining United States media coverage of the No Gun Ri incident (1999–present) and Korean survivors' testimonies.* Temple University. http://lib-e2.lib.ttu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/korean-war-caught-history-memory-examining-united/docview/304981632/se-2

Cionea, I. A. (2013). *A dual perspective on the management of relational transgressions in romantic relationships*. University of Maryland, College Park. http://lib-e2.lib.ttu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/dual-perspective-on-management-relational/docview/1426849349/se-2

Cislaghi, B., & Heise, L. (2020). Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, *42*(2), 407-422. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13008

Citrin, J., Wong, C., & Duff, B. (2001). The meaning of American national identity: Patterns of ethnic conflict and consensus. In R. D. Ashmore, L. Jussim, & D. Wilder (Eds.), *Social*

identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction (pp. 71-100). Oxford University Press.

Clarke, H. D., Kornberg, A., & Stewart, M. C. (2004). Referendum voting as political choice: The case of Quebec. *British Journal of Political Science*, *34*(2), 345-355. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123404000092

Clifford, S. (2020). Compassionate democrats and tough Republicans: How ideology shapes partisan stereotypes. *Political Behavior*, *42*(4), 1269-1293. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09542-z

Cockburn, C. (2013). War and security, women and gender: an overview of the issues. *Gender & Development*, *21*(3), 433-452. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2013.846632

Cogburn, D. L., & Espinoza-Vasquez, F. K. (2011). From networked nominee to networked nation: Examining the impact of Web 2.0 and social media on political participation and civic engagement in the 2008 Obama campaign. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *10*(1-2), 189-213. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2011.540224

Cohen, G. L. (2003). Party over policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*(5), 808-822. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.808

Cohn, C. (2000). “How can she claim equal rights when she doesn't have to do as many push-ups as I do?” The framing of men's opposition to women's equality in the military. *Men and Masculinities*, *3*(2), 131-151. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X00003002001

Cole, L. A. (1976). Comment on" Black representation". *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, *12*(2), 243-250. https://doi.org/10.1177/107808747601200205

Collens, J. D. (2020). Women, novices, and veterans: Diversity in the 2018 Democratic House primaries. In T. S. Sisco, J. C. Lucas, & C. J. Galdieri (Eds.), *The unforeseen impacts of the 2018 U.S. midterms* (pp. 61-76). Palgrave Pivot. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37940-7_4

Condon, M., & Holleque, M. (2013). Entering politics: General self-efficacy and voting behavior among young people. *Political Psychology*, *34*(2), 167-181. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12019

Connaughton, S. L. (2013). *Inviting Latino voters: Party messages and Latino party identification*. Routledge.

Conroy, M., & Green, J. (2020). It takes a motive: communal and agentic articulated interest and candidate emergence. *Political Research Quarterly*, *73*(4), 942-956. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912920933668

Conroy-Krutz, J., Moehler, D. C., & Aguilar, R. (2016). Partisan cues and vote choice in new multiparty systems. *Comparative Political Studies*, *49*(1), 3-35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015603015

Cooper, F. R. (2009). Our first unisex president? Black masculinity and Obama's feminine side. *Denver University Law Review*, *86*, 633-662. https://ssrn.com/abstract=1321479

Cooper, C. A., Golden, L., & Socha, A. (2013). The Big Five personality factors and mass politics. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *43*(1), 68-82. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.00982.x

Corral, Á. J., & Leal, D. L. (2020). Latinos por Trump? Latinos and the 2016 presidential election. *Social Science Quarterly*, *101*(3), 1115-1131. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12787

Coulomb-Gully, M. (2009). Les sciences de l'information et de la communication: Une discipline *gender blind*? *Questions de Communication*, *15*, 129-153. https://doi.org/10.4000/questionsdecommunication.518

Cree, A., & Caddick, N. (2020). Unconquerable heroes: Invictus, redemption, and the cultural politics of narrative. *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, *13*(3), 258-278. https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2019.1615707

Crenshaw, K. W. (2017). *On intersectionality: Essential writings*. The New Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE publications.

Crowder-Meyer, M. (2020). Baker, bus driver, babysitter, candidate? Revealing the gendered development of political ambition among ordinary Americans. *Political Behavior*, *42*(2), 359-384. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9498-9

Crowley, K., & Sandhoff, M. (2017). Just a girl in the army: US Iraq war veterans negotiating femininity in a culture of masculinity. *Armed Forces & Society*, *43*(2), 221-237. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X16682045

Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*, 61-149. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(07)00002-0

Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., Kwan, V. S., Glick, P., Demoulin, S., Leyens, J. P., ... & Ziegler, R. (2009). Stereotype content model across cultures: Towards universal similarities and some differences. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *48*(1), 1-33. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X314935

Dawson, M. C. (2001). *Black visions: The roots of contemporary African-American political ideologies*. University of Chicago Press.

Dawson, M. C., & Popoff, R. (2004). Reparations: Justice and greed in Black and White. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 1*(1), 47-91. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X04040056

Deaux, K., & Lewis, L. L. (1984). Structure of gender stereotypes: Interrelationships among components and gender label. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*(5), 991-1004. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.5.991

De Bruin, E. N., & Van Lange, P. A. (1999). Impression formation and cooperative behavior. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 29*(2-3), 305-328. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199903/05)29:2/3<305::AID-EJSP929>3.0.CO;2-R

DeGroot, G. J. (2001). A few good women: Gender stereotypes, the military and peacekeeping. *International Peacekeeping*, *8*(2), 23-38. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310108413893

De la Garza, R. O., & Cortina, J. (2007). Are Latinos Republicans but just don't know it? The Latino vote in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. *American Politics Research, 35*(2), 202-223. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X06294885

Delli Carpini, M. X., & Keeter, S. (1993). Measuring political knowledge: Putting first things first. *American Journal of Political Science, 37*(4), 1179-1206. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111549

De Neve, J. E. (2014). Ideological change and the economics of voting behavior in the US, 1920–2008. *Electoral Studies, 34*, 27-38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2013.10.003

Department of Veterans Affairs. (n. d.). *History of VA*. https://www.va.gov/history/index.asp

Devine, C. J. (2015). Ideological social identity: Psychological attachment to ideological in-groups as a political phenomenon and a behavioral influence. *Political Behavior*, *37*(3), 509-535. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-014-9280-6

Ditonto, T. M., Hamilton, A. J., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2014). Gender stereotypes, information search, and voting behavior in political campaigns. *Political Behavior*, *36*(2), 335-358. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-013-9232-6

Do, J. J., & Samuels, S. M. (2021). I am a warrior: An analysis of the military masculine-warrior narrative among US Air Force Officer Candidates. *Armed Forces & Society*, *47*(1), 25-47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20931561

Doan, A. E., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (2010). The role of intersectional stereotypes on evaluations of gay and lesbian political candidates. *Politics & Gender*, *6*(1), 63-91. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09990511

Doan, A. E., & Portillo, S. (2017). Not a woman, but a soldier: Exploring identity through translocational positionality. *Sex Roles*, *76*(3), 236-249. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0661-7

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, No. 19-1392, 597 U.S. __ (2022)

Doherty, D., Dowling, C. M., & Miller, M. G. (2022). *Small power: How local parties shape elections*. Oxford University Press.

Dolan, K. (2004). The impact of candidate sex on evaluations of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives. *Social Science Quarterly*, *85*(1), 206-217. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08501015.x

Dolan, K. (2010). The impact of gender stereotyped evaluations on support for women candidates. *Political Behavior*, *32*(1), 69-88. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-009-9090-4

Dolan, K. (2014). Gender stereotypes, candidate evaluations, and voting for women candidates: What really matters? *Political Research Quarterly*, *67*(1), 96-107. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913487949

Dolan, K. A. (2018). *Voting for women: How the public evaluates women candidates.* Routledge.

Dolan, K., & Sanbonmatsu, K. (2011). Candidate gender and experimental political science. In J. N. Druckman, D. P. Greene, J. H. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of experimental political science* (pp. 289-299). Cambridge University Press.

Donovan, K., Kellstedt, P. M., Key, E. M., & Lebo, M. J. (2020). Motivated reasoning, public opinion, and presidential approval. *Political Behavior*, *42*, 1201-1221. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09539-8

Downs, A. (1957). An economic theory of political action in a democracy. *Journal of Political Economy*, *65*(2), 135-150. https://doi.org/10.1086/257897

Druckman, J. N. (2004). Priming the vote: Campaign effects in a US Senate election. *Political Psychology*, *25*(4), 577-594. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00388.x

Dunivin, K. O. (1994). Military culture: Change and continuity. *Armed Forces & Society*, *20*(4), 531-547. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9402000403

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, *109*(3), 573-598. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573

Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (1999). The origins of sex differences in human behavior: Evolved dispositions versus social roles. *American Psychologist*, *54*(6), 408-423. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.6.408

Eagly, A. H., Nater, C., Miller, D. I., Kaufmann, M., & Sczesny, S. (2020). Gender stereotypes have changed: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of US public opinion polls from 1946 to 2018. *American Psychologist, 75*(3), 301-315. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000494

Eckhart, N. R., Laha-Walsh, K., Parrott, S., & Albright, D. L. (2021). Presidential and gubernatorial tweets involving military servicemembers and veterans. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v7i1.223

Eggers, A. C., Vivyan, N., & Wagner, M. (2018). Corruption, accountability, and gender: Do female politicians face higher standards in public life? *The Journal of Politics, 80*(1), 321-326. https://doi.org/10.1086/694649

Emerson, K. T., & Murphy, M. C. (2014). Identity threat at work: How social identity threat and situational cues contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in the workplace. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 20*(4), 508-520. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035403

Endicott, T. W. (2022). Veteran social identity, partisanship, and political behavior. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (Advanced online publication). https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2022.2047740

Ensley, M. J. (2007). Candidate divergence, ideology, and vote choice in US Senate elections. *American Politics Research, 35*(1), 103-122. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X06294318

Erichsen, K., Schrock, D., Dowd-Arrow, B., & Dignam, P. (2020). Bitchifying Hillary: Trump supporters' vilification of Clinton during the 2016 presidential election. *Social Currents, 7*(6), 526-542. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496520941022

Erikson, R. S., & Tedin, K. L. (2015). *American public opinion: Its origins, content and impact*. Routledge.

Ethier, K. A., & Deaux, K. (1994). Negotiating social identity when contexts change: Maintaining identification and responding to threat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*(2), 243-251. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.2.243

Evans, A. (2016). 'For the elections, we want women!': Closing the gender gap in Zambian politics. *Development and Change*, *47*(2), 388-411. https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12224

Farrell, D. M., & Schmitt-Beck, R. (2003). *Do political campaigns matter? Campaign effects in elections and referendums*. Routledge.

Fernandez-Navia, T., Polo-Muro, E., & Tercero-Lucas, D. (2021). Too afraid to vote? The effects of COVID-19 on voting behaviour. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *69*, 102012. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2021.102012

Ferree, K. E. (2006). Explaining South Africa's racial census. *The Journal of Politics*, *68*(4), 803-815. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00471.x

Finkel, S. E., & Geer, J. G. (1998). A spot check: Casting doubt on the demobilizing effect of attack advertising. *American Journal of Political Science*, *42*(2), 573-595. https://doi.org/10.2307/2991771

Fiorina, M. P. (1978). Economic retrospective voting in American national elections: A micro-analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*, *22*(2), 426-443. https://doi.org/10.2307/2110623

Fiorina, M. P. (1981). Some problems in studying the effects of resource allocation in congressional elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *25*(3) 543-567. https://doi.org/10.2307/2110818

Fiske, S. T., & Stevens, L. E. (1993). *What's so special about sex? Gender stereotyping and discrimination*. Sage.

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *11*(2), 77-83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*(6), 878-902. https://doi.org/10.1037/t35954-000

Fletcher, J. K. (2006). Gender perspectives on work and personal life research. In S. M. Bianchi, L. M. Casper, & R. Berkow King (Eds.), *Work, family, health, and well-being* (pp. 323-336). Routledge.

Ford, D. G. (2017). Talent management and its relationship to successful veteran transition into the civilian workplace: Practical integration strategies for the HRD professional. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *19*(1), 36-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316682736

Foreman, S. D. (2022). The 2020 elections overview: A campaign cycle like no other. In S. D. Foreman, M. L. Godwin, & W. C. Wilson (Eds.), *The roads to Congress 2020* (pp. 3-17). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82521-8_1

Fornos, C. A., Power, T. J., & Garand, J. C. (2004). Explaining voter turnout in Latin America, 1980 to 2000. *Comparative Political Studies*, *37*(8), 909-940. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414004267981

Fowler, J. H. (2006). Habitual voting and behavioral turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, *68*(2), 335-344. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00410.x

Fowler, J. H., & Kam, C. D. (2007). Beyond the self: Social identity, altruism, and political participation. *The Journal of Politics, 69*(3), 813-827. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00577.x

Fraga, L. R., Lopez, L., Martinez-Ebers, V., & Ramírez, R. (2007). Gender and ethnicity: Patterns of electoral success and legislative advocacy among Latina and Latino state officials in four states. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, 28*(3-4), 121-145. https://doi.org/10.1300/J501v28n03_06

Francia, P. L. (2001). Early fundraising by nonincumbent female congressional candidates: The importance of women's PACs. *Women & Politics, 23*(1-2), 7-20. https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v23n01_02

Fraser, K. C. (2005). Dictionary of military terms. *Reference Reviews*, *19*(2), 22-23. https://doi.org/10.1108/09504120510580163

Freedman, P., & Goldstein, K. (1999). Measuring media exposure and the effects of negative campaign ads. *American Journal of Political Science, 43*(4), 1189-1208. https://doi.org/10.2307/2991823

Fridkin, K. L., & Kenney, P. J. (2004). Do negative messages work? The impact of negativity on citizens' evaluations of candidates. *American Politics Research, 32*(5), 570-605. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X03260834

Fridkin, K. L., Kenney, P. J., & Woodall, G. S. (2009). Bad for men, better for women: The impact of stereotypes during negative campaigns. *Political Behavior, 31*(1), 53-77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-008-9065-x

Fridkin, K., & Kenney, P. (2014). *The changing face of representation: The gender of US senators and constituent communications*. University of Michigan Press.

