

## **The Language of Sexism: The Impact of Gendered Terms in Media on Candidate Trait Assessments**

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### **Abstract**

The use of gender-coded language in media has potential to impact public perceptions of political candidates. This work presents a study designed to uncover whether certain descriptive words impact perceptions of candidate gender, and how gender-coded language impacts perceptions of positive traits in perceived-male and perceived-female candidates. In a two-part experiment, students ( $n=269$ ) were exposed to fabricated excerpts from news articles describing fictitious politicians with masculine-, feminine-, and neutral-coded adjectives. This was followed by post-exposure questionnaires to assess assumed gender of the candidate and positive trait ratings. Results showed that respondents overwhelmingly assumed a candidate of an unspecified gender was male, and the use of masculine-coded adjectives to describe politicians in media increased their competency and qualification ratings by as high as 7-15%. This study suggests that the devaluation of femininity may be a prominent subconscious public bias, where masculinity is rewarded. Masculine traits make the candidates seem more qualified and competent to the public, while femininity is devalued in the assumption that a position of power, such as Mayor, is filled by a man.

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### **Introduction**

Language matters. The way people are described in media has the power to change public opinion. The power media has to define individuals through the use of descriptive language is critical to the political sphere. When the individuals being described are political candidates, suddenly this power expands from changing public opinion to changing who has real political influence. So how exactly does the language used in media impact the way we think about candidates? This paper studies the ways in which the descriptive language used by the media to portray politicians can impact public perceptions of candidates, focusing in on gender. Existing literature in this area regarding gender has focused on the impact of directly sexist language such as ‘ice queen,’ ‘mean girl,’ or ‘grandma’ to describe female politicians (Lake et al. 2014). This is a part of the puzzle that already has good evidence supporting it – many researchers have come to the conclusion that sexist language in media negatively impacts female candidates (Sensales et al. 2016, 459; Carlin and Winfrey 2009, 327).

In the era of the ‘Me Too’ and ‘Times Up’ movements, it seems possible that the use of upfront and blunt sexist language in media to describe female politicians is on the decline. It has become less and less socially acceptable to be perceived as sexist, but does this mean sexism in media descriptors of politicians has disappeared? It is with this era of social change and attention to gender equality in mind that this article aims to investigate one area in which gender stereotypes are still alive and well: language. There is an immense power behind language – the way in which the media describes politicians can have an incredible impact on how the public views those politicians, and in turn on the decisions people make in the voting booth (Goetz 2008;

Sniderman 1993). To examine this further, this article brings in Sandra Bem's study of gendered word-association to look at how indirectly gender-coded descriptive language in media impacts the social perceptions of politicians of all genders. This article looks at descriptors like 'sympathetic' and 'ambitious' that are stereotypically associated with gender (Bem 1974, 156) to analyze the impact the use of these coded descriptors in media has on the social perceptions of the candidates being described. These findings could not only inform media outlets on how to write in such a way that does not bias the readers, but it could also serve to help us better understand how deeply ingrained notions of gender roles, even in language, can change the way we think about politics. Knowing how these ingrained perceptions of gender roles impact public opinion can aid voters in confronting their own subconscious bias and ultimately aid them in challenging the way they see and think about gender.

This study will proceed by contextualizing this work within the web of past research, followed by a description of hypotheses and methods. Subsequently this article describes and undertakes two experimental studies, and presents their findings, concluding with a discussion of the implications of this research. Overall, this study explores how gender-coded language impacts perceptions of political candidates. It aims to uncover 1) if certain descriptive words impact perceptions of gender, and 2) how masculine, feminine, and neutral coded language impacts perceptions of positive traits in perceived-male and perceived-female<sup>2</sup> candidates.

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that I use the language of 'perceived-male' and 'perceived-female' (rather than just saying 'male' and 'female') throughout this article in order to acknowledge that perceived gender and an individual's actual gender are two different things. Gender is personal and performative (Butler 1990); reading about a candidate described using the pronouns he/him/his may lead the public to perceive that candidate as a man, but it says nothing about the candidate's actual gender identity. For brevity of reporting, in my descriptive statistics section I will refer to the candidates as simply 'male' and 'female,' but throughout the rest of this article I will use 'perceived-male' and 'perceived-female'.

## Literature Review

### ***How Language Matters***

The importance of language in politics has been extensively studied by political communications scholars in the past. The consensus is simple amongst these scholars: words matter. The way in which political issues are defined, the language that is used, and the aspects that are emphasized all impact the appearance of that issue to the public (Chong & Druckman 2007; Goetz 2008; Cobb & Ross 1997; Rochefort & Cobb 1994) and can inform resulting public opinion (Goetz 2008; Sniderman 1993). Edward Goetz (2008) found that “the difference in wording produced a difference in public opinion of more than 30 percentage points” (222) when describing ‘affordable housing’ instead as ‘lifecycle housing’ to the public. This simple change in word-choice changed how the issue was framed to surveyed suburban residents and ended up impacting support for that issue by a significant amount. This is the power of language.

Goetz quite simply altered how the issue was ‘framed’. Framing is rooted in cognitive linguistics but is incredibly applicable to the field of political science (Lakoff 1996). It is inherently a psychological and subconscious process of “the way we reason and what counts as common sense” (Lakoff 2004). The frames we reason the world through shape our goals, plans, actions, our social policies, even our votes. George Lakoff explains this with the example of ‘Don’t think of an elephant’. He explains, “Every word, like elephant, evokes a frame, which can be an image or other kinds of knowledge,” and thus no matter how hard we try, our subconscious immediately produces the image of large floppy ears and a grey trunk. The concept of framing is quite simple and can aid our understanding of the power in media. Frame building (Scheufele 1999) is how “media outlets choose specific frames in communication” (Chong & Druckman 2007, 101). The words, images, phrases, and style of presentation used by a media outlet to relay information about a topic to the public are all a part of

this frame in communication. In the context of this article, we are focusing on the linguistic part of the frame. It is worth noting that the other aspects of the frame, such as the specific images of different candidates chosen by media outlets to present to the public, is an interesting area for further study that is adjacent to the topics of this article on how candidates are framed. However, for the purposes of this article, the *language* used in framing is being examined. This framing can change how entire political issues are seen by the public.

It has become clear that word choice matters, at least in describing policy issues. But what about in describing political candidates? Does the power of language translate from describing policy to describing candidates? Short answer: yes. Recent studies have found the increased language of personalization towards political candidates in media has impacted vote choice (Eberl et al. 2017; King 2002; McAllister 2007; Takens et al. 2015) and voter attitudes towards candidates (Eberl et al. 2017; Balmas and Sheaffer 2010; Lenz and Lawson 2011). Voters perceive candidates' political traits and overall image more or less favourably depending on how that candidate is portrayed in the media (Eberl et al. 2017). Differential portrayals and the use of a language of personalization has a very real impact on the public, with different positive and negative portrayals of candidates activating certain considerations, beliefs, and even stereotypes that the media-consuming public may hold. The words used to describe candidates can prove to have a very advantageous effect for the candidate, or a very detrimental effect for the candidate, depending on which words are used.

### **How Gender Matters**

From this body of work it has become clear that the way politicians are described has an impact on public perceptions. But how *are* female politicians being described in the media? In order to prove the relevance of this research, it is first necessary to establish differential treatment. This initially does not seem hard to establish: scholars have widely found an overutilization of sexist language towards female

politicians in the media (Sensales et al. 2016, 464; Carlin and Winfrey 2009, 327). Common stereotypes of professional women as the sex object, the mother, the pet, and the iron maiden (Kanter 1977, 223) have been studied in media portrayals of female politicians such as Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin (Carlin and Winfrey 2009, 328), and the way in which women are held accountable to a higher degree than men are in politics has been studied in politicians like Geraldine Ferraro (Baaske 1989, 84). Media coverage of female candidates has been found to overwhelmingly focus on a lack of viability (Smith 1997), family roles, ‘feminine traits’ such as compassion and honesty, and ‘women’s’ political issues more so than media coverage of male candidates - which focuses on professional background, credentials, and ‘masculine traits’ such as expertise and leadership (Braden 1996; Bystrom et al. 2004; Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Devitt 1999; Kahn 1996; Norris 1997; Hayes 2011).