Froehlich, L., Olsson, M. I., Dorrough, A. R., & Martiny, S. E. (2020). Gender at work across nations: Men and women working in male-dominated and female-dominated occupations are differentially associated with agency and communion. *Journal of Social Issues, 76*(3), 484-511. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12390

Fulton, S. A., & Dhima, K. (2021). The gendered politics of congressional elections. *Political Behavior*, *43*, 1611-1637. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09604-7

Funk, P. (2007). Is there an expressive function of law? An empirical analysis of voting laws with symbolic fines. *American Law and Economics Review, 9*(1), 135-159. https://doi.org/10.1093/aler/ahm002

Gallego, A., & Rodden, J. (2016). *The weight of issues: Cross-pressured voters in the United States*. Mimeo.

Gallup. (2023). *Most important problem. Percentage of Americans mentioning economic issues as the nation's most important problem*. https://news.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx

Garzia, D. (2013). Changing parties, changing partisans: The personalization of partisan attachments in Western Europe. *Political Psychology*, *34*(1), 67-89. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00918.x

Gay, C. (2004). Putting race in context: Identifying the environmental determinants of Black racial attitudes. *American Political Science Review, 98*(4), 547-562. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404041346

Geys, B. (2006). Explaining voter turnout: A review of aggregate-level research. *Electoral Studies*, *25*(4), 637-663. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2005.09.002

Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American Political Science Review, 102*(1), 33-48. https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540808009X

Gerber, A. S., Huber, G. A., Doherty, D., Dowling, C. M., & Panagopoulos, C. (2013). Big Five personality traits and responses to persuasive appeals: Results from voter turnout experiments. *Political Behavior, 35*(4), 687-728. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-012-9216-y

Gershon, S. (2012). When race, gender, and the media intersect: Campaign news coverage of minority congresswomen. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, 33*(2), 105-125. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2012.667743

Gershon, S. A., Montoya, C., Bejarano, C., & Brown, N. (2019). Intersectional linked fate and political representation. *Politics, Groups, and Identities, 7*(3), 642-653. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2019.1639520

Gershtenson, J., & Plane, D. L. (2007). Trust in government. *American National Election Studies Pilot Study Report, No. nes011890*. https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/gershtenson-plane-2007-trust-in-government.pdf

Gevorgyan, G. (2010). Does culture matter? Using accommodation, framing, and Hofstede theories to predict Chinese voters' perceptions and attitudes toward culturally oriented online political advertising. *China Media Research, 6*(1), 91-102. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A219656568/AONE?u=anon~a21fba7d&sid=googleScholar&xid=2fe6fdc2

Gilens, M. (2011). *Paying the piper: Economic inequality and democratic responsiveness*. Princeton University Press.

Gillespie, J. D. (2012). *Challengers to duopoly: Why third parties matter in American two-party politics*. Univ of South Carolina Press.

Gimpel, J. G., & Schuknecht, J. E. (2003). Political participation and the accessibility of the ballot box. *Political Geography, 22*(5), 471-488. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(03)00029-5

Gimpel, J. G., Dyck, J. J., & Shaw, D. R. (2004). Registrants, voters, and turnout variability across neighborhoods. *Political Behavior, 26*(4), 343-375. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-004-0900-4

Glasford, D. E. (2008). Predicting voting behavior of young adults: The importance of information, motivation, and behavioral skills. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 38*(11), 2648-2672. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2008.00408.x

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*(3), 491. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491

Golan, G. J., Banning, S. A., & Lundy, L. (2008). Likelihood to vote, candidate choice, and the third-person effect: Behavioral implications of political advertising in the 2004 presidential election. *American Behavioral Scientist, 52*(2), 278-290. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764208321356

Goldstein, A. N. (2018). "Why are you trying to destroy the last good thing men have?" Understanding resistance to women in combat jobs. *International Feminist Journal of Politics, 20*(3), 385-404. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2018.1451259

Goldstein, J. S. (2003). *War and gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice versa*. Cambridge University Press.

Goggin, S. N., Henderson, J. A., & Theodoridis, A. G. (2020). What goes with red and blue? Mapping partisan and ideological associations in the minds of voters. *Political Behavior, 42*(4), 985-1013. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-09525-6

Gómez, A., Chinchilla, J., Vázquez, A., López-Rodríguez, L., Paredes, B., & Martínez, M. (2020). Recent advances, misconceptions, untested assumptions, and future research agenda for identity fusion theory. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 14*(6), e12531. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12531

Gonzalez, J. A., & Simpson, J. (2021). The workplace integration of veterans: Applying diversity and fit perspectives. *Human Resource Management Review*, *31*(2), 100775. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2020.100775

Gopal, K., & Verma, R. (2018). Brand personality in politics: Scale development and validation. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, *48*(2), 36-51. https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2018/v48/i2/121333

Gosnell, H. F. (1927). *Getting out the vote*. University of Chicago Press.

Graham, M. H., & Svolik, M. W. (2020). Democracy in America? Partisanship, polarization, and the robustness of support for democracy in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 392-409. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000052

Green, D. P., & Gerber, A. S. (2010). Introduction to social pressure and voting: New experimental evidence. *Political Behavior, 32*(3), 331-336. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-010-9120-2

Green, D., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2002). *Partisan hearts and minds: Political parties and the social identity of voters*. Yale University Press.

Greene, S. (2004). Social identity theory and party identification. *Social Science Quarterly*, *85*(1), 136-153. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08501010.x

Grier, S. A., & Brumbaugh, A. M. (1999). Noticing cultural differences: Ad meanings created by target and non-target markets. *Journal of Advertising*, *28*(1), 79-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1999.10673578

Griffin, J. D., & Keane, M. (2006). Descriptive representation and the composition of African American turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, *50*(4), 998-1012. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00229.x

Guinier, L. (1994). [E]racing democracy: The voting rights cases. *Harvard Law Review*, *108*(1), 109-137.

Ha, S. E., & Lau, R. R. (2015). Personality traits and correct voting. *American Politics Research*, *43*(6), 975-998. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X14568551

Hacker, K. L. (2004). *Presidential candidate images*. Rowman Littlefield.

Hammond, S. P. (2016). Complex perceptions of identity: The experiences of student combat veterans in community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *40*(2), 146-159. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1017891

Hanna, N. (2009). An argument for voting abstention. *Public Affairs Quarterly*, *23*(4), 275-286. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40441535

Hansen, K. M., & Pedersen, R. T. (2014). Campaigns matter: How voters become knowledgeable and efficacious during election campaigns. *Political Communication*, *31*(2), 303-324. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2013.815296

Hardy, M. M., Coker, C. R., Funk, M. E., & Warner, B. R. (2019). Which ingroup, when? Effects of gender, partisanship, veteran status, and evaluator identities on candidate

evaluations. *Communication Quarterly*, *67*(2), 199-220. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2019.1573201

Harris, F. (2012). *The price of the ticket: Barack Obama and rise and decline of Black politics*. Oxford University Press.

Hatemi, P. K., Crabtree, C., & Smith, K. B. (2019). Ideology justifies morality: Political beliefs predict moral foundations. *American Journal of Political Science*, *63*(4), 788-806. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12448

Hauschild, V. D., DeGroot, D. W., Hall, S. M., Grier, T. L., Deaver, K. D., Hauret, K. G., & Jones, B. H. (2017). Fitness tests and occupational tasks of military interest: A systematic review of correlations. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, *74*(2), 144-153. https://doi.org/10.1136/oemed-2016-103684

Hawryluk, M. M. S. (2019). *Expectations, perceptions, and social roles: The effects and performance of gender in campaigns for the United States Congress* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago). https://www.proquest.com/docview/2272841293?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true

Hayes, A. F. (2018). Partial, conditional, and moderated mediation: Quantification, inference, and interpretation. *Communication Monographs*, *85*(1), 4-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1352100

Hayes, A. F. (2023). PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling [White paper]. Retrieved from http://www.afhayes.com/ public/process2023.pdf

Hayes, D. (2005). Candidate qualities through a partisan lens: A theory of trait ownership. *American Journal of Political Science*, *49*(4), 908-923. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.00163.x

Hayes, D. (2011). When gender and party collide: Stereotyping in candidate trait attribution. *Politics & Gender*, *7*(2), 133-165. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X11000055

Hayes, D., & Lawless, J. L. (2016). *Women on the run: Gender, media, and political campaigns in a polarized era*. Cambridge University Press.

Herd, D., & Grube, J. (1996). Black identity and drinking in the US: A national study. *Addiction*, *91*(6), 845-857. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1360-0443.1996.91684510.x

Herron, M. C., & Sekhon, J. S. (2005). Black candidates and black voters: Assessing the impact of candidate race on uncounted vote rates. *The Journal of Politics*, *67*(1), 154-177. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00312.x

Hewstone, M., & Giles, H. (1997). Social groups and social stereotypes. In N. Coupland & A. Jaworski (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics. Modern linguistics series* (pp. 270-283). Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25582-5_22

Hinojosa, R., & Telles, E. (2021). Trump paradox: How immigration and trade affected White voting and attitudes. *Socius*, *7*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231211001970

Hipes, C., & Gemoets, D. (2019). Stigmatization of war veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Stereotyping and social distance findings. *Society and Mental Health*, *9*(2), 243-258. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156869318801889

Hodges, E. B. (2021). “Storming the Castle.” Examining the motivations of the veterans who participated in the Capitol riots. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *7*(3). https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v7i3.274

Hofstede, G. (1983). National cultures in four dimensions: A research-based theory of cultural differences among nations. *International studies of management & organization*, *13*(1-2), 46-74. https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.1983.11656358

Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms. *Communication Theory*, *16*(1), 7-30. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00003.x

Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *58*(4), 255-269. https://doi.org/10.2307/2787127

Holbrook, T. (1996). *Do campaigns matter?*. Sage.

Holman, M. R., Merolla, J. L., & Zechmeister, E. J. (2011). Sex, stereotypes, and security: A study of the effects of terrorist threat on assessments of female leadership. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *32*(3), 173-192. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2011.589283

Horiuchi, Y. (2005). *Institutions, incentives and electoral participation in Japan: Cross-level and cross-national perspectives*. Routledge.

Housholder, E. E., & LaMarre, H. L. (2014). Facebook politics: Toward a process model for achieving political source credibility through social media. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *11*(4), 368-382. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2014.951753

Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion*. Yale University Press.

Howe, W. T. (2022). Existing in higher education as a post-9/11 United States veteran: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *8*(2). http://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v8i2.358

Howe, W. T., & Shpeer, M. (2019). From military member to student: An examination of the communicative challenges of veterans to perform communication accommodation in the university. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *48*(3), 203-220. https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2019.1592770

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*(1), 1-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Huckfeldt, R. R., & Sprague, J. (1995). *Citizens, politics and social communication: Information and influence in an election campaign*. Cambridge University Press.

Huddy, L. (2013). From group identity to political cohesion and commitment. In L. Huddy, D. O. Sears, & J. S. Levy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (pp. 737–773). Oxford University Press.

Huddy, L., & Capelos, T. (2002). Gender stereotyping and candidate evaluation. In V. C. Ottati, R. S. Tindale, J. Edwards, F. B. Bryant, L. Health, D. C. O'Connell, Y. Suarez-Balzacar, & E. J. Posavac (Eds.), *The social psychology of politics* (pp. 29-53). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0569-3_2

Huddy, L., & Terkildsen, N. (1993). Gender stereotypes and the perception of male and female candidates. *American Journal of Political Science*, *37*(1), 119-147. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111526

Hunniecutt, J. R. (2020). On not seeing myself in the research on veterans. In A. Herrmann (Ed.), *The Routledge international handbook of organizational autoethnography* (pp. 117-133). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429056987

Hunter, K., & Best, R. (2020). You can't have women in peace without women in conflict and security. *Georgetown Security Studies Review, 8*(2), 5-22.

Huntington, S. P. (1957). Conservatism as an ideology. *American Political Science Review, 51*(2), 454-473. https://doi.org/10.2307/1952202

Ivie, R. L. (2016). Hegemony, instabilities, and interventions: a special issue on discourses of war and peace. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses, 11*(2), 125-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2016.1153644

Ivie, R. L., & Giner, O. (2016). Waging peace: Transformations of the warrior myth by US military veterans. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses, 11*(2), 199-213. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2016.1182174

Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (2010). *News that matters: Television and American opinion.* University of Chicago Press.