These differential media portrayals have been found to impact voter perceptions, with voters assessing female candidates as compassionate, willing to compromise, and people-oriented while assessing male candidates as assertive, active, and self-confident (Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Lawless 2004; Leeper 1991; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989). Voters have also been found to perceive male candidates as stronger in areas of crime, the military, and the economy, while seeing female candidates as stronger in areas of healthcare, education, and gender equity (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Lawless 2004; Leeper 1991; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989).

Despite the widespread literature within political science arguing that female candidates are treated differently, there is a small but notable rising tide of scholars arguing otherwise. Danny Hayes and Jennifer Lawless are a part of this tide, publishing an article in 2015 arguing that female candidates are not treated differently by media or by voters. In this article, they state that “there is little reason to expect that candidate sex will affect journalists’ coverage of, or voters’ attitudes toward, the women and men running for office in their

districts” (96). However, as political scientist Meredith Conroy points out, Hayes and Lawless fail to take into account the difference between reinforcing gender stereotypes, and masculine norms:

If descriptions suggest feminine behavior by men is a weakness, or masculine behavior by women is a strength, then a positive association between politics and masculinity is reinforced. So, although descriptions of men and women are similar, it is not clear if the similarities show a preference to masculinity, given the way the data is collected. (Conroy 2017, 292-293)

In essence, when both male and female politicians are being described with ‘masculine’ traits, masculine norms are still being reinforced. Conroy also assesses the problems with Hayes and Lawless collapsing all descriptive language used towards candidates into four categories - leadership, integrity, competence, and empathy:

Although “leadership” and “empathy” are potential proxies for masculinity and femininity, in looking at the list of traits, “leadership” looks like a gender mixed bag. The “empathy” traits, however, are largely feminine. [. . .] empathy gets less attention overall in print media (71), which I think is important for understanding the gendered terrain of American politics. (Conroy 2017, 293)

Alongside this problematic characterization of all descriptive language into these four (notably still gendered) categories, Hayes and Lawless’s results showing that empathy-categorized traits received less attention in print media is not in line with their assertion that gender does not impact journalist’s coverage of candidates. While blunt sexist language in media is indeed on the decline, the impact of stereotyped language is still very real. Men still make up the majority of political candidates, and are less likely to be described with the feminine-coded language in Hayes and Lawless’s empathy-categorized traits. Thus their finding

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that empathy-categorized traits received less attention in print media fits cleanly with the theory that men are less likely to be described with ‘feminine’ traits due to existing and pervasive gender stereotypes. This in itself is differential treatment, though less conspicuous than the blunt sexist language of the past.

Deborah Jordan Brooks’s 2013 book ‘He Runs, She Runs: Why Gender Stereotypes Do Not Harm Women Candidates’ is also a part of this rising tide of scholars in line with Hayes and Lawless’s theories. This book makes the argument that female candidates are not seen differently by the public than male candidates. While compelling in its evidence that the effect of gender stereotypes are indeed less consequential than they have been in the past, Brooks’s findings still do not allow for the complete dismissal of the influence of gender stereotypes. *He Runs, She Runs* similarly focuses on debunking the idea that female politicians are treated differently in quite blunt ways – finding that behaviors such as crying or displays of anger do not lead to the candidate being regarded differently by the public on the grounds of gender. But like Hayes and Lawless, Brooks’s examination of the impact of gender stereotypes only goes so far. While both analyze gender stereotypes at the level of general public attitudes, neither works delve into the impact of deeply ingrained gender stereotyped language and media word-choice, and that is the gap in the literature this study will attempt to fill.

While existing literature studying the impact of media descriptions of politicians by gender on public opinion has focused largely on bluntly sexist language, this study intends to expand on the work of Gilda Sensales, Alessandra Areni, and Alessandra Dal Secco in examining not how the upfront sexist stereotypes (such as the sex object, the mother, the pet, and the iron maiden) impact public opinion of politicians, but instead how the deeper and less conspicuous roots of linguistic sexism inherently gender normal words like ‘competitive’ and ‘sympathetic’, and in turn impact public opinion of politicians in a less noticeable way. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) will be a useful asset in establishing the way in which descriptive language takes

on gendered stereotypes. The value of the BSRI in this context is as a pre-existing list of descriptive terms that have been found to be seen as gendered in the public eye. The use of this list will be valuable in the place of adding more components to this study that would attempt to create a similar list. The use of this pre-existing and widely recognized list of gendered terms is done with an eye to building this work on the credible foundation of existing research.

### ***Sandra Bem's Sex-Role Inventory***

Sandra Bem's BSRI is a noteworthy and extensively influential contribution to feminist psychology (Beere 1990; Holt and Ellis 1998; Donnelly and Twenge 2017). It categorizes descriptive language into masculine, feminine, and neutral groupings:

The masculine (M) scale of the BSRI contains qualities stereotypically associated with men (e.g., assertive, independent, ambitious), and the feminine (F) scale contains qualities stereotypically associated with women (e.g., gentle, gullible, warm). These gendered qualities were selected by way of an initial survey, wherein Stanford undergraduates generated a 200-item list of socially desirable traits for each gender. (Donnelly and Twenge 2017, 556)

The Stanford undergraduate subjects then were divided into two groups, in which they rated these 200 terms by their social desirability for men and for women. The scale ranged from 'Not at all desirable' to 'Extremely desirable'. These social desirability ratings allowed Bem to narrow down the list of 200 items to 20 for each scale: 10 positive and 10 negative traits with extremely high desirability by gender (Figure 1). Three scales were produced – one with 20 male-typed traits, one with 20 female-typed traits, and one neutral scale in which "personality characteristics that were judged as no more desirable for one sex than the other" (The Encyclopedia of Gender and Society 2009, 59-60).

This pre-existing list of gendered descriptive characteristics (Figure 1) will be a useful aid in the study of how language impacts public opinion of politicians by gender. Research has already demonstrated the social behavior of discomfort around those that do not adhere to traditional gender roles (Butler 1993; Norton and Herek 2013), so it naturally follows to study how public opinion of candidates may change when ‘masculine’ words are used to describe perceived-female candidates, and when ‘feminine’ words are used to describe perceived-male candidates. Bringing Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity into the sphere of political science, it is important to consider whether people are uncomfortable enough with descriptions of candidates that use words which do not adequately ‘match’ or perform that candidates perceived gender that their opinion of the candidate decreases. Ultimately, our strict adherence to gender roles as a society may be creating a gendered media landscape in which candidates that are not described in ways that match the perceived binary<sup>3</sup> are then penalized in elections.

Returning to the BSRI, Sandra Bem created the BSRI in the mid-1970s, so it is first necessary to establish its ongoing relevance. Donnelly and Twenge’s (2017) meta-analysis investigates how the masculine and feminine traits measured using the BSRI have changed in the last 19 years. Their findings concluded that college students BSRI scores have remained stagnant since the 1990s in all areas except “a decline ( $d = -.26$ ) in women’s femininity scores from 1993 to 2012, suggesting that women are now less likely to endorse traditionally feminine characteristics as representative of themselves” (Donnelly

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<sup>3</sup> I use the language of ‘perceived binary’ to acknowledge the fact that gender is a social construct traditionally presumed to be a binary, and that these assumptions are increasingly challenged. While many/most participants in my studies may well perceive gender as a binary and see the candidates I describe through that binary lens, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a broader view of gender. Scholars such as Judith Butler, Riki Wilchins, Dean Spade, Lori Girshick, and Richard M. Juang, to name a few, are all studying and working within broader views of gender than the binary structure.

and Twenge 2017, 560). This is consistent with attitude changes towards women's roles since the 1990s and may indicate "a devaluation of traditional femininity" (Donnelly and Twenge 2017, 556) or even "a movement toward a post-gender culture" (Donnelly and Twenge 2017, 560; Gerson 2010; McDowell 2012). The changes in how women endorse these stereotypically feminine characteristics have informed this article's hypothesis of how participants are likely to rate candidates highly when these feminine characteristics are described. The BSRI goes not without critique, but critiques of the inventory have centered on self-ratings of BSRI characteristics not matching up with desirability ratings of the same traits (Pedhazur 1979; Choi et al. 2008). These critiques do not impact the use of the BSRI in this research, due to the fact that this research merely uses the adjectives list from the BSRI and applies them to candidates – it does not engage in the self-rating test aspect of the BSRI. Thus the BSRI is still a useful and relevant list of characteristics in the existing literature for use in this study.

### ***Hypotheses***

Considering the findings from the existing body of literature on both gender-coded language and sexism in the media, this article proposes a series of hypotheses to test. Before testing how perceptions of positive traits in candidates change when different gendered descriptors are used, it is first necessary to establish how the use of these descriptive terms changes perceptions of gender. Does the use of gendered descriptive language change how the public perceives the candidates entire gender, or does it just inform their perceptions of how that candidate fits into traditional gender roles? The following hypotheses are tested in the first experiment to explore this:

***Hypothesis 1A:*** *When masculine descriptors are used to describe a candidate of an undisclosed gender, readers will perceive that candidate as male.*

**Hypothesis 1B:** When feminine descriptors are used to describe a candidate of an undisclosed gender, readers will perceive that candidate as female.

**Hypothesis 1C:** When neutral descriptors are used to describe a candidate of an undisclosed gender, readers will perceive that candidate as a relatively even mix of genders, not strongly favouring a male perception or a female perception.

It is necessary to test these three hypotheses to determine the relevance of the use of Bem Sex-Inventory terms in the second experiment. The words in the Bem-Inventory were determined by social desirability by gender. The words listed on the feminine scale were extremely socially desirable characteristics for women, and the words listed on the masculine scale were extremely socially desirable characteristics for men (Bem 1974, 156). If these descriptors are so strongly associated with social desirability for a certain gender, then will the use of these terms on a candidate of an unknown gender lead readers to assume the candidate is the gender associated with those terms? Or will the use of these descriptors not inform the reader of the candidate's gender, but will lead readers to make judgements about that candidate's positive traits informed by perceived adherence to gender roles? The first experiment will use the above hypotheses to test whether the use of these terms changes perceptions of the candidate's gender, and the second experiment will test whether the use of these terms changes perceptions of the candidate's positive traits.

Knowing the existing research in the field has seen results in which the use of sexist stereotypes in media coverage have caused lower positive trait ratings and lower likeliness to vote for the candidate, and paired with the existing scholarship around public discomfort towards those who do not conform to traditional gender roles, it thus should follow that candidates who are described with gendered adjectives that do not 'match' their perceived gender should see a downturn in positive trait ratings and feelings thermometer scores in the second experiment. However, this does not take into

account the existing power dynamics between masculinity and femininity. Taking into account the devaluation of femininity in society (Donnelly and Twenge 2017, 560), it follows that candidates of any perceived gender will receive lower scores of competency, qualification, likeability, and feelings thermometer scores when they are described with feminine Bem-inventory words. Therefore, the hypotheses for Study 2 take into account the prediction that masculine Bem-inventory traits should produce an overall gain of positive trait ratings, while feminine Bem-inventory traits should produce an overall loss:

**Hypothesis 2A:** *All candidates described in media with feminine descriptors will be perceived as **less competent** than when neutral descriptors are used.*

**Hypothesis 2B:** *All candidates described in media with feminine descriptors will be perceived as **less qualified** than when neutral descriptors are used.*

**Hypothesis 2C:** *All candidates described in media with feminine descriptors will be **generally liked less** than when neutral descriptors are used.*

**Hypothesis 3A:** *All candidates described in media with masculine descriptors will be perceived as **more competent** than when neutral descriptors are used.*

**Hypothesis 3B:** *All candidates described in media with masculine descriptors will be perceived as **more qualified** than when neutral descriptors are used.*

**Hypothesis 3C:** *All candidates described in media with masculine descriptors will be **generally liked more** than when neutral descriptors are used.*

**Hypothesis 4A:** *The male candidate described with neutral descriptors will still be perceived as **more competent** than the female candidate described with neutral descriptors.*

**Hypothesis 4B:** *The male candidate described with neutral descriptors will still be perceived as **more qualified** than the female candidate described with neutral descriptors.*

**Hypothesis 4C:** *The male candidate described with neutral descriptors will still be **generally more liked** than the female candidate described with neutral descriptors.*

It will be interesting to see if one theory may take precedence in the results – whether unmatched gender descriptors may cause a consistent loss, or whether feminine descriptors may cause a consistent loss. In other words, is the public more uncomfortable with the media using descriptive language that does not ‘match’ the gender of the candidate being described, or is femininity devalued to the point that the public are consistently uncomfortable with stereotypically feminine traits being used to describe politicians?

## Data and Methods

### ***Survey Experiment***

This study involves a two-part survey experiment. The survey experiments were both conducted on undergraduate students at a Canadian public university taking eligible political science courses. A total of 269 students completed an online survey that included these experiments as well as a handful of other, unrelated studies. For both studies, the experimental material consists of fabricated excerpts from news articles describing fabricated nonpartisan candidates for a city council election in a small generic-sounding city (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). In Study 1, the city used is called Martinsville, and in Study 2, the city used is called Yorkton. Using a fabricated election, fabricated candidates that are unknown to the public, and small generic-sounding cities with names that will likely be unfamiliar to the public is done to ensure this experiment covers a low-information election, where existing partisan biases and local knowledge would not impact the results. The excerpts, while fictitious, are designed to imitate real media

coverage of politicians. The fabricated articles have ‘The Globe and Mail’ logo at the top of the page, and they are formatted in the same way The Globe and Mail formats articles on their website. This is a minor deception necessary to gain credibility, as The Globe and Mail is widely regarded as a trusted news source in Canada (Stecula 2017).

### *Study 1*

In Study 1, three excerpts from news articles are fabricated about one fake politician, whose gender remains unknown throughout the excerpt. This politician is only described using ‘Mayor Foster’ in place of pronouns. For example, instead of ‘He is running for re-election,’ it reads ‘Mayor Foster is running for re-election.’ From these three excerpts, one excerpt uses only feminine adjectives from the BSRI (Figure 3), another uses only masculine adjectives from the BSRI, and a third excerpt only uses neutral adjectives from the BSRI (images of these treatments can be found in Appendix A).

Each category of the BSRI (feminine, masculine, and neutral) only consists of 10 positive trait words, so the words chosen from these short lists were selected based on how naturally they could be worked into the fabricated news article while maintaining credibility. External validity was prioritized in choosing the words – for example, the word ‘ambitious’ was chosen from the masculine category of the BSRI instead of the word ‘athletic’, as a real news article describing a politician would be much less likely to use a word like ‘athletic’ to describe politicians (See Figure 4 for a complete list of which BSRI words were used in treatments).

Six BSRI words were used in each treatment, as this was the average number of BSRI words that could be naturally worked into each excerpt without it sounding like an unnatural list of adjectives. Each participant in the experiment was randomly assigned one of these three excerpts to read and asked to complete a short questionnaire after they read it. The questionnaire asked the participant what gender they perceived the candidate they were reading about to be based on the excerpt they just read. The options were male, female, and other

gender. The ‘other gender’ option rerouted the participant to a freeform-response question that asked them to specify what gender they perceived the candidate to be. The purpose of the ‘other gender’ option and the freeform-response box is to collect data on whether any respondents perceived the candidates to be neither male nor female (i.e. non-binary, Two-Spirit, genderqueer, etc.). The questionnaire also asked three filler questions unrelated to this research topic to ensure the participants do not guess the topic of the study (as this would create an existing bias for when they participate in the second study). The filler questions ask the respondents opinions on the importance of municipal elections and whether they voted in the last municipal and federal elections.

### *Study 2*

In Study 2, six excerpts were fabricated from news articles about two made up politicians – one perceived-male (Candidate A), and one perceived-female (Candidate B). Candidate A will be described using the pronouns he/him/his, and Candidate B will be described using the pronouns she/her/hers. Each excerpt is identical except for the descriptive adjectives of each candidate, which varies according to lists of gendered adjectives from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory. Each candidate has three fabricated news excerpts about them - one excerpt uses only feminine adjectives from the BSRI (Figure 5), another uses only masculine adjectives from the BSRI, and a third excerpt uses only neutral adjectives from the BSRI. As in Study 1, the words chosen from the BSRI category lists were selected based on how naturally they could be worked into the fabricated news article while maintaining credibility. The 6 words that were chosen (out of the 10 positive adjectives from each BSRI list) were the words that would sound most appropriate within the context of the article. Each participant in the experiment was randomly assigned one of these six excerpts to read, and was asked to complete a short questionnaire after they read it. The questionnaire asked the participant to rate the candidate’s competency and qualification from a scale of 0-10, and to rate them on a feelings

thermometer from 0-100 of how much they like the candidate based on the excerpt they just read. The detailed treatments and questionnaires can be found in the Appendix.