Iyengar, S., Sood, G., & Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affect, not ideology social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 76*(3), 405-431. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038

Jackman, R. W. (1987). Political institutions and voter turnout in the industrial democracies. *American Political Science Review, 81*(2), 405-423. https://doi.org/10.2307/1961959

Jackson, R. A., & Carsey, T. M. (2007). US Senate campaigns, negative advertising, and voter mobilization in the 1998 midterm election. *Electoral Studies, 26*(1), 180-195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2006.06.010

Jacobson, G. C. (1990). The effects of campaign spending in House elections: New evidence for old arguments. *American Journal of Political Science, 34*(2), 334-362. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111450

Jacoby, W. G. (1991). Ideological identification and issue attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 178-205. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111443

James, L. R., & Brett, J. M. (1984). Mediators, moderators, and tests for mediation. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 69*(2), 307. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.69.2.307

Jarvis, S. E., & Connaughton, S. L. (2005). "Audiences *implicadas e ignoradas* in the English and Spanish language 2002 Texas gubernatorial debates. *The Howard Journal of Communications, 16*(2), 131-148. https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170590948983

Jessee, S. A. (2010). Partisan bias, political information and spatial voting in the 2008 presidential election. *The Journal of Politics, 72*(2), 327-340. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609990764

Johns, R., & Shephard, M. (2011). Facing the voters: The potential impact of ballot paper photographs in British elections. *Political Studies, 59*(3), 636-658. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00874.x

Johnson, B. (2010). A few good boys: Masculinity at a military-style charter school. *Men and Masculinities, 12*(5), 575-596. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X09342228

Johnson, T. J., & Fahmy, S. (2009). Embeds' perceptions of censorship: Can you criticize a soldier then have breakfast with him in the morning?. *Mass Communication and Society, 12*(1), 52-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430801950650

Jost, J. T., Barberá, P., Bonneau, R., Langer, M., Metzger, M., Nagler, J., Sterling, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2018). How social media facilitates political protest: Information, motivation, and social networks. *Political Psychology*, *39*(1), 85-118. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12478

Judd, C. M., James-Hawkins, L., Yzerbyt, V., & Kashima, Y. (2005). Fundamental dimensions of social judgment: Understanding the relations between judgments of competence and warmth. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *89*(6), 899-913. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.899

Judd, C. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1981). Process analysis: Estimating mediation in treatment evaluations. *Evaluation Review*, *5*(5), 602-619. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X8100500502

Jungblut, M., & Haim, M. (2021). Visual gender stereotyping in campaign communication: Evidence on female and male candidate imagery in 28 countries. *Communication Research* (Advanced online publication). https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502211023333

Kachel, S., Steffens, M. C., & Niedlich, C. (2016). Traditional masculinity and femininity: Validation of a new scale assessing gender roles. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*, 956. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00956

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). On the interpretation of intuitive probability: A reply to Jonathan Cohen. *Cognition*, *7*(4), 409–411. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(79)90024-6

Karlsen, R. (2011). A platform for individualized campaigning? Social media and parliamentary candidates in the 2009 Norwegian election campaign. *Policy & Internet*, *3*(4), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.2202/1944-2866.1137

Keats, P. A. (2010). Soldiers working internationally: Impacts of masculinity, military culture, and operational stress on cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, *32*, 290-303. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-010-9107-z

Keefe, W. J., & Ogul, M. S. (1992). *The American legislative process: Congress and the states*. Pearson.

Kenney, S. J. (1996). New research on gendered political institutions. *Political Research Quarterly*, *49*(2), 445-466. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299604900211

Kenny, D. A. (2008). Reflections on mediation. *Organizational Research Methods*, *11*(2), 353-358. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428107308978

King, G., & Browning, R. X. (1987). Democratic representation and partisan bias in congressional elections. *American Political Science Review*, *81*(4), 1251-1273. https://doi.org/10.2307/1962588

King, D. C., & Matland, R. E. (2003). Sex and the grand old party: An experimental investigation of the effect of candidate sex on support for a Republican candidate. *American Politics Research*, *31*(6), 595-612. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X03255286

Kitchens, K. E., & Swers, M. L. (2016). Why aren't there more republican women in Congress? Gender, Partisanship, and Fundraising Support in the 2010 and 2012 Elections. *Politics & Gender*, *12*(4), 648-676. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X1600009X

Kittilson, M. C., & Fridkin, K. (2008). Gender, candidate portrayals and election campaigns: A comparative perspective. *Politics & Gender*, *4*(3), 371-392. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X08000330

Klar, S., & Krupnikov, Y. (2016). *Independent politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Kleykamp, M., & Hipes, C. (2015). Coverage of veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the US media. *Sociological Forum*, *30*(2), 348-368. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12166

Kline, R. (2013). Exploratory and confi rmatory factor analysis. In *Applied quantitative analysis in education and the social sciences* (pp. 183-217). Routledge.

Klingler, J. D., & Chatagnier, J. T. (2014). Are you doing your part? Veterans' political attitudes and Heinlein's conception of citizenship. *Armed Forces & Society*, *40*(4), 673-695. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X12471932

Knight, K. (2006). Transformations of the concept of ideology in the twentieth century. *American Political Science Review*, *100*(4), 619-626. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055406062502

Knutsen, O. (1998). The strength of the partisan component of left-right identity: A comparative longitudinal study of left-right party polarization in eight west European countries. *Party Politics*, *4*(1), 5-31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068898004001001

Koch, J. W. (2002). Gender stereotypes and citizens' impressions of House candidates' ideological orientations. *American Journal of Political Science*, *46*(2), 453-462. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088388

Koenig, A. M., & Eagly, A. H. (2014). Evidence for the social role theory of stereotype content: Observations of groups' roles shape stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *107*(3), 371-392. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037215

Krasa, S., & Polborn, M. K. (2018). Political competition in legislative elections. *American Political Science Review*, *112*(4), 809-825. https://doi.org/ 10.1017/S0003055418000503

Krishna, A., & Sokolova, T. (2017). A focus on partisanship: How it impacts voting behaviors and political attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *27*(4), 537-545.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1057740817300505 -:~:text=https%3A//doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2017.07.005

Krook, M. L., & O'Brien, D. Z. (2012). All the president's men? The appointment of female cabinet ministers worldwide. *The Journal of Politics*, *74*(3), 840-855. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381612000382

Krook, M. L., & Sanín, J. R. (2020). The cost of doing politics? Analyzing violence and harassment against female politicians. *Perspectives on Politics*, *18*(3), 740-755. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719001397

Krupnikov, Y., & Piston, S. (2015). Racial prejudice, partisanship, and White turnout in elections with Black candidates. *Political Behavior*, 37, 397-418. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-014-9268-2

Lange, J. (2023, April 20). *54% of Americans disapprove of the president*. Reuters/Ipsos. https://www.reuters.com/graphics/USA-BIDEN/POLL/nmopagnqapa/

Lau, V. W., Bligh, M. C., & Kohles, J. C. (2020). Leadership as a reflection of who we are: social identity, media portrayal, and evaluations of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential election. *Sex Roles*, *82*, 422-437. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01070-8

Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science*, 951-971. https://doi.org/10.2307/2669334

Lawless, J. L., & Pearson, K. (2008). The primary reason for women's underrepresentation? Reevaluating the conventional wisdom. *The Journal of Politics*, *70*(1), 67-82. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002238160708005X

Layman, G. C., & Carsey, T. M. (2002). Party polarization and party structuring of policy attitudes: A comparison of three NES panel studies. *Political Behavior*, *24*(3), 199-236. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1558396

Leal, D. L., & Teigen, J. M. (2018). Military service and political participation in the United States: Institutional experience and the vote. *Electoral Studies*, *53*, 99-110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2017.09.004

Lee, J., & Pachon, H. P. (2007). Leading the way: An analysis of the effect of religion on the Latino vote. *American Politics Research*, *35*(2), 252-272. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X06295300

Lee, T., & Hajnal, Z. L. (2011). *Why Americans don't join the party: Race, immigration, and the failure (of political parties) to engage the electorate*. Princeton University Press.

Leeper, T. J., & Slothuus, R. (2014). Political parties, motivated reasoning, and public opinion formation. *Political Psychology*, *35*(1), 129-156. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12164

Leighley, J. E., & Nagler, J. (2013). *Who votes now? Demographics, issues, inequality, and turnout in the United States*. Princeton University Press.

Lerman, A. E., & Sadin, M. L. (2016). Stereotyping or projection? How white and black voters estimate black candidates' ideology. *Political Psychology*, *37*(2), 147-163. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12235

Levin, D. Z., Whitener, E. M., & Cross, R. (2006). Perceived trustworthiness of knowledge sources: The moderating impact of relationship length. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(5), 1163-1171. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.5.1163

Lien, P.-t. (2010). *The making of Asian America through political participation*. Temple University Press.

Lien, P.-t., Conway, M. M., & Wong, J. (2003). The contours and sources of ethnic identity choices among Asian Americans. *Social Science Quarterly*, *84*(2), 461-481. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6237.8402015

Lim, J. S., & Lee, M. J. (2016). The effects of partisan bias, selective exposure and economic condition on a presidential impeachment: A logistic mediation analysis. *커뮤니케이션과학*, *32*(1), 5-36.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2017). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage publications.

Lips, H. M. (2020). *Sex and gender: An introduction*. Waveland Press.

Lizotte, M. K. (2017). Gender, partisanship, and issue gaps. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, *17*(1), 379-405. https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12144

Lofquist, D. A. (2017). *Characteristics of female veterans: An analytic view across age-cohorts: 2015*. US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, US Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acsbr15-03.pdf

Lucas, J. C., & Silber Mohamed, H. (2021). Gender, race, ethnicity, and the racialization of attitudes toward descriptive representation. *American Politics Research*, *49*(5), 517-533. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X211022620

Lupia, A. (1994). Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections. *American Political Science Review*, *88*(1), 63-76. https://doi.org/10.2307/2944882

Lupia, A., & McCubbins, M. D. (2000). The institutional foundations of political competence: How citizens learn what they need to know. In A. Lupia, M. D. McCubbins, & S. L. Popkin (Eds.), *Elements of reason: Cognition, choice, and the bounds of rationality* (pp. 47-67). Cambridge University Press.

Lupia, A., & Philpot, T. S. (2005). Views from inside the net: How websites affect young adults' political interest. *The Journal of Politics, 67*(4), 1122-1142. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00353.x

Lupu, N. (2013). Party brands and partisanship: Theory with evidence from a survey experiment in Argentina. *American Journal of Political Science, 57*(1), 49-64. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2012.00615.x

Luskin, R. C. (1987). Measuring political sophistication. *American Journal of Political Science, 31*(4), 856-899. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111227

McCarty, N., Poole, K. T., & Rosenthal, H. (2016). *Polarized America: The dance of ideology and unequal riches*. MIT Press.

Mackie, D. M., Devos, T., & Smith, E. R. (2000). Intergroup emotions: Explaining offensive action tendencies in an intergroup context. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(4), 602-616. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.4.602

MacLean, A., & Kleykamp, M. (2014). Coming home: Attitudes toward US veterans returning from Iraq. *Social Problems, 61*(1), 131-154. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2013.12074

Malka, A., & Lelkes, Y. (2010). More than ideology: Conservative–liberal identity and receptivity to political cues. *Social Justice Research, 23*(2), 156-188. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-010-0114-3

Maltby, S., & Thornham, H. (2016). The digital mundane: social media and the military. *Media, Culture & Society*, *38*(8), 1153-1168. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716646173

Mangum, M. (2013). The racial underpinnings of party identification and political ideology. *Social Science Quarterly*, *94*(5), 1222-1244. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12029

Manning, J. E., & Brudnick, I.A. (2022). Congressional research service. *Women in Congress: Statistics and brief overview*. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43244

Mansbridge, J. (2003). Rethinking representation. *American Political Science Review*, *97*(4), 515-528. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000856

Mason, L., & Wronski, J. (2018). One tribe to bind them all: How our social group attachments strengthen partisanship. *Political Psychology*, *39*, 257-277. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12485

Masuoka, N., & Junn, J. (2013). *The politics of belonging: Race, public opinion, and immigration*. University of Chicago Press.

Masuoka, N., Ramanathan, K., & Junn, J. (2019). New Asian American voters: Political incorporation and participation in 2016. *Political Research Quarterly*, *72*(4), 991-1003. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912919843342

Matland, R. E., & King, D. C. (2002). Women as candidates in congressional elections. In C. S. Rosenthal (Ed.), *Women transforming Congress* (pp. 119-45). University of Oklahoma Press.

Matsumoto, R. A., England, B. R., Mastarone, G., Richards, J. S., Chang, E., Wood, P. R., & Barton, J. L. (2020). Rheumatology clinicians' perceptions of telerheumatology within the Veterans Health Administration: a national survey study. *Military Medicine*, *185*(11-12), e2082-e2087. https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usaa203

Mattan, A. J., & Small, T. A. (2021). Worth a thousand words: The study of visual gendered self-presentation on Twitter. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique, 54*(2), 477-490. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423921000032

Mattes, K., Spezio, M., Kim, H., Todorov, A., Adolphs, R., & Alvarez, R. M. (2010). Predicting election outcomes from positive and negative trait assessments of candidate images. *Political Psychology, 31*(1), 41-58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00745.x

Mattila, M., Söderlund, P., Wass, H., & Rapeli, L. (2013). Healthy voting: The effect of self-reported health on turnout in 30 countries. *Electoral Studies, 32*(4), 886-891. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2013.07.010

Meng, M. D., & Davidson, A. (2020). A vote of competence: How a similar upbringing to political candidates influences voting choice. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 39*(4), 396-411. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620943181

McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect-and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal, 38*(1), 24-59. https://doi.org/10.5465/256727

McClurg, S. D., & Holbrook, T. M. (2009). Living in a battleground: Presidential campaigns and fundamental predictors of vote choice. *Political Research Quarterly, 62*(3), 495-506. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908319575

McConnaughy, C. M., White, I. K., Leal, D. L., & Casellas, J. P. (2010). A Latino on the ballot: Explaining coethnic voting among Latinos and the response of White Americans. *The Journal of Politics, 72*(4), 1199-1211. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381610000629

McCormick, W. H., Currier, J. M., Isaak, S. L., Sims, B. M., Slagel, B. A., Carroll, T. D., & Albright, D. L. (2019). Military culture and post-military transitioning among veterans: A

qualitative analysis. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *4*(2), 287-298. https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v4i2.121

McCroskey, J. C. (1966). Scales for the measurement of ethos. *Speech Monographs*, *33*(1), 65-72. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637756609375482

McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communications Monographs*, *66*(1), 90-103. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759909376464

McDaniel, A. E. (2008). Measuring gender egalitarianism: The attitudinal difference between men and women. *International Journal of Sociology*, *38*(1), 58-80. https://doi.org/10.2753/IJS0020-7659380103

McDermott, M. L. (1997). Voting cues in low-information elections: Candidate gender as a social information variable in contemporary United States elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *41*(1), 270-283. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111716

McDermott, M. L. (2016). *Masculinity, femininity, and American political behavior*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190462802.001.0001

McDermott, M. L., & Panagopoulos, C. (2015). Be all that you can be: The electoral impact of military service as an information cue. *Political Research Quarterly*, *68*(2), 293-305. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912915572151

McGinley, A. C. (2009). Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Michelle Obama: Performing gender, race, and class on the campaign trail. *Denver Law Review*, *86*(3), 709-725. https://ssrn.com/abstract=1375743

McGregor, S. C. (2020). “Taking the temperature of the room”: How political campaigns use social media to understand and represent public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 84*(1), 236-256. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfaa012

McGurk, D., Cotting, D. I., Britt, T. W., & Adler, A. B. (2006). Joining the ranks: The role of indoctrination in transforming civilians to service members. In A. B. Adler, C. A. Castro, & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life: The psychology of serving in peace and combat: Operational stress* (pp. 13–31). Praeger Security International.

McHugo, G. J., Lanzetta, J. T., Sullivan, D. G., Masters, R. D., & Englis, B. G. (1985). Emotional reactions to a political leader's expressive displays. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *49*(6), 1513. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.49.6.1513

McKelvey, R. D., & Ordeshook, P. C. (1986). Information, electoral equilibria, and the democratic ideal. *The Journal of Politics*, *48*(4), 909-937. https://doi.org/10.2307/2131005

McLaughlin, P. T., Geras, M. J., & Rhinehart, S. (2022). Supporting veterans: Source cues, issue ownership, and the electoral benefits of military service. *Political Behavior* (Advanced online publication). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-022-09827-w

McQuarrie, M. (2017). The revolt of the Rust Belt: Place and politics in the age of anger. *The British Journal of Sociology, 68*(1), S120-S152. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12328

Meeks, L. (2012). Is she “man enough”? Women candidates, executive political offices, and news coverage. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(1), 175-193. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01621.x

Meeks, L. (2017). Getting personal: Effects of Twitter personalization on candidate evaluations. *Politics & Gender, 13*(1), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000696

Meeks, L. (2019). Owning your message: Congressional candidates' interactivity and issue ownership in mixed-gender campaigns. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *16*(2), 187-202. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2019.1620149

Meeks, L. (2021). Conservatives and women. In S. E. Jarvis (Ed.), *Conservative political communication. How right-wing media and messaging (re)made American politics* (pp. 102-118). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351187237

Meeks, L., & Domke, D. (2016). When politics is a woman's game: party and gender ownership in woman-versus-woman elections. *Communication Research*, *43*(7), 895-921. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215581369

Michaelsen, A. (2015). Brand Obama: How Barack Obama revolutionized political campaign marketing in the 2008 Presidential election. [Bachelor's thesis, Claremont McKenna College]. https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/990/

Mickey, E. L. (2022). The organization of networking and gender inequality in the new economy: Evidence from the tech industry. *Work and Occupations*, *49*(4), 383-420. https://doi.org/10.1177/07308884221102134

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.

Miller, N. (2013). *Committees, agendas and voting*. Routledge.

Moehler, D., & Conroy-Krutz, J. (2016). Eyes on the ballot: Priming effects and ethnic voting in the developing world. *Electoral Studies*, *42*, 99-113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.01.010

More in Common. (2022, November). *The veterans and citizens initiative. 2022 Veterans Day report: A survey of Americans' attitudes towards veterans.* https://www.moreincommon.com/media/mgtbbnh0/2022-veterans-day-report.pdf

Morlan, R. L. (1984). Municipal vs. national election voter turnout: Europe and the United States. *Political Science Quarterly, 99*(3), 457-470. https://doi.org/10.2307/2149943

Mondak, J. J., Hibbing, M. V., Canache, D., Seligson, M. A., & Anderson, M. R. (2010). Personality and civic engagement: An integrative framework for the study of trait effects on political behavior. *American Political Science Review, 104*(1), 85-110. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409990359

Montoya, C. M., Bejarano, C., Brown, N. E., & Gershon, S. A. (2022). The intersectional dynamics of descriptive representation. *Politics & Gender, 18*(2), 483-512. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000744

Muhr, S. L., & Sløk-Andersen, B. (2017). Exclusion and inclusion in the Danish military: A historical analysis of the construction and consequences of a gendered organizational narrative. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 30*(3), 367-379. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-10-2016-0195

Mullen, B., Brown, R., & Smith, C. (1992). Ingroup bias as a function of salience, relevance, and status: An integration. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 22*(2), 103-122. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420220202

Muthén, B., & Muthén, L. (2022). Mplus. In *Handbook of item response theory* (pp. 507-518). Chapman and Hall/CRC.

Nagel, R. U. (2021). Gendered preferences: How women's inclusion in society shapes negotiation occurrence in intrastate conflicts. *Journal of Peace Research, 58*(3), 433-448. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319899456

Nai, A. (2015). The maze and the mirror: Voting correctly in direct democracy. *Social Science Quarterly, 96*(2), 465-486. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12154

Nai, A. (2022). Populist voters like dark politicians. *Personality and Individual Differences, 187*, 111412. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111412

Nakanishi, D. T. (2009). The transnational politics of Asian Americans. In C. Collet & P.-t. Lien (Eds.), *The transnational politics of Asian Americans* (pp. ix-xiv). Temple University Press.

Nathan, N. L. (2019). *Electoral politics and Africa's Urban transition: Class and ethnicity in Ghana*. Cambridge University Press.

National Conference of State Legislatures. (n.p.). *Military and veterans' affairs*. https://www.ncsl.org/research/military-and-veterans-affairs.aspx

Newport, F., & Carroll, J. (2007). *Analysis: Impact of personal characteristics on candidate support*. Princeton University Press.

Nicholson, S. P. (2021). *Voting the agenda: Candidates, elections, and ballot propositions.* Princeton University Press.

Niven, D. (2006). Throwing your hat out of the ring: Negative recruitment and the gender imbalance in state legislative candidacy. *Politics & Gender, 2*(4), 473-489. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06060120

Norris, P., & Curtice, J. (2002). Tuned out voters? Media impact on campaign learning. *Ethical Perspectives, 9*(4), 200-21. https://doi.org/10.2143/ep.9.4.503859

Nuño, S. A. (2007). Latino mobilization and vote choice in the 2000 presidential election. *American Politics Research, 35*(2), 273-293. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X06297032

Oliver, S., & Conroy, M. (2018). Tough enough for the job? How masculinity predicts recruitment of city council members. *American Politics Research, 46*(6), 1094-1122. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X17729719

Oliver, J. E., & Ha, S. E. (2007). Vote choice in suburban elections. *American Political Science Review, 101*(3), 393-408. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055407070323

Olivola, C. Y., & Todorov, A. (2010). Elected in 100 milliseconds: Appearance-based trait inferences and voting. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 34*(2), 83-110. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-009-0082-1

O'Malley, D. (Executive Producer). (2016 - current). *Vet TV. Veteran Television.* [TV series]. n.d. https://www.veterantv.com/

Ono, Y., & Burden, B. C. (2019). The contingent effects of candidate sex on voter choice. *Political Behavior, 41*(3), 583-607. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9464-6

Oosterhof, N. N., & Todorov, A. (2009). Shared perceptual basis of emotional expressions and trustworthiness impressions from faces. *Emotion, 9*(1), 128-133. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014520

Orman, J. (1985). Media coverage of the congressional underdog. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 18*(4), 754-759. https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909650002268X

Osiel, M. J. (2017). *Obeying orders: atrocity, military discipline and the law of war*. Routledge.

Ottati, V. C. (1990). Determinants of political judgments: The joint influence of normative and heuristic rules of inference. *Political Behavior, 12*(2), 159-179. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00992467

Otto, A. H., & Steinhardt, M. F. (2014). Immigration and election outcomes—Evidence from city districts in Hamburg. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, *45*, 67-79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2014.01.004

Ou, Y.-s., & McAdoo, H. P. (1993). Socialization of Chinese American children. In H. P. McAdoo (Ed.), *Family ethnicity: Strength in diversity* (pp. 245–270). Sage.

Pack, M. (2010). Obama: The marketing lessons. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, *12*(1), 2-9. https://doi.org/10.1057/dddmp.2010.17

Padró i Miquel, G. (2007). The control of politicians in divided societies: The politics of fear. *The Review of Economic Studies*, *74*(4), 1259-1274. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-937X.2007.00455.x

Page, J. T., & Duffy, M. E. (2018). What does credibility look like? Tweets and walls in US presidential candidates' visual storytelling. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *17*(1), 3-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2016.1171819

Palan, S., & Schitter, C. (2018). Prolific. ac—A subject pool for online experiments. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, *17*, 22-27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2017.12.004

Palczewski, C. H., McGeough, D. D., & DeFrancisco, V. P. (2022). *Gender in communication: A critical introduction*. Sage.

Palmen, D., Derksen, J., & Kolthoff, E. (2018). *House of Cards*: Psychopathy in politics. *Public Integrity*, *20*(5), 427-443. https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2017.1402736

Pancer, S. M., Brown, S. D., & Barr, C. W. (1999). Forming impressions of political leaders: A cross-national comparison. *Political Psychology*, *20*(2), 345-368. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00148

Parrott, S., Albright, D. L., Dyche, C., & Steele, H. G. (2019). Hero, charity case, and victim: How US news media frame military veterans on Twitter. *Armed Forces & Society*, *45*(4), 702-722. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18784238

Parrott, S., Albright, D. L., Steele, H. G., & Dyche, C. (2019). The US military veteran in news photographs: Representation and stereotypes. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, *26*(2), 79-90. https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2019.1593171

Parrott, S., Albright, D. L., Eckhart, N., & Laha-Walsh, K. (2022). US veterans and civilians describe military news coverage as mediocre, think stories affect others more than themselves. *Armed Forces & Society*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X221080944

Parrott, S., Albright, D. L., & Eckhart, N. (2022). Veterans and media: The effects of news exposure on thoughts, attitudes, and support of military veterans. *Armed Forces & Society*, *48*(3), 503-521. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20986145

Parry, K., & Pitchford-Hyde, J. (2022). 'We may have bad days... that doesn't make us killers': How military veterans perceive contemporary British media representations of military and post-military life. *Media, War & Conflict*. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352221113958

Pastor, R., & Verge, T. (2021). The symbolic representation of women's political firsts in editorial cartoons. *Feminist Media Studies*, *6*, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1886140

Patterson, O. (1982). An analysis of coverage of the Vietnam veteran. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *59*(2), 308. https://www.proquest.com/openview/4bd1efd450d2562ab4983b7a85a4ec61/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1818414

Peacock, C., Dugger, H., Fanelli, J. K., Harris, A. J., McLelland, J. B., & Richardson, L. A. (2021). Choosing a candidate: Traits, issues, and electability. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *65*(3), 540-557. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764220978458

Peacock, D., & Irons, A. (2017). Gender inequality in cybersecurity: Exploring the gender gap in opportunities and progression. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*, *9*(1), 25-44. http://www.genderandset.open.ac.uk/

Pearson, K., & Dancey, L. (2011). Elevating women's voices in congress: Speech participation in the house of representatives. *Political Research Quarterly*, *64*(4), 910-923. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912910388190

Pearson, K., & McGhee, E. (2013). What it takes to win: Questioning "gender neutral" outcomes in US House elections. *Politics & Gender*, *9*(4), 439-462. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X13000433

Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American journal of political science*, 825-850. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111797

Pew Research Center. (2020). *Political polarization*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/politics-policy/political-parties-polarization/political-polarization/

Pew Research Center. (2021). *Hispanic/ Latino voters*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/race-ethnicity/racial-ethnic-groups/hispanics-latinos/hispanic-latino-voters/

Pew Research Center (2022). *New Congress will have a few more veterans, but their share of lawmakers is still near a record low*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-

tank/2022/12/07/new-congress-will-have-a-few-more-veterans-but-their-share-of-lawmakers-is-still-near-a-record-low/

Pew Research Center. (2022). *Public has modest expectations for Washington's return to divided government*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/politics-policy/us-elections-voters/election-2022/

Pfau, M., Haigh, M., Fifrick, A., Holl, D., Tedesco, A., Cope, J., ... & Martin, M. (2006). The effects of print news photographs of the casualties of war. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 83*(1), 150-168. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900608300110

Phillips, R., & Connelly, V. (2021). Examining myths of the mad, bad and sad British veteran in today's media: a qualitative approach. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 48*(1), 73-96. https://doi.org/10.5744/jpms.2021.1003

Phillips, R., Connelly, V., & Burgess, M. (2020). Representations of British armed forces veterans in the press: A quantitative analysis of newspaper articles. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 47*(1). https://doi.org/10.5744/jpms.2020.1003

Phillips, C. D., & Lee, T. (2018). Superficial equality: Gender and immigration in Asian American political participation. *Politics, Groups, and Identities, 6*(3), 373-388. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1494012

Piazza, K. S., & Diaz, G. (2020). Light in the midst of chaos: COVID-19 and female political representation. *World Development, 136*, 105125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105125

Piccoli, L., & Ruedin, D. (2023). Local-to-local electoral connections for migrants: the association between voting rights in the place of origin and the propensity to vote in the

place of residence. *Democratization*, *30*(1), 40-56. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2108802

Pierce, D. R., & Lau, R. R. (2019). Polarization and correct voting in US presidential elections. *Electoral Studies*, *60*, 102048. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.102048

Plutzer, E. (2002). Becoming a habitual voter: Inertia, resources, and growth in young adulthood. *American Political Science Review*, *96*(1), 41-56. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402004227

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *47*(11), 1451-1458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004

Popkin, S. L. (1991). *The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns*. University of Chicago Press.