### **Dependent Variables**

#### *Study 1*

In Study 1, the only dependent variable is perceived candidate gender. Participants will be asked what gender they perceived the candidate they were reading about to be: Male, Female, or Other Gender. This dependent variable is necessary to determine whether the use of gendered descriptive terms leads readers to assume the candidate *is* the gender associated with those terms or not. The ‘Other Gender’ option was added, along with a brief list of examples of other genders, in order to acknowledge diversity within gender identity.

#### *Study 2*

In Study 2, there are three dependent variables: the measures of competency, qualification, and a feelings thermometer. These variables were selected through a review of measures used in the existing literature. Baaske notes that “Most scholars of public speaking consider some favorable assessment of intelligence, intentions and integrity to be essential dimensions of credibility” (Baaske 1989, 19). Lake et al. used the measures of being in touch, likability, confidence, effectiveness, and qualification in their 2014 study. These existing measures were amalgamated into two categories for the purposes of this study: competence (integrating intelligence and effectiveness), and qualification (accounting for credibility from intentions and being ‘in touch’). For these traits, respondents were given the trait (competence and qualification) and asked to rate how strongly they felt that quality described the candidate on a scale from 0-10. A feelings thermometer question was also added, which will ask how much the subject likes the candidate on a scale from 0-100 to more generally cover the overall feeling the subject gets of the candidate from the excerpt. Together,

this gives me two positive traits for the participant to rate in the questionnaire for Study 2, and a separate feelings thermometer question. The questionnaire was kept short by using broader terms rather than invoking a longer list of measures, due to the limited timeframe of this study and the necessity of simplifying data analysis. The measures of competency and qualification are rooted in existing literature on public evaluations of politicians by gender: Praino et al., Lewis et al., Schneider et al., Bernstein, and Carpinella et al. all used competency as a measure in their works on candidate evaluation by gender, and Huddy & Capelos and O'Brien et al. all used qualification. The purpose of these measures is to analyze how perceptions of positive traits in candidates change when different descriptive terms are used in media to describe these candidates. Competence, qualification, and overall likability of the candidate are all positive traits that follow Baaske's description of dimensions of candidate credibility.

### **Results & Discussion**

A sample of undergraduate political science students makes up the subject pool for these studies (Figure 6). Out of the 269 respondents, 99 identified themselves as male (36.8%), 166 identified themselves as female (61.7%), 1 person identified themselves as another gender other than male or female (Two-Spirit identities, non-binary identities, etc.), and 3 people declined to answer. Unfortunately, due to only 1 respondent identifying themselves as outside of the perceived gender binary, this study was unable to make any meaningful inferences about the candidate trait perceptions of this group. This is unfortunate due to the specific and salient position in which those outside of the gender binary are situated on issues of public opinion regarding gender. Continuing this body of work with a larger sample of individuals who fall outside of the gender binary would be a particularly valuable area in which to push further research due to this salient positionality.

Income, age, citizenship status, interest in politics, and party leanings of the sample can be found in Figure 6. This subject pool is of course a specific and limited demographic that is not representative

of all ages, education levels, economic classes, geographic dispersals, party leanings, and other unreported or unrecorded demographic differences. This is acknowledged as a limitation of this study and results will be discussed within this context of this limitation. However, this limitation does not discount the results of the study altogether - as Professor of Logistics Rodney W. Thomas points out, "All research methods have inherent strengths and weaknesses," and "If students are included within the scope of applicable theory and able to respond to treatment conditions, then they are perfectly appropriate participants" (Thomas 2011, 290). Druckman and Kam agree that "student subjects are not an inherent problem to experimental research; moreover, the burden of proof – articulating and demonstrating that student subjects pose an inferential problem – should lie with critics rather than experimenters" (Druckman and Kam 2011, 41).

### *Study 1*

In Study 1, a total of 262 respondents were randomly assigned into each treatment group, resulting in 87 respondents assigned to read Treatment 1 (feminine adjectives), 88 respondents assigned to read Treatment 2 (masculine adjectives), and 87 respondents assigned to read Treatment 3 (neutral adjectives). There was only one dependent variable for Study 1 – perceived gender of the candidate. The survey provided the respondents with three possible responses: Male, Female, and Other Gender (freeform response). Nine people selected 'other gender', but upon examination of their freeform responses, they overwhelmingly used the 'other gender' option as a way to evade selecting a gender and wrote variations of 'I don't know' in the freeform, rather than selecting it because they actually believed the candidate was a non-binary, gender non-conforming, and/or Two-Spirit individual. For this reason, the 9 'other gender' responses were eliminated from the results.

Remarkably, no matter what treatments they were assigned to, 79.4% of respondents assumed the candidate they read about was

male. This result is overwhelming and surprising amongst a group of undergraduate political science students who should, in theory, have a solid understanding that a local Mayor can be any gender – an understanding that politicians are not just men. The differences between the assumed gender when comparing the different treatments was not nearly as significant in the results as this overpowering assumption regardless of treatment that the ungendered ‘Mayor Foster’ must be male.

I did not find support for *H1A*, *H1B*, or *H1C* in the results. When masculine descriptors were used to describe a candidate of an undisclosed gender, 80.2% of respondents perceived that candidate as male (Figure 7). However, due to the fact that respondents overwhelmingly perceived the candidate as male regardless of treatment, it is unlikely that this is a causal relationship. It is more likely that the fact the fabricated individual was a politician is what caused people to assume they were male, rather than the adjectives used. When feminine descriptors were used to describe a candidate of an undisclosed gender, I had expected readers to mostly perceive that candidate as female, but in fact 78.8% of respondents still perceived that candidate as male, not female (Figure 7). Lastly when neutral descriptors were used to describe a candidate of an undisclosed gender, I had expected readers to perceive that candidate as a relatively even mix of genders, but in reality, 79.2% of respondents still perceived that candidate as male (Figure 7). This article posits that this non-result may have stemmed from the entering assumption that the candidate was male being so strong that it overpowered any effects of all three treatments.

The most significant result in Study 1 was by far the fact that 79.4% of respondents assumed Mayor Foster was a man, regardless of what adjectives were used to describe the Mayor. It would make sense that the responses might differ by gender of the respondent, thus a regression analysis was performed taking into account respondent’s gender to see if this was the case (detailed tables of regression results can be found in Appendix C). Both male and female respondents

assumed the candidate in the article was male with relative consistency (see margins plot from basic OLS regressions in Figure 8). It seems likely that the overwhelming majority of respondents assuming a political candidate of an undisclosed gender is male was due to the fact that they were presented as a politician, which even today is a male-dominated profession. However, it is surprising that the majority of people who made this assumption was so large, considering that the politician was a local Mayor rather than a federal candidate (female leaders are much more common at the local level than the federal level: women make up 18% of mayors in Canada while only making up 3.4% of Prime Ministers since 1867 [Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2017; Parliament of Canada 2016]). It is also surprising considering that this sample is taken from students in political science classes who, in theory, should have a relative understanding of the fact that there are politicians and specifically local Mayors who are not male. Perhaps this is an insight into the pervasiveness of deeply rooted beliefs regarding the gender roles of who is perceived to be ‘right for’ and ‘wrong for’ certain professions like politician.

### *Study 2*

In Study 2, there were 42-43 people assigned to each of the 6 Treatment groups, making for 256 people total who participated in the survey. The three dependent variables analyzed in the context of the hypotheses are competency, qualification, and a feelings thermometer.

I found limited support for *H2A* and *H2B*, the hypotheses regarding feminine descriptors causing a downturn in positive trait ratings. Both the male and the female candidate described with feminine adjectives were perceived as very slightly less competent and slightly less qualified than when neutral adjectives were used (see margins plots from basic OLS regressions in Figure 9, Figure 10). The mean of the 0-10 competence variable is 5.93 for the male candidate described with feminine adjectives, which is 0.26 points less than the male candidate described with neutral adjectives. For the female candidate, the mean of the competence variable is 5.98 for the female

candidate described with feminine terms, which is 0.19 points less than the female candidate described with neutral terms. In terms of qualification ratings, the mean of the 0-10 qualified variable is 5.4 for the male candidate described with feminine descriptors, which is 0.08 points less than the same candidate described with neutral adjectives. The difference was a little more noticeable with the female candidate, who received a qualified rating of 5.3 when described with feminine adjectives – 0.34 points less than when described with neutral adjectives. However, as with many of the other findings for Study 2, further study with a larger subject pool would be necessary to make any conclusive claims about this finding, as the findings here were quite insignificant.

*H2C*, the hypothesis regarding feminine descriptors causing a downturn in feelings thermometer ratings, was not supported by the results. Both the male and the female candidate described with feminine descriptors were generally liked roughly the same amount as when neutral descriptors were used (Figure 11). The female candidate described with feminine descriptors received an average rating on the 0-100 feelings thermometer of 62, which was 0.3 points higher than when she was described using neutral adjectives. The male candidate described with feminine descriptors received an average rating of 64.3, which was 1.28 points higher than when he was described neutrally. However, these differences in likability were incredibly minor and statistically insignificant.

I found some support for *H3A* and *H3B* in the results, the hypotheses regarding masculine descriptors causing an upturn in positive trait ratings. Both the male and the female candidate described with masculine descriptors were perceived as slightly more competent and more qualified than when neutral descriptors were used (see Figure 9, Figure 10). The female candidate described with masculine descriptors received an average competency rating of 6.7 on the 0-10 scale, which was 0.5 points higher than when she was described using neutral terms, and an average of 6.3 on the 0-10 scale for how qualified she was perceived to be, which was 0.66 points more than when she

was described neutrally. As for the male candidate, he received an average competency rating of 6.26 when described with masculine adjectives, which was 0.07 points higher than when he was described neutrally, and an average qualified rating of 5.81 when described with masculine adjectives, which is 0.29 points more than when he was described with neutral adjectives.

I did not find support for *H3C*, the other hypothesis regarding the feelings thermometer. All candidates were liked roughly the same amount, there were no significant differences in feelings thermometer scores (See Figure 11). The female candidate described with masculine adjectives received an average rating on the 0-100 feelings thermometer scale of 63.95, which is slightly more than the 61.73 average rating she received when described neutrally. But for the male candidate, he received an average rating of 61.79 when described with masculine adjectives, which is slightly less than the 62.98 he received when described neutrally. The ratings here are incredibly close and not statistically significant.

*H4A*, *H4B*, and *H4C* were not supported either. These were the hypotheses regarding the male candidate described neutrally seeing an upturn in positive trait ratings compared to the woman. The male candidate described with neutral descriptors was actually perceived as having roughly the same levels of competency and qualification than the female candidate described with neutral descriptors. He was also generally liked roughly the same amount as the female candidate described with the same neutral descriptors.

The most significant result by far was seen in the ‘Perceived-Female + Masculine Descriptors’ Treatment in Study 2. The woman described with masculine adjectives was seen as almost 10% more qualified than the woman described with feminine adjectives (Figure 9). This is a very large and significant difference. Her competency rating didn’t change quite as dramatically, but she was still seen as 7% more competent when described with masculine adjectives as compared to feminine adjectives, which is definitely still quite a large differential (Figure 10). This result supports the idea that masculine

traits are valued over feminine traits in female politicians. It also supports the simple idea at the root of this study – that language matters. A news outlet describing a female politician as ‘ambitious’ instead of ‘compassionate’ could make the general public view her as 10% more competent. This is a substantial finding.

The results get even more interesting when the self-identified gender of the respondents is factored in (detailed tables of regression results can be found in Appendix C). A regression analysis was performed on the Qualification and Competency variables from Study 2, factoring in the gender the survey-taker identified themselves as in the subject pool’s pre-survey, and found some noteworthy results (Figure 12, Figure 13). Female respondents were much more likely to punish the female candidate described with feminine adjectives, and much more likely to reward the female candidate described with masculine adjectives. Female survey-takers saw the masculine-described female candidate as almost 15% more qualified than when she was described using feminine adjectives. This is also a substantial finding – 15% is a huge differential, especially in the political sphere where even the smallest change in positive trait perceptions could, for some voters, be the difference between deciding to vote for that candidate or not.

More interesting still is the feelings thermometer results when broken down by respondent gender (Figure 14). Male survey-takers liked the male candidate described with feminine adjectives a full 8 points less than female survey-takers did. This result begins to support the idea that men are subconsciously taught that there is more value in men having ‘masculine’ traits than ‘feminine’ ones, and that men with ‘feminine’ traits should be liked less. Put simply, this supports the idea that male femininity is devalued amongst men in society. Additional research with larger sample sizes would be crucial to analyzing the depth of this relationship further, but this result from Study 2 alone is meaningful and important.

One caveat to both Study 1 and Study 2 that must be acknowledged is the names chosen for the candidates. Mayor Foster,

Julie King, and Dave Newsom are all names that are predominantly European/North American in usage. While these names were chosen as the most generic-sounding Canadian politician names possible, it is important to acknowledge that for many respondents these names may have conjured an image of a white politician. Sexism does not exist in a vortex, it intersects differently in every individual with many different identities of race, ability, class, sexuality, and so on. The specific intersections of sexism and racism in positive trait perceptions of politicians is a valuable area for further research to be pushed into. While the implications of choosing white-sounding names for these two specific experiments are unknown, it would be relevant for further studies to experiment with many different names (and a larger sample size) to see if the use of names that do not invoke an image of whiteness may impact trait perceptions in different ways alongside the use of gendered adjectives.

Another important area for further research would be a content-analysis of what adjectives are actually being used to describe politicians in media today, by gender. What descriptors are being used to describe female candidates, compared to male candidates? In the real world, are female candidates actually being described with feminine-implied adjectives? Or are they being described with more neutral terms, or even masculine-implied terms? The same goes for male candidates. It is necessary to examine what words are actually being used to describe politicians of different genders in real news media today. It would be valuable for further research to explore the real-word usage of gendered adjectives in political news coverage, to discover how prevalent this kind of language actually is in the coverage of candidates. Specifically, it would be valuable to take the six BSRI words used in each treatment and analyze how often those particular words are actually being used in news media, to determine the practical value of Study 2's results.

Prior to discussing the most important results from this study and their implications, it is necessary to identify some key limitations of this research. First and foremost, a subject pool of 269

undergraduate students is by no means representative of the broader Canadian population. Notably this was a group of students with more women than men, with a relatively high average income, and with primarily liberal political leanings. This is not a representative sample. Due to the spread of 269 individuals across treatments, especially in study 2, it is also difficult to make any conclusive claims about these results without further research. A much larger sample size would be necessary in further research to examine whether many of these results could achieve statistical significance if repeated. However, the results seen in this study suggest that such further research would be valuable, and likely to show noteworthy results.

### **Conclusion**

Even with a liberal-leaning sample of politically educated young students, 79.4% of respondents still assumed an ungendered Mayor they read about was male. This is an important finding, suggesting that the profession of politician is still largely assumed to be a man's job. The idea that language matters when candidates are described in media was also supported. A female candidate described with masculine adjectives was seen as a whopping 10% more qualified and 7% more competent than when she was described with feminine adjectives. This result was magnified for female survey-takers, who saw the masculine-described candidate as almost 15% more qualified than the feminine-described one. These are not unsubstantial numbers - this could have implications for media outlets writing on politicians. A 15% increase in positive trait ratings is quite a significant power to influence the public opinion of readers. As well, is it interesting to consider the real-world applicability of this study. Respondents read a short and unfamiliar article with a subtle treatment, and yet were moved by an entire point on the ten-point qualification scale. Whereas in the real world, people are exposed to more influential articles with stronger biases potentially quite frequently. The effects could be quite a bit larger in reality, especially for avid news readers and those with a

specific interest in politics. Prolonged exposure to this type of news coverage has the potential for powerful shifts in public opinion.