Poutvaara, P., Jordahl, H., & Berggren, N. (2009). Faces of politicians: Babyfacedness predicts inferred competence but not electoral success. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *45*(5), 1132-1135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.06.007

Powell Jr., G. B. (1986). American voter turnout in comparative perspective. *American Political Science Review*, *80*(1), 17-43. https://doi.org/10.2307/1957082

Pradel, F. (2021). Biased representation of politicians in Google and Wikipedia search? The joint effect of party identity, gender identity and elections. *Political Communication*, *38*(4), 447-478. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1793846

Prior, M. (2006). The incumbent in the living room: The rise of television and the incumbency advantage in US House elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *68*(3), 657-673. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00452.x

Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Berg.

Rallings, C., & Thrasher, M. (2017). *British electoral facts 1832-2006*. Routledge.

Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Espenshade, T. J. (2001). Immigrant incorporation and political participation in the United States. *International Migration Review*, *35*(3), 870-909. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2001.tb00044.x

Ramey, A. J., Klingler, J. D., & Hollibaugh Jr, G. E. (2022). Still the same? Revealed preferences and ideological self-perception among former members of Congress. *American Politics Research*, *50*(6), 781-791. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X221106425

Ramirez, M. (2022, November 11). *Women, suburban voters and Latinos help drive election results in 2022 midterms*. USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/11/09/2022-midterms-women-and-suburban-voters-help-democrats-avoid-disaster/8318080001/

Redlawsk, D. P. (2004). What voters do: Information search during election campaigns. *Political Psychology*, *25*(4), 595-610. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00389.x

Reis, J., & Menezes, S. (2020). Gender inequalities in the military service: A systematic literature review. *Sexuality & Culture*, *24*(3), 1004-1018. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-019-09662-y

Reger, M. A., Etherage, J. R., Reger, G. M., & Gahm, G. A. (2008). Civilian psychologists in an Army culture: The ethical challenge of cultural competence. *Military Psychology*, *20*(1), 21-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/08995600701753144

Reysen, S. (2005). Construction of a new scale: The Reysen likability scale. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *33*(2), 201-208. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2005.33.2.201

Rhidenour, K. B. (2015). *The mediated veteran: How news sources narrate the pain and potential of returning soldiers* (Doctoral dissertation). http://hdl.handle.net/2152/30521

Rhidenour, K. B., Barrett, A. K., & Blackburn, K. G. (2019). Heroes or health victims?: Exploring how the elite media frames veterans on Veterans Day. *Health Communication*, *34*(4), 371-382. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2017.1405481

Rice, V. J., Liu, B., & Schroeder, P. J. (2018). Impact of in-person and virtual world mindfulness training on symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. *Military Medicine*, *183*(1), 413-420. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01129-3

Richards, Z., & Hewstone, M. (2001). Subtyping and subgrouping: Processes for the prevention and promotion of stereotype change. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *5*(1), 52-73. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0501_4

Richardson, D. K. (2022). The electoral impact of military experience: Evidence from US Senate elections (1982–2016). *Armed Forces & Society*, *48*(4), 961-981. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X211038032

Ridgeway, C. L. (2011). *Framed by gender: How gender inequality persists in the modern world*. Oxford University Press.

Ridgeway, C. L., & Kricheli-Katz, T. (2013). Intersecting cultural beliefs in social relations: Gender, race, and class binds and freedoms. *Gender & Society*, *27*(3), 294-318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213479445

Riggle, E. D., Ottati, V. C., Wyer, R. S., Kuklinski, J., & Schwarz, N. (1992). Bases of political judgments: The role of stereotypic and nonstereotypic information. *Political Behavior, 14*(1), 67-87. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00993509

Ritzer, G., & Dean, P. (2015). *Globalization: A basic text*. John Wiley & Sons.

Robbett, A., Colón, L., & Matthews, P. H. (2023). Partisan political beliefs and social learning. *Journal of Public Economics*, *220*, 104834. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2023.104834

Roets, A., & Van Hiel, A. (2009). The ideal politician: Impact of voters' ideology. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *46*(1), 60-65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.09.006

Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

Rokeach, M. (1968). The role of values in public opinion research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *32*(4), 547-559. https://doi.org/10.1086/267645

Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. Free Press.

Rokeach, M. (1979). The two-value model of political ideology and British politics. *British Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, *18*(2), 169-172. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8260.1979.tb00321.x

Rosenstone, S. J., & Hansen, J. M. (1993). *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America*. Longman.

Rubio Juan, M., & Revilla, M. (2021). Comparing respondents who passed versus failed an Instructional Manipulation Check: A case study about support for climate change policies. *International Journal of Market Research*, *63*(4), 408-415. https://doi.org/10.1177/14707853211023039

Rudman, L. A., & Fairchild, K. (2004). Reactions to counterstereotypic behavior: The role of backlash in cultural stereotype maintenance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *87*(2), 157-176. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.2.157

Ruiz, A. L., Bartkowski, J. P., Ellison, C. G., Acevedo, G. A., & Xu, X. (2017). Religion and gender ideologies among working-age US Latinas/os. *Religions*, *8*(7), 121-137. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8070121

Rule, N. O., & Ambady, N. (2009). She's got the look: Inferences from female chief executive officers' faces predict their success. *Sex Roles*, *61*(9), 644-652. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9658-9

Rule, N. O., Ambady, N., Adams Jr., R. B., Ozono, H., Nakashima, S., Yoshikawa, S., & Watabe, M. (2010). Polling the face: Prediction and consensus across cultures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *98*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017673

Rydell, R. J., McConnell, A. R., & Mackie, D. M. (2008). Consequences of discrepant explicit and implicit attitudes: Cognitive dissonance and increased information processing. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *44*(6), 1526-1532. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.07.006

Saad, L. (2022, October 31). *Economy is top election issue; abortion and crime next*. Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/404243/economy-top-election-issue-abortion-crime-next.aspx

Saldaña, J. (2020). Qualitative data analysis strategies. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.)* (pp. 876-911). Oxford Handbooks. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.33

Sampaio, A. (2019). ¡Adelante, mujeres! What does the unprecedented showing of Latina candidates and voters in the 2018 elections reveal about the balance of political power in the Trump era? *NACLA Report on the Americas, 51*(1), 13-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2019.1593682

Sanbonmatsu, K. (2020). Women's underrepresentation in the US Congress. *Daedalus, 149*(1), 40-55. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01772

Sanbonmatsu, K., & Dolan, K. (2008). Do gender stereotypes transcend party? *Political Research Quarterly, 62*(3), 485-494. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908322416

Sanchez, G. R., Fraga, L. R., & Ramírez, R. (Eds.). (2020). *Latinos and the 2016 election: Latino resistance and the election of Donald Trump*. Michigan State University Press.

Santia, M., & Bauer, N. M. (2022). The intersection of candidate gender and ethnicity: How voters respond to campaign messages from Latinas. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* (Advanced online publication). https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211072697

Sasson-Levy, O. (2003). Military, masculinity, and citizenship: Tensions and contradictions in the experience of blue-collar soldiers. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power, 10*(3), 319-345. https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890390228892

Sasson-Levy, O., Levy, Y., & Lomsky-Feder, E. (2011). Women breaking the silence: Military service, gender, and antiwar protest. *Gender & Society, 25*(6), 740-763. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243211421782

Scarborough, W. J., & Sin, R. (2020). Gendered places: The dimensions of local gender norms across the United States. *Gender & Society, 34*(5), 705-735. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243220948220

Scarborough, W. J., Pepin, J. R., Lambouths III, D. L., Kwon, R., & Monasterio, R. (2021). The intersection of racial and gender attitudes, 1977 through 2018. *American Sociological Review*, *86*(5), 823-855. https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224211033582

Schake, K., & Robinson, M. (2021). Assessing civil-military relations and the January 6th Capitol insurrection. *Orbis*, *65*(3), 532-544. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2021.06.013

Schmidt, H. (2020). "Hero-worship" or "manipulative and oversimplifying": How America's current and former military service members perceive military-related news reporting. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *6*(1), 13-24. https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v6i1.156

Schmitt, C., & Brant, H. K. (2019). Gender, ambition, and legislative behavior in the United States House. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *40*(2), 286-308. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2019.1570757

Schneider, M. C., & Bos, A. L. (2019). The application of social role theory to the study of gender in politics. *Political Psychology*, *40*(1), 173-213. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12573

Schneider, M. C., Bos, A. L., & DiFilippo, M. (2022). Gender role violations and voter prejudice: The agentic penalty faced by women politicians. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *43*(2), 117-133. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2021.1981095

Schneider, M. C., Holman, M. R., Diekman, A. B., & McAndrew, T. (2016). Power, conflict, and community: How gendered views of political power influence women's political ambition. *Political Psychology*, *37*(4), 515-531. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12268

Schwenk, J. (2022). Candidate selection and female representation in the context of high corruption: The case of Italy's 2014 mayor elections. *Electoral Studies*, *79*, 102500. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2022.102500

Sellers, C. (1965). The equilibrium cycle in two-party politics. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *29*(1), 16-38. https://doi.org/10.1086/267295

Seltzer, R. A., Newman, J., & Leighton, M. V. (1997). *Sex as a political variable: Women as candidates and voters in US elections*. Lynne Rienner.

Serani, D. (2022). The Covid pandemic enters the ballot box: The impact of conspiracy theories on Italians' voting behaviour during the COVID-19 crisis. *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* (Advanced online publication). https://doi.org/10.1017/ipo.2021.56

Shair-Rosenfield, S., & Hinojosa, M. (2014). Does female incumbency reduce gender bias in elections? Evidence from Chile. *Political Research Quarterly*, *67*(4), 837-850. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912914550044

Shane III, L. (2020, December 20). *Veterans in the 117th Congress, by the numbers*. Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/12/28/veterans-in-the-117th-congress-by-the-numbers/

Shane III, L. (2022, October 17). *A full list of the 196 veterans running for Congress this year*. Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/election-2022/2022/10/17/a-full-list-of-the-195-veterans-running-for-congress-this-year/

Shane III, L. (2023, January 3). *Breaking down the number of veterans in the 118th Congress.* Military Times. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/election-2022/2023/01/03/breaking-down-the-number-of-veterans-in-the-118th-congress/

Shawcroft, J. E., Coyne, S. M., Zurcher, J. D., & Brubaker, P. J. (2022). Depictions of gender across eight decades of Disney animated film: The role of film producer, director, and writer gender. *Sex Roles*, *86*(5), 346-365. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-022-01273-6

Shi, H. X., Shepherd, D. M., & Schmidts, T. (2015). Social capital in entrepreneurial family businesses: the role of trust. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *21*(6), 814-841. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-04-2015-0090

Shields P. M. (2020). Dynamic intersection of military and society. In: A. Sookermany (Ed.) *Handbook of military sciences*. Springer Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4

Shino, E., & Smith, D. (2022). Political knowledge and convenience voting. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, *32*(2), 408-428. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2020.1814308

Shpeer (2023). *Depictions of female veterans*. [Unpublished manuscript].

Shpeer, M., & Howe, W. T. (2020). Socialization, face negotiation, identity, and the United States military. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 726-744. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/11885

Shpeer, M., & Meeks, L. (2022). "The stiletto in Putin's side": Analyzing Russian media coverage of the only female presidential candidate in 2018. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, *15*(2), 165-184. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2021.1896023

Shulman, H. C., Sweitzer, M. D., Bullock, O. M., Coronel, J. C., Bond, R. M., & Poulsen, S. (2022). Predicting vote choice and election outcomes from ballot wording: The role of processing fluency in low information direct democracy elections. *Political Communication*, *39*(5), 652-673. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2022.2092920

Sigelman, L., Sigelman, C. K., & Fowler, C. (1987). A bird of a different feather? An experimental investigation of physical attractiveness and the electability of female candidates. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *50*(1), 32-43. https://doi.org/10.2307/2786888

Silver, D., & Miller, D. (2014). Cultural scenes and voting patterns in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, *47*(3), 425-450. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423914000778

Silverstein, R. (1994). Chronic identity diffusion in traumatized combat veterans. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *22*(1), 69-79. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.1994.22.1.69

Simi, P., Bubolz, B. F., & Hardman, A. (2013). Military experience, identity discrepancies, and far right terrorism: An exploratory analysis. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *36*(8), 654-671. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2013.802976

Simić, O. (2010). Does the presence of women really matter? Towards combating male sexual violence in peacekeeping operations. *International Peacekeeping*, *17*(2), 188-199. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533311003625084

Simonton, D. K. (1988). Presidential style: Personality, biography, and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *55*(6), 928-936. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.55.6.928

Smets, K., & Van Ham, C. (2013). The embarrassment of riches? A meta-analysis of individual-level research on voter turnout. *Electoral Studies*, *32*(2), 344-359. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2012.12.006

Smith, A. R., Reingold, B., & Owens, M. L. (2012). The political determinants of women's descriptive representation in cities. *Political Research Quarterly*, *65*(2), 315-329. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912910395327

Smith, E. C. (2022). *Service above self: Women veterans in American politics*. University Press of Kansas.