Ideally, this knowledge can be used to inform media outlets of the implicit sexism in gender-coded language, but also to awaken the public to their own subconscious biases in the hopes that these can then be challenged. An important area for further research is to examine whether awareness of these biases (for example, being told before reading an article that people view candidates described with perceived-masculine adjectives as more qualified) would reduce or eliminate that change in trait-ratings based on language. Can we reduce subconscious sexist beliefs, like the idea that politicians must be male, by becoming aware of their pervasiveness?

Study 1's results have practical value - 79.4% is a substantial finding, though not an expected result. It seems that any impact the adjectives might have had on the assumption of the candidate's gender was completely washed out by the overwhelming assumption that Mayor Foster was a man, regardless of adjectives used. This does not necessarily prove the BSRI invalid, but it does suggest that some perceptions of specific professions are so strong that they outweigh any effects from gendered adjectives. While the adjectives alone did not seem to change the reader's perception of the candidate's actual gender, they did lead readers to make judgements about that candidate's positive trait ratings as we saw in Study 2. Further study into the current validity of the BSRI would be useful in determining whether, for example, if Study 1 was repeated with an individual of a perceived gender-neutral profession, would the adjectives have made a difference in perceived gender? Further, is there even such a thing as a perceived gender-neutral profession, or are our perceptions of gender roles ingrained into professions across the board? It may be the case that BSRI terms are not the most effective terms to use – another valuable area for further research to explore is in investigating the terms themselves, and measuring which terms (both from and not from the BSRI lists) activate public perceptions of gender roles or gender stereotypes most.

Overall, the results of this study can be situated within the theory of devaluation of femininity. Masculinity, in this case masculine-coded traits, is rewarded. These masculine traits make the candidates seem more qualified and competent to the public. Femininity is also devalued in the assumption that a position of power, such as Mayor, is filled by a man. While further research with larger sample sizes is necessary to conclusively prove many of the hypotheses presented in this article, these are still important findings and a shocking wake-up call to the pervasiveness of subconscious sexism in language. Power dynamics between masculinity and femininity are alive and well in the political sphere, and the media has the power to frame candidates with masculine-coded or feminine-coded traits. This is a relationship that must be studied further – it is crucial for us to better understand the influence of gendered framing, how much power the media wields with it, what words the media is actually currently using to describe candidates, and whether awareness of these subconscious biases can help us actually reduce these biases in the long run. Can awakening to the language of sexism help us to challenge it? There is work to be done, but perhaps these results can be one of the wake-up calls we need.

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## Figures

Items on the Masculinity, Femininity, and Neutral Scales of the BSRI		
<i>Masculine Items</i>	<i>Feminine Items</i>	<i>Neutral Items</i>
Acts as a leader	Affectionate	Adaptable
Aggressive	Cheerful	Conceited
Ambitious	Childlike	Conscientious
Analytical	Compassionate	Conventional
Assertive	Does not use harsh language	Friendly
Athletic	Eager to soothe hurt feelings	Happy
Competitive	Feminine	Helpful
Defends own beliefs	Flatterable	Inefficient
Dominant	Gentle	Jealous
Forceful	Gullible	Likable
Has leadership abilities	Loves children	Moody
Independent	Loyal	Reliable
Individualistic	Sensitive to the needs of others	Secretive
Makes decisions easily	Shy	Sincere
Masculine	Soft spoken	Solemn
Self-reliant	Sympathetic	Tactful
Self-sufficient	Tender	Theatrical
Strong personality	Understanding	Truthful
Willing to take a stand	Warm	Unpredictable
Willing to take risks	Yielding	Unsystematic

Figure 1. Source: Bem 1974

STUDY 1			
	Control (Neutral)	Masculine	Feminine
<b>Unknown Gender Candidate</b>	T1: Neutral terms used	T2: Masculine terms used	T3: Feminine terms used

Figure 2.1: Treatments for Study 1 (the dependent variable for Study 1 is perceived gender)

STUDY 2			
<i>Candidate</i>	Control (Neutral)	Masculine	Feminine
<b>A (Perceived Male)</b>	T1: Neutral terms used	T2: Masculine terms used	T3: Feminine terms used
<b>B (Perceived Female)</b>	T4: Neutral terms used	T5: Masculine terms used	T6: Feminine terms used

Figure 2.2: Treatments for Study 2 (the dependent variables for Study 2 are perceived competency, qualification, and a feelings thermometer)

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The headline is "Mayor Foster up for Re-election". The article discusses Mayor Foster's campaign, mentioning his support for local issues and his speech being well-received. Feminine terms such as "compassionate" and "sympathetic" are highlighted in yellow. The sidebar includes a "Trending" section with five news items.

Figure 3: Study 1, Treatment 1 - feminine terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

BSRI Words Used in Each Treatment		
Masculine Items	Feminine Items	Neutral Items (Control)
Ambitious Analytical Assertive Independent Self-reliant Willing to take a stand	Cheerful Compassionate Loyal Sympathetic Understanding Warm	Adaptable Friendly Happy Helpful Sincere Tactful

Figure 4: BSRI words used in each treatment

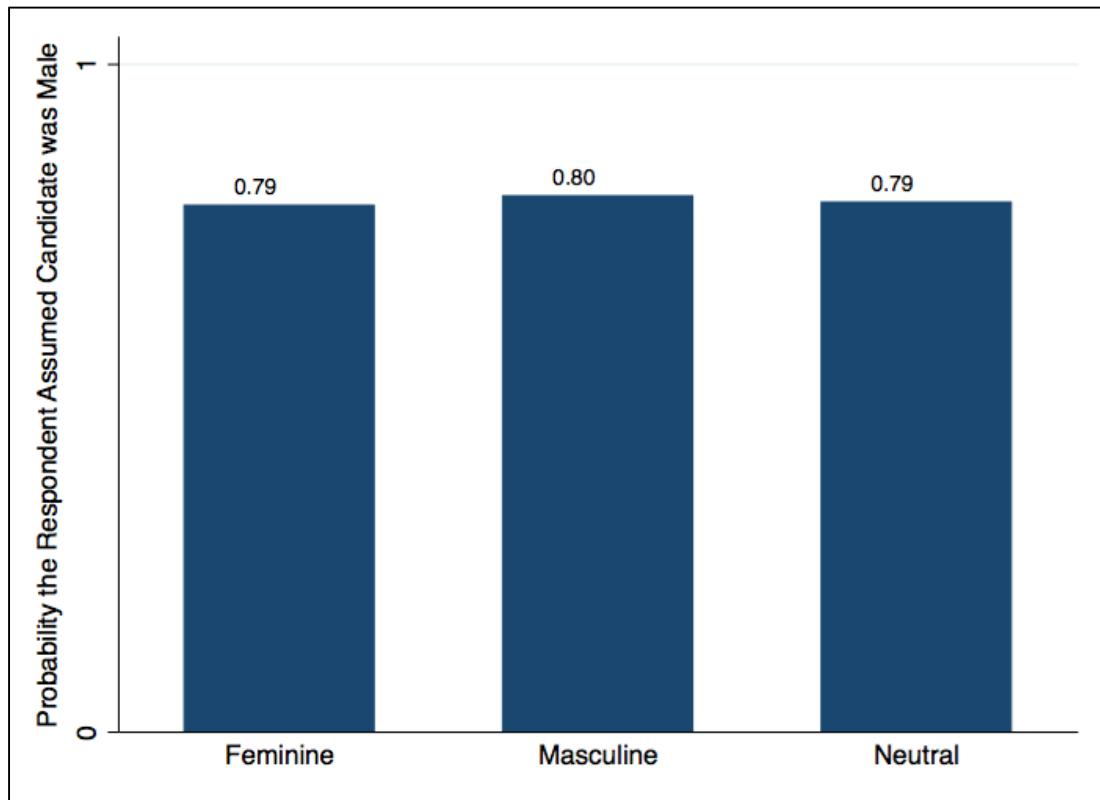
The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The headline is "Campaign kicks off in Yorkton". The article describes a campaign event where a candidate addressed the crowd. Feminine terms such as "cheerfully", "compassionate", and "sympathetic" are highlighted in yellow. The sidebar includes a "Trending" section with five news items.