Soeters, J.L., Winslow, D.J., Weibull, A. (2006). Military culture. In: G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military. Handbooks of sociology and social research.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-34576-0_14

Soroka, S., Loewen, P., Fournier, P., & Rubenson, D. (2016). The impact of news photos on support for military action. *Political Communication*, *33*(4), 563-582. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2015.1133745

Soules, M. J. (2021). Women in uniform: The opening of combat roles in state militaries. *International Interactions*, *46*(6), 847-871. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2020.1814766

Southwell, P. L. (2004). Five years later: A re-assessment of Oregon's vote by mail electoral process. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *37*(1), 89-93. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096504003804

Spence, J. T., & Buckner, C. E. (2000). Instrumental and expressive traits, trait stereotypes, and sexist attitudes what do they signify? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *24*(1), 44-62. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2000.tb01021.x

Stalsburg, B. L. (2010). Voting for mom: The political consequences of being a parent for male and female candidates. *Politics & Gender*, *6*(3), 373-404. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X10000309

Stahl, R. (2009). Why we" support the troops": Rhetorical evolutions. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, *12*(4), 533-570. https://doi.org/10.1353/rap.0.0121

Stier, S., Bleier, A., Lietz, H., & Strohmaier, M. (2018). Election campaigning on social media: Politicians, audiences, and the mediation of political communication on Facebook and Twitter. *Political Communication*, *35*(1), 50-74. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1334728

Stokes, D. E. (1962). Party loyalty and the likelihood of deviating elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *24*(4), 689-702. https://doi.org/10.2307/2128042

Stokes-Brown, A. K. (2018). The Latino vote in the 2016 election—myths and realities about the 'Trump effect.' In J. C. Lucas, C. J. Galdieri, & T. S. Sisco (Eds.), *Conventional wisdom, parties, and broken barriers in the 2016 election* (pp. 61-80). Lexington Books.

Sullivan, J. M., & Arbuthnot, K. N. (2009). The effects of Black identity on candidate evaluations: An exploratory study. *Journal of Black Studies*, *40*(2), 215-237. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934707309430

Sussman, A. B., Petkova, K., & Todorov, A. (2013). Competence ratings in US predict presidential election outcomes in Bulgaria. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *49*(4), 771-775. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.02.003

Swann, W. B., Jr., & Bosson, J. K. (2010). Self and identity. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 589–628). John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470561119.socpsy001016

Sweet-Cushman, J. (2022). Legislative vs. executive political offices: How gender stereotypes can disadvantage women in either office. *Political Behavior*, *44*(1), 411-434. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09721-x

Tabachnick, B. G., Fidell, L. S., & Ullman, J. B. (2013). *Using multivariate statistics* (Vol. 6, pp. 497-516). Pearson.

Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science*, *50*(3), 755-769. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00214.x

Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, *13*(2), 65-93. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In J. T. Jost & J. Sidanius (Eds.), *Political psychology* (pp. 276-293). Psychology Press.

Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *1*(2), 149-178. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420010202

Teigen, J. M. (2007). Veterans' party identification, candidate affect, and vote choice in the 2004 US presidential election. *Armed Forces & Society*, *33*(3), 414-437. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764206296586

Teigen, J. M. (2013). Military experience in elections and perceptions of issue competence: An experimental study with television ads. *Armed Forces & Society*, *39*(3), 415-433. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X12451561

Teigen, J. M. (2018). *Why veterans run: Military service in American presidential elections, 1789-2016*. Temple University Press.

Teven, J. J. (2008). An examination of perceived credibility of the 2008 presidential candidates: Relationships with believability, likeability, and deceptiveness. *Human Communication*, *11*(4), 391-408.

https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=c6d2aac7f9442efa2b6ee2fbb8c5479b7d6fd058

Theodoridis, A. G. (2017). Me, myself, and (I),(D), or (R)? Partisanship and political cognition through the lens of implicit identity. *The Journal of Politics*, *79*(4), 1253-1267. https://doi.org/10.1086/692738

Thomas, K. H., Haring, E. L., McDaniel, J., Fletcher, K. L., & Albright, D. L. (2017). Belonging and support: Women veterans' perceptions of veteran service organizations. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, *2*(2), 2-12. http://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v2i2.12

Thomsen, D. M., & Swers, M. L. (2017). Which women can run? Gender, partisanship, and candidate donor networks. *Political Research Quarterly*, *70*(2), 449–463. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917698044

Todorov, A., Mandisodza, A. N., Goren, A., & Hall, C. C. (2005). Inferences of competence from faces predict election outcomes. *Science*, *308*(5728), 1623-1626. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1110589

Todorov, A., Pakrashi, M., & Oosterhof, N. N. (2009). Evaluating faces on trustworthiness after minimal time exposure. *Social Cognition*, *27*(6), 813-833. https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2009.27.6.813

Towner, T. L., & Clawson, R. A. (2016). A wise Latina or a baffled rookie? Media coverage of justice Sonia Sotomayor's ascent to the bench. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *37*(3), 316-340. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2016.1188600

Towner, T. L., & Dulio, D. A. (2012). New media and political marketing in the United States: 2012 and beyond. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *11*(1-2), 95-119. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2012.642748

Tracy, S. J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.

Turpin, J. (1998). Many faces: Women confronting war. In L. A. Lorentzen & J. E. Turpin (Eds.), *The women and war reader* (pp. 3-18). NYU Press.

United Nations Women. (2022, September 7). *Press release: Achieving full gender equality is still centuries away, warns the United Nations in a new report*. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2022/09/press-release-achieving-full-gender-equality-is-still-centuries-away-warns-the-united-nations-in-a-new-report

U.S. Census Bureau. (n. d.). *Veterans*. https://www.census.gov/topics/population/veterans.html

U.S. Department of Defense. (2022). *Department of Defense releases Annual Demographics Report — Upward trend in number of women serving continues.* https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3246268/department-of-defense-releases-annual-demographics-report-upward-trend-in-numbe/

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. (2023). *National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics - Percent change in veteran population by state from 2000 to 2020.* https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp

U.S. Federal Election Commission. (n. d.). *Help for candidates and committees.* https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/

U.S. Government. (n. d.). *Branches of the U.S. Government*. U.S. Government. https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government

USC Annenberg Media. (n. d.). *Election*. USC Annenberg Media. https://www.uscannenbergmedia.com/tags/election/

Vaccari, C. (2010). "Technology is a commodity": The Internet in the 2008 United States presidential election. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *7*(4), 318-339. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681003656664

Valentino, N. A., Neuner, F. G., & Vandenbroek, L. M. (2018). The changing norms of racial political rhetoric and the end of racial priming. *The Journal of Politics*, *80*(3), 757-771. https://doi.org/10.1086/694845

Van Bavel, J. J., & Pereira, A. (2018). The partisan brain: An identity-based model of political belief. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, *22*(3), 213-224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2018.01.004

Van der Pas, D. J., & Aaldering, L. (2020). Gender differences in political media coverage: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication*, *70*(1), 114-143. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqz046

van Douwen, N., van den Brink, M., & Benschop, Y. (2022). Badass marines: Resistance practices against the introduction of women in the Dutch military. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *29*(5), 1443-1462. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12835

Van Vugt, M. (2006). Evolutionary origins of leadership and followership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *10*(4), 354-371. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1004_5

van 't Wout, M., & Sanfey, A. G. (2008). Friend or foe: The effect of implicit trustworthiness judgments in social decision-making. *Cognition*, *108*(3), 796-803. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2008.07.002

van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, *134*(4), 504-535. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.4.504

Verba, S., & Nie, N. H. (1987). *Participation in America: Political democracy and social equality*. University of Chicago Press.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.

Veterans Campaign. (n.p.). *2022 Election analysis*. http://www.veteranscampaign.org/2022-election-analysis

Vis, B. (2019). Heuristics and political elites' judgment and decision-making. *Political Studies Review*, *17*(1), 41-52. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929917750311

Von Hippel, C., Issa, M., Ma, R., & Stokes, A. (2011). Stereotype threat: Antecedents and consequences for working women. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*(2), 151-161. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.749

Wamble, J. (2018). *Show us that you care: How community commitment signals affect Black political considerations* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Maryland. https://doi.org/10.13016/M24746V6D

Warner, B. R. (2018). Modeling partisan media effects in the 2014 US midterm elections. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *95*(3), 647-669. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699017712991

Warner, B. R., & Banwart, M. C. (2016). A multifactor approach to candidate image. *Communication Studies*, *67*(3), 259-279. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2016.1156005

Watts, A. L., Lilienfeld, S. O., Smith, S. F., Miller, J. D., Campbell, W. K., Waldman, I. D., Rubenzer, S.J., & Faschingbauer, T. J. (2013). The double-edged sword of grandiose narcissism: Implications for successful and unsuccessful leadership among US presidents. *Psychological Science, 24*(12), 2379-2389. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613491970

Weldon, S. L. (2008). Intersectionality. In G. Goertz & A. G. Mazur (Eds.), *Politics, gender and concepts: Theory and methodology* (pp. 193-218). Cambridge University Press.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 125-151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002

White, M. J., & White, G. B. (2006). Implicit and explicit occupational gender stereotypes. *Sex Roles, 55*(3), 259-266. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9078-z

Whitley, R., & Carmichael, V. (2022). Veterans in the media: Assessing Canadian newspaper coverage of the Lionel Desmond murder-suicide. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health, 8*(1), 68-78. https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh-2021-0060

Wilbur, D. (2016). Defining the Iraq-Afghanistan veteran in American newspapers. *Sociology, 6*(4), 267-276. https://doi.org/ 10.17265/2159-5526/2016.04.006

Wilcox, C., Sigelman, L., & Cook, E. (1989). Some like it hot: Individual differences in responses to group feeling thermometers. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 53*(2), 246-257. https://doi.org/10.1086/269505

Williams, L. F. (2017). White/Black perceptions of the electability of Black political candidates. In L. J. Barker (Ed.), *Black electoral politics* (pp. 45-64). Routledge.

Wiliarty, S. E. (2010). *The CDU and the politics of gender in Germany: Bringing women to the party*. Cambridge University Press.

Willis, J., & Todorov, A. (2006). First impressions: Making up your mind after a 100-ms exposure to a face. *Psychological Science, 17*(7), 592-598. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01750.x

Wiman, S. (2015). Qualified for power? On epistemology in voting. *Open Journal of Political Science, 5*(03), 210-218. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2015.53022

Winfrey, K. L. (2021). "I'm F---ing Moving to Iowa:" Gender and Candidate Image in the 2020 Iowa Caucus. *American Behavioral Scientist, 65*(3), 558-573. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764220981121

Wojciszke, B. (1994). Multiple meanings of behavior: Construing actions in terms of competence or morality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*(2), 222-232. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.2.222

Wojciszke, B. (2005). Morality and competence in person-and self-perception. *European Review of Social Psychology, 16*(1), 155-188. https://doi.org/10.1080/10463280500229619

Wolak, J. (2009). The consequences of concurrent campaigns for citizen knowledge of congressional candidates. *Political Behavior, 31*(2), 211-229. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-008-9069-6

Wolfinger, R. E., & Hoffman, J. (2001). Registering and voting with motor voter. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 34*(1), 85-92. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096501000130

Women and Politics Institute. (2023, March). *She votes: Women's voices at the forefront*. Women and Politics Institute. https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/research.cfm

Wong, J. (2018). The evangelical vote and race in the 2016 presidential election. *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, *3*(1), 81-106. https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2017.32

Wong, C., & Cho, G. E. (2005). Two-headed coins or Kandinskys: White racial identification. *Political Psychology*, *26*(5), 699-720. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2005.00440.x

Wong, J. S., Ramakrishnan, S. K., Lee, T., Junn, J., & Wong, J. (2011). *Asian American political participation: Emerging constituents and their political identities*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Wood, E. J., & Toppelberg, N. (2017). The persistence of sexual assault within the US military. *Journal of Peace Research*, *54*(5), 620-633. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343317720487

World Economic Forum. (2021, March 30). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. Global Gender Gap Report. https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/

World Economic Forum. (2022, July 13). *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*. Global Gender Gap Report. https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/

Xu, J. (2005). Why do minorities participate less? The effects of immigration, education, and electoral process on Asian American voter registration and turnout. *Social Science Research*, *34*(4), 682-702. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2004.11.002

Yankelovich, D. (1991). *Coming to public judgment: Making democracy work in a complex world*. Syracuse University Press.

Zaller, J. R. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge University Press.

Zebrowitz, L. A., & Montepare, J. M. (2008). First impressions from facial appearance cues. In N. Ambady & J. J. Skowronski (Eds.), *First impressions* (pp. 171-204). Guilford Publications.

Appendix A

Pilot Study Survey

[Consent information]

[Random assignment to experimental conditions]

Description
On the next page, you will be presented with an ad from a political candidate that is running for office in the upcoming U.S. Congressional elections.

Please read all the information in the ad very carefully, pay attention to all the details, and study the ad, overall.

You will be asked to complete a series of questions about this ad afterwards.