*Figure 5: Study 2, Treatment 1 – perceived-female candidate, feminine terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)*

	<i>% of Respondents</i>
<b>Gender:</b> Male	36.8%
<b>Gender:</b> Female	61.7%
<b>Gender:</b> Other gender	0.4%
<b>Gender:</b> Declined to answer	1.1%
<b>Annual household income:</b> Over \$100,000	37.2%
<b>Annual household income:</b> \$50,000 – 99,000	29.7%
<b>Annual household income:</b> Below \$50,000	13.4%
<b>Annual household income:</b> Don't know/declined	19.4%
<b>Age:</b> Below 19	0.4%
<b>Age:</b> 19-23	90.6%
<b>Age:</b> Above 23	8.9%
<b>Citizenship:</b> Citizen or Permanent Resident	83%
<b>Citizenship:</b> Visitor	15.4%

<b>Political Interest:</b> Low (0-3)	1.9%
<b>Political Interest:</b> Medium (4-6)	11.2%
<b>Political Interest:</b> High (7-10)	86.9%
<b>Party Affiliation:</b> Conservative	18%
<b>Party Affiliation:</b> Liberal	46.2%
<b>Party Affiliation:</b> NDP	19.9%
<b>Party Affiliation:</b> Green	2.3%
<b>Party Affiliation:</b> Other/none	11.2%

Figure 6: Respondent Information



*Figure 7:* Study 1, probability the respondent assumed the candidate was male across treatments (neutral = control)

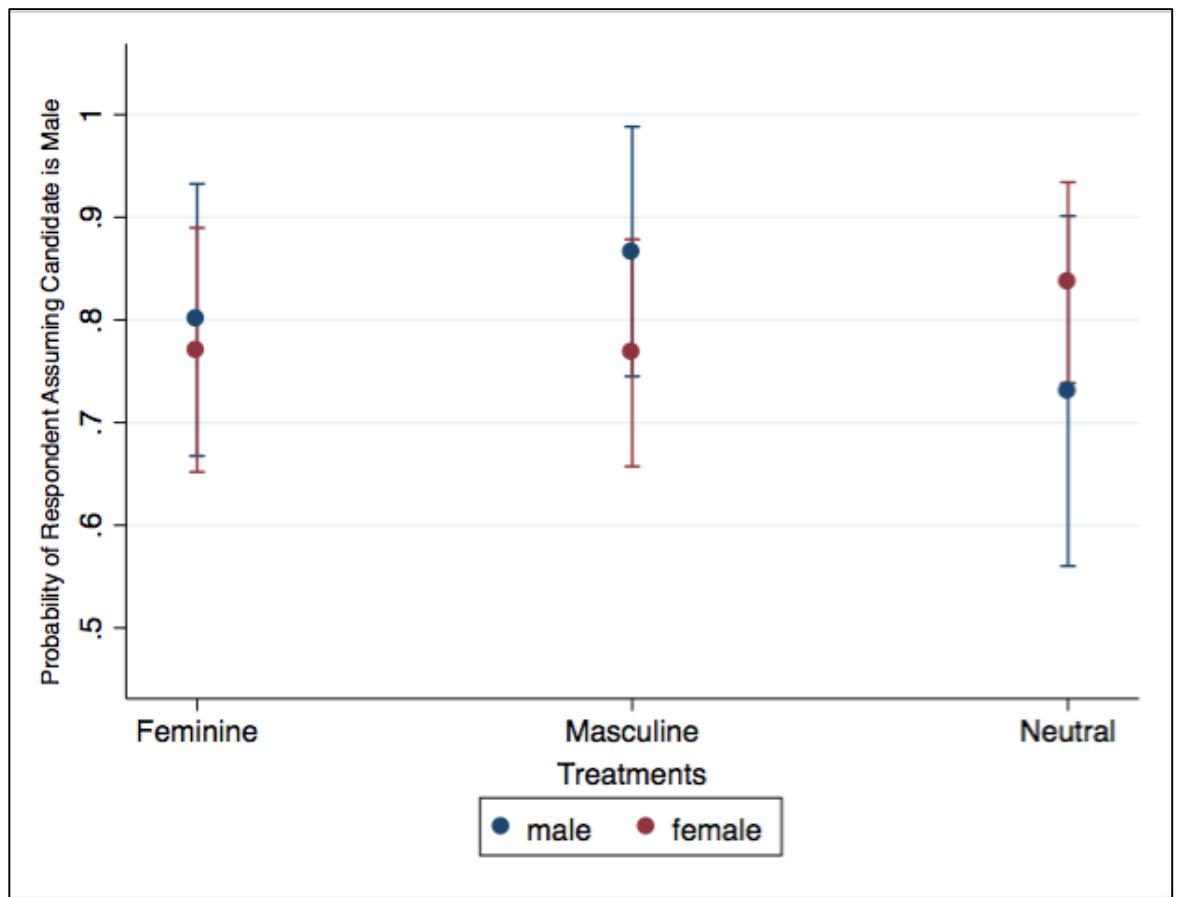


Figure 8: Probability of Respondent Assuming Candidate is Male in Study 1, by Respondent Gender (neutral = control)

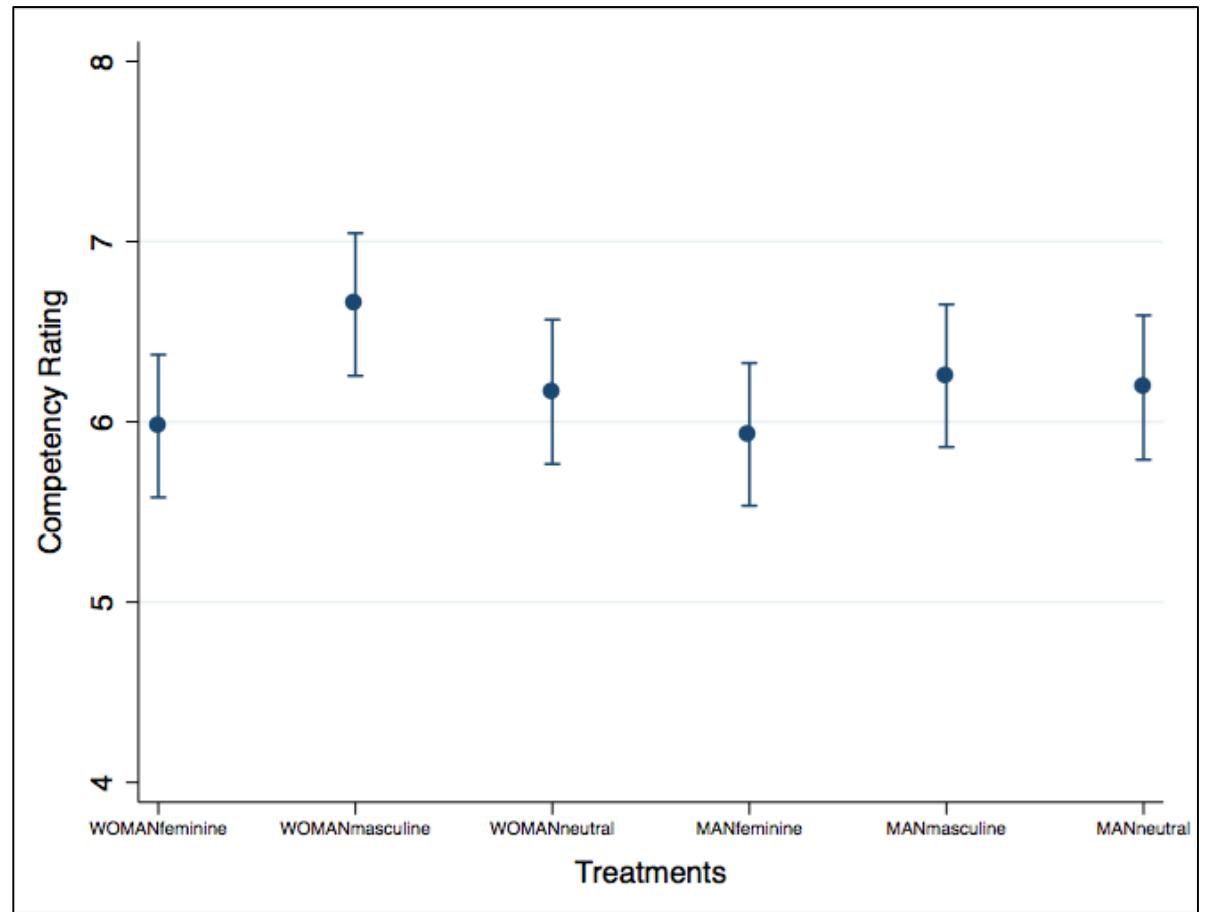


Figure 9: Qualification Ratings in Study 2 (neutral = control)