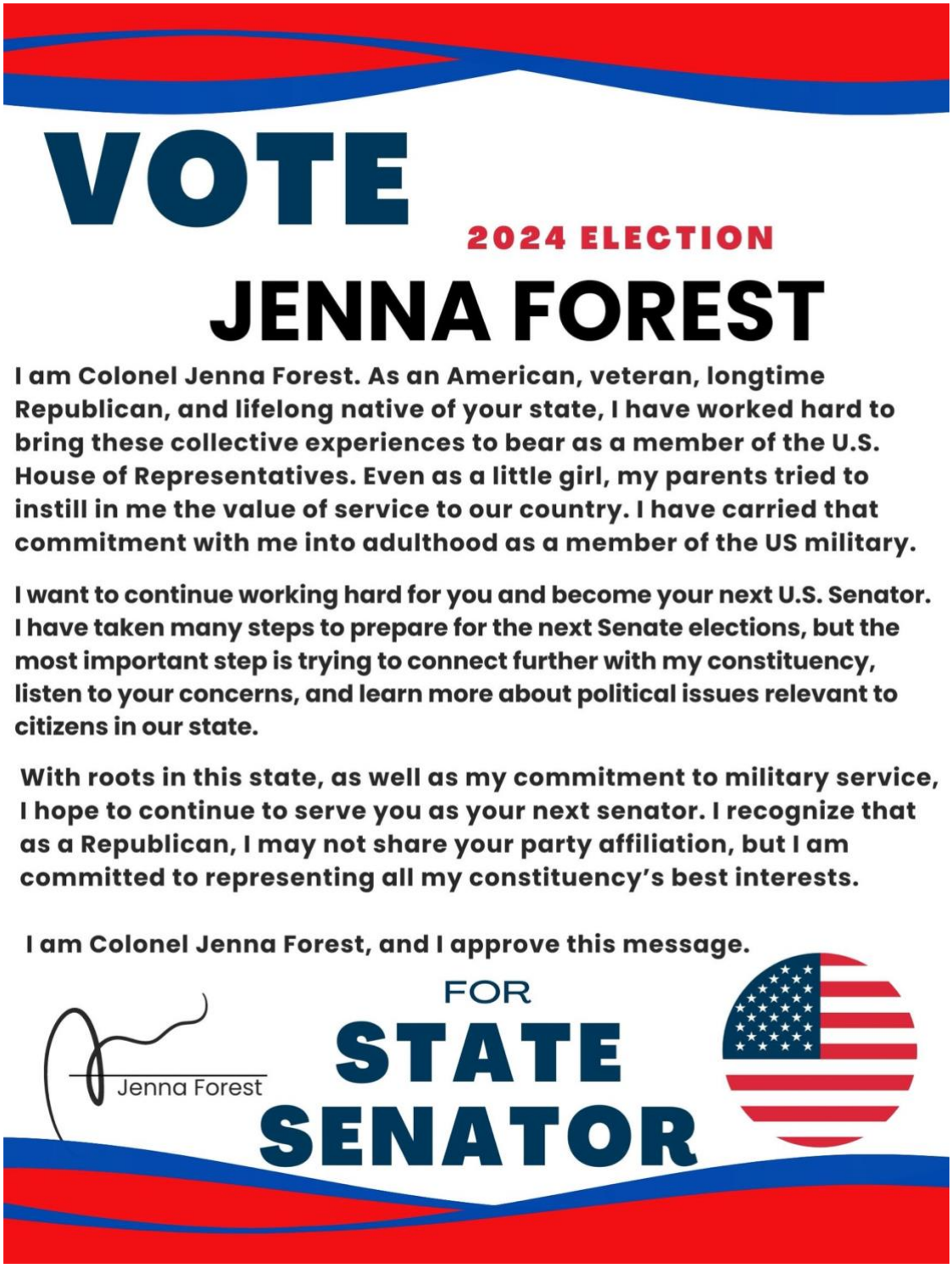
Condition 1: Male, Republican, Veteran

Condition 2: Male, Republican, Non-Veteran

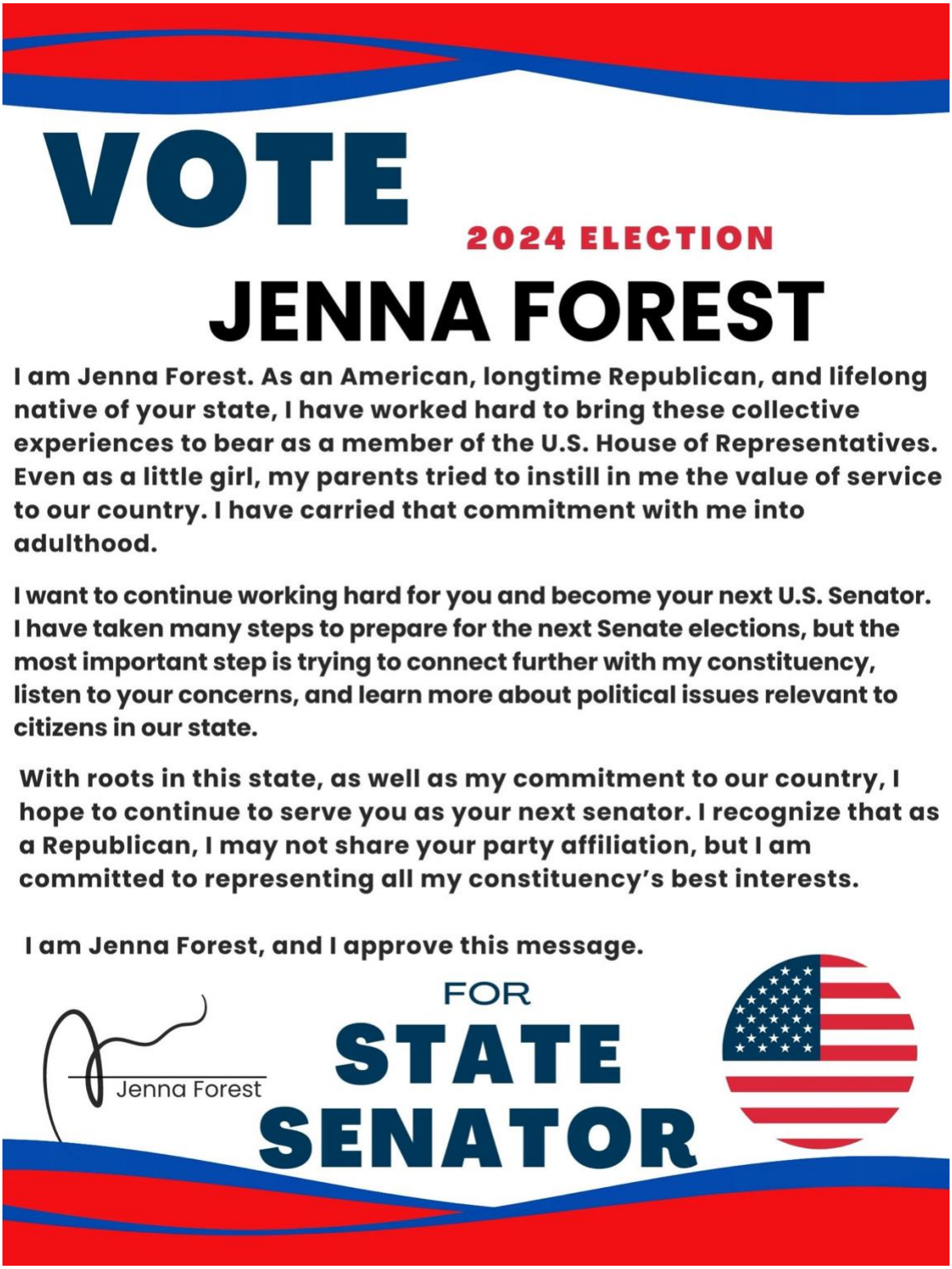
Condition 3: Male, Democrat, Veteran

Condition 4: Male, Democrat, Non-Veteran

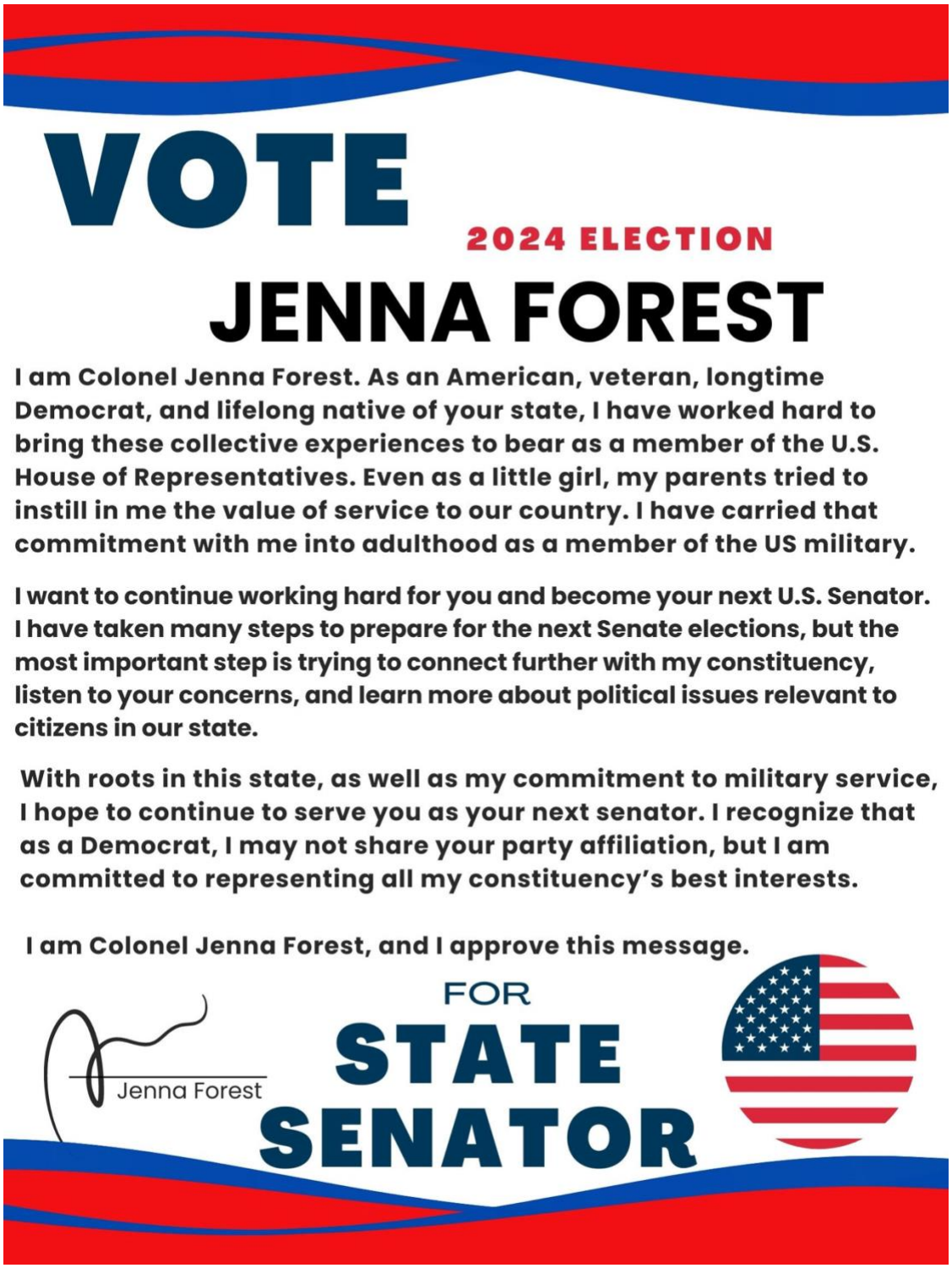
Condition 5: Female, Republican, Veteran



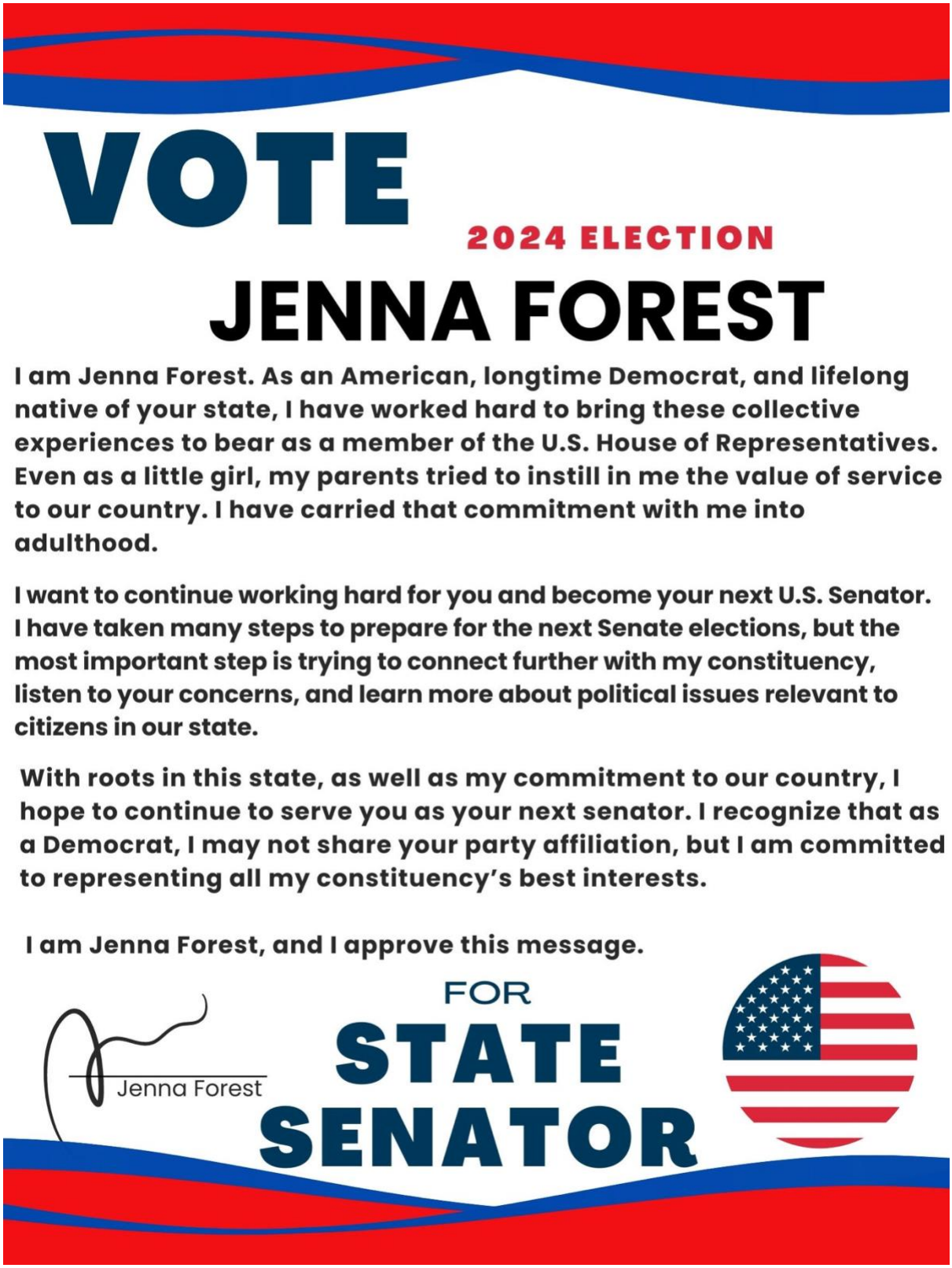
Condition 6: Female, Republican, Non-Veteran



Condition 7: Female, Democrat, Veteran



Condition 8: Female, Democrat, Non-Veteran



Manipulation Checks

What was the **gender** of the Congressional candidate in the ad?

The ad **mentione**d the candidate was male

The ad **mentioned** the candidate was female

Do not remember

Other (please specify) _____

What was the **political party affiliation** of the Congressional candidate?

The ad **mentioned** the candidate was a Republican

The ad **mentioned** the candidate was a Democrat

Do not remember

Other (please specify) _____

What was the **background** of the Congressional candidate?

The ad **mentioned** the candidate was a military veteran

The ad **did not mention** the candidate was a military veteran

Do not remember

Other (please specify)_____

Political Ad Realism

Now please think about the political campaign ad you have just read.
Slide the cursor to a number that best fits your level of agreement with each statement.

The campaign ad...

	None at all		A little		A moderate amount		A lot		A great deal	
	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
is believable.											
is realistic.											
is credible.											
resembles real-life political campaign ads.											

Continue to think critically about the campaign ad you have just read.
Answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.

Did you find the campaign ad believable? Why or why not? Please explain.

What would you suggest be added or revised about the campaign ad to make it more realistic? Please explain.

Did you have enough information to be able to form an impression about the political candidate depicted? Please explain.

What would you suggest adding to the campaign ad to ensure others who read it have sufficient information about the candidate? Please explain.

Is there anything else that we could do to improve this political ad? Please explain.

Attention Check
What color is the sky? Please mark green as the correct answer for this question.

Blue

Red

Purple

Green

Finally, please answer the following information about yourself that we can report, in aggregate form, to describe our sample for this study.

What is your age, in years? Please enter a number.

What is your biological sex?

Male

Female

Intersex

Non-binary

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What ethnic or racial group do you most identify with?

White

Hispanic, Latino, or LatinX

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

A combination of these

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Note: If you are currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received up to this point.

High school degree or less

Associate (2 year) degree

Bachelor (4 year) degree

Professional degree

Graduate degree (e.g., MA, PhD)

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What is your current occupation?

In which state do you live? (Please select from the drop-down menu)

▼ Alabama ... Prefer not to answer

How would you describe your political views?

Very Liberal

Slightly Liberal

Moderate

Slightly Conservative

Very Conservative

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What political party do you identify with the most?

Republican

Libertarian

Democrat

Independent

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

Mark not paying attention as the answer for this question.

Paying full attention to this survey

Not paying attention

Paying some attention to this survey

Are you current or former U.S. military member?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

Is anyone in your household current or former U.S. military member?

Yes

No

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

[Debriefing Statement]

Appendix B

Main Study Survey

[Consent information]

For the next questions, we would like to learn more about your political opinions and behaviors. Please answer these questions honestly.

Political Participation

How would you describe the level of your political involvement? Please read each question carefully and select the answer that best fits your opinion about the statement.

	Never true	Rarely true	Occasionally true	Sometimes true	Frequently true	Usually true	Always true
I work for a political party or candidates during elections.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I attend political meetings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am/was a member of a political party.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I always vote in elections.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I attend political rallies.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I discuss politics with my friends, relatives and colleagues.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I participate actively to solve community problems.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I take part in strikes to influence the government.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I file petitions against the government.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I refuse to pay government rent and taxes to influence government decisions.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I take part in protests to influence the government.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I take part in demonstrations to influence the government.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I take part in boycotts to influence the government.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I use electronic media (TV/Radio) to know about politics.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I search the internet about politics.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I read about politics in print media (newspapers/ magazines, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I try to influence my friends, relatives and colleagues regarding the formation of their political opinion.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I try to convince my friends, relatives and colleagues to vote.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please select rarely true as your answer for this question.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Trust in Government

We would like to know a little more about your opinions about the U.S. government.

Please read each statement carefully. Select the answer that best describes your opinions about the statement.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Usually	Always
How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Please select always as your answer for this question.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes

Below are a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Women should be cherished and protected by men.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Women are too easily offended.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Women exaggerate problems they have at work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Please select strongly disagree as your answer here.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Random assignment to experimental conditions]

Description

On the next page, you will be presented with a piece of mail (i.e., a mailer) coming from a political candidate addressed to constituents.

Please read all the information in the mailer very carefully and pay attention to all the details in the mailer.

You will be asked to complete a series of questions about this mailer afterwards for which you need to remember these details.

Condition 1: Male, Republican, Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JOHN FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am Colonel John Forest. As an American, veteran, longtime Republican, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little boy, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as a member of the U.S. military and as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a veteran and as a Republican, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Republican, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

Colonel John Forest

John FOREST U.S. Senate

Condition 2: Male, Republican, Non-Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JOHN FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am John Forest. As an American, longtime Republican, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little boy, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a Republican, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Republican, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

John Forest

John FOREST U.S. Senate

Condition 3: Male, Democrat, Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JOHN FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am Colonel John Forest. As an American, veteran, longtime Democrat, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little boy, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as a member of the U.S. military and as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a veteran and as a Democrat, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Democrat, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

Colonel John Forest

John FOREST U.S. Senate

Condition 4: Male, Democrat, Non-Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JOHN FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am John Forest. As an American, longtime Democrat, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little boy, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a Democrat, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Democrat, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

John Forest

John FOREST U.S. Senate

Condition 5: Female, Republican, Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JENNA FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am Colonel Jenna Forest. As an American, veteran, longtime Republican, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little girl, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as a member of the U.S. military and as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a veteran and as a Republican, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Republican, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

Colonel Jenna Forest

Jenna FOREST

U.S. Senate

Condition 6: Female, Republican, Non-Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JENNA FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am Jenna Forest. As an American, longtime Republican, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little girl, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a Republican, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Republican, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

Jenna Forest

Jenna FOREST U.S. Senate

Condition 7: Female, Democrat, Veteran

Condition 8: Female, Democrat, Non-Veteran

VOTE 2024 ELECTION

JENNA FOREST

FOR

U.S. SENATOR

I am Jenna Forest. As an American, longtime Democrat, and lifelong native of our state, I have worked hard to bring these collective experiences to bear as a member of the U.S. Senate. As a little girl, my parents instilled in me the value of service to our country. I have carried that commitment with me into adulthood as your Senator. I fought for and got legislation passed on strengthening the economy, improving K-12 education, and decreasing the costs of healthcare while in the Senate.

I want to continue this work as your U.S. Senator for another term. I have taken many steps to prepare for the 2024 Senate elections, but the most important step is trying to connect further with my constituency, listen to your concerns, and learn more about what political issues matter most to us all at this time. As a Democrat, one of my priorities is to continue fighting in Congress to bring down inflation, so your paycheck goes further each month for you and your family.

I recognize that as a Democrat, I may not share your party affiliation, but I am committed to representing all my constituency's best interests. I was born here, raised here, and I want to continue to serve here for you, our great state, and its people.

Jenna Forest

Jenna FOREST U.S. Senate

Manipulation Checks

What was the **gender** of the Congressional candidate in the mailer?

The mailer **mentioned** the candidate was male

The mailer **mentioned** the candidate was female

Do not remember

Other (please specify) _____

What was the **political party affiliation** of the Congressional candidate in the mailer?

The mailer **mentioned** the candidate was a Republican

The mailer **mentioned** the candidate was a Democrat

Do not remember

Other (please specify) _____

What was the **background** of the Congressional candidate in the mailer?

The mailer **mentioned** the candidate was a military veteran

The mailer **did not mention** the candidate was a military veteran

Do not remember

Other (please specify) _____

Vote Choice Intent

For the following questions, please think about the political candidate in the mailer.

How likely are you to vote for this candidate in the upcoming election?

Extremely unlikely

Very unlikely

Somewhat unlikely

Neither likely or unlikely

Somewhat likely

Very likely

Extremely likely

How strong is your preference for this political candidate?

Extremely weak

Very weak

Somewhat weak

Neither weak nor strong

Somewhat strong

Very strong

Extremely strong

How likely are you to vote for this political candidate in the upcoming election?

Extremely unlikely

Very unlikely

Somewhat unlikely

Neither likely nor unlikely

Somewhat likely

Very likely

Extremely likely

How probable is it that you would vote for this political candidate in the upcoming election?

Extremely improbable

Very Improbable

Somewhat improbable

Neither probable nor improbable

Somewhat probable

Very probable

Extremely probable

How strongly would you consider voting for this political candidate in the upcoming election?

Extremely weakly

Very weakly

Somewhat weakly

Neither weakly nor strongly

Somewhat strongly

Very strongly

Extremely strongly

How interested would you be in voting for this political candidate in the upcoming election?

Extremely uninterested

Very uninterested

Somewhat uninterested

Neither interested nor uninterested

Somewhat interested

Very interested

Extremely interested

How strongly do you intend to vote for this candidate?

Extremely weakly

Very weakly

Somewhat weakly

Neither weakly nor strongly

Somewhat strongly

Very strongly

Extremely strongly

Attention Check

Please select "Very uninterested" as your answer for this statement.

Extremely uninterested

Very uninterested

Somewhat uninterested

Neither interested nor uninterested

Somewhat interested

Very interested

Extremely interested

Likability

For the following questions, please think about the political candidate in the mailer.

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each statement presented below about this candidate.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
This political candidate is friendly.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This political candidate is likeable.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This political candidate is warm.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This political candidate is approachable.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would ask this political candidate for advice.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like this political candidate as a coworker.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to be friends with this political candidate.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This political candidate is similar to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This political candidate is knowledgeable.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Click on "Strongly Disagree".	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Perceived Credibility

For the following questions, please think about the political candidate in the mailer.
The following are a series of adjectives that ask about your impressions about this candidate.

Think about each adjective and to what extent you believe the candidate in the mailer is like that. Choose the bubble that corresponds to your assessment.

Here is the first set of adjectives.

Competence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Intelligent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Unintelligent
Untrained	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Trained
Inexpert	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Expert
Informed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Uninformed
Incompetent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Competent
Bright	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Stupid

Here is another set of adjectives.

Goodwill

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Cares about me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Doesn't care about me
Has my interests at heart	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Doesn't have my interests at heart
Self-centered	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Not self-centered
Concerned with me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Unconcerned with me
Insensitive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Sensitive
Not understanding	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Understanding

Here is the final set of adjectives.

Trustworthiness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Honest	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Dishonest
Untrustworthy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Trustworthy
Honorable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Dishonorable
Moral	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Immoral
Unethical	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Ethical
Phoney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Genuine

Demographic Questions

Finally, please answer the following information about yourself that we can report, in aggregate form, to describe our sample for this study.

What is your age, in years? Please enter a number.

What is your biological sex?

Male

Female

Intersex

Non-binary

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What ethnic or racial group do you most identify with?

White

Hispanic, Latino, or LatinX

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

A combination of these

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Note: If you are currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received up to this point.

High school degree or less

Associate (2 year) degree

Bachelor (4 year) degree

Professional degree

Graduate degree (e.g., MA,PhD)

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What is your current occupation?

In which state do you live? (Please select from the drop-down menu)

▼ Alabama ... Prefer not to answer

What is your religious affiliation, if any?

Protestant

Roman Catholic

Mormon

Greek Orthodox

Russian Orthodox

Jewish

Muslim

Buddhist

Hindu

Atheist

Agnostic

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

How would you describe your political views?

Very Liberal

Slightly Liberal

Moderate

Slightly Conservative

Very Conservative

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

What political party do you identify with the most?

Republican

Libertarian

Democrat

Independent

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

Attention Check

Mark not paying attention as the answer for this question.

Paying full attention to this survey

Not paying attention

Paying some attention to this survey

Are you current or former U.S. military member?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

Is anyone in your household current or former U.S. military member?

Yes

No

Other (please specify) _____

Prefer not to answer

[Debriefing Statement]