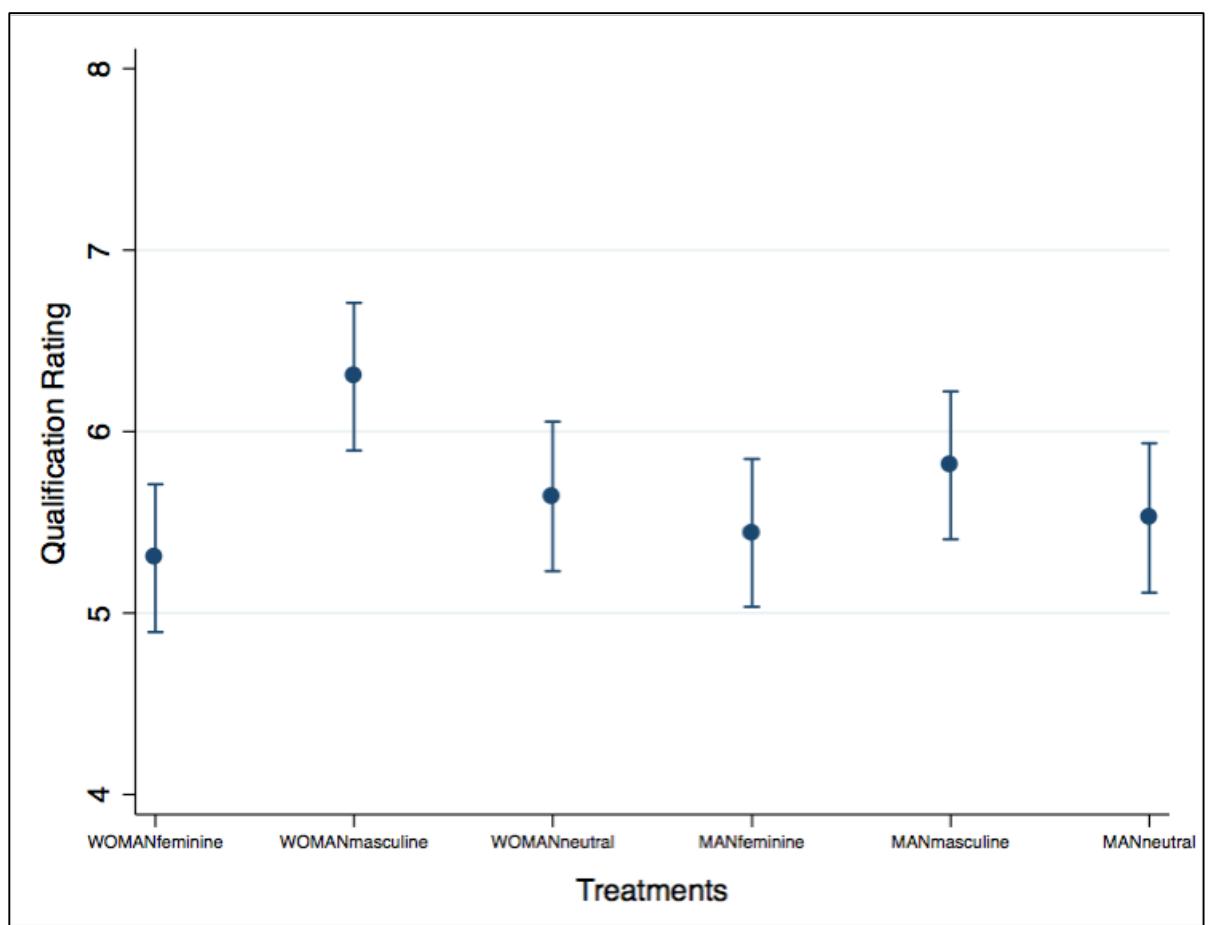
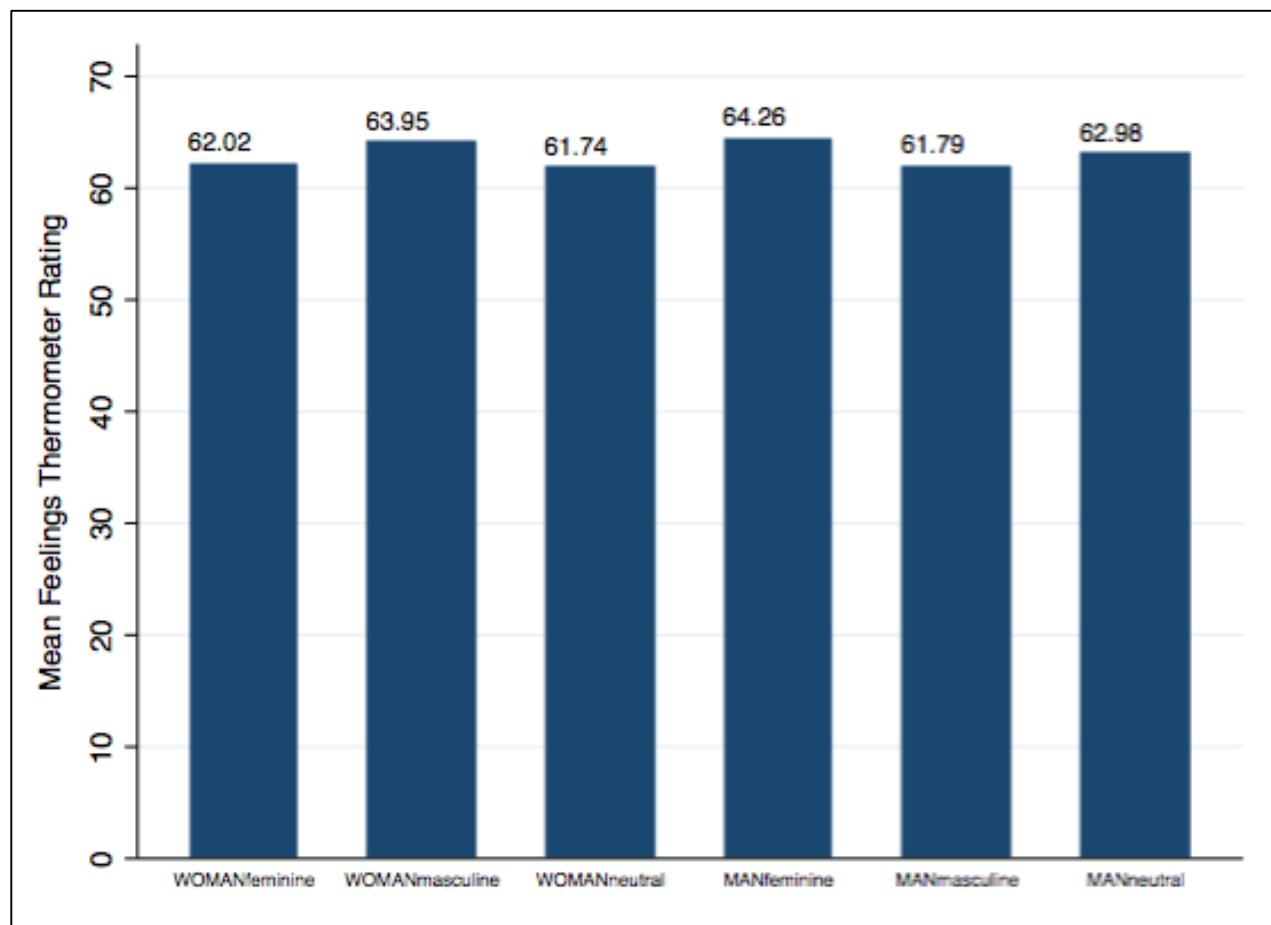


Figure 10: Competency Ratings in Study 2 (neutral = control)



*Figure 11:* Feelings Thermometer Ratings in Study 2 (In this graph, the mean is the average feelings thermometer rating for each treatment. The feelings thermometer scale was from 0-100)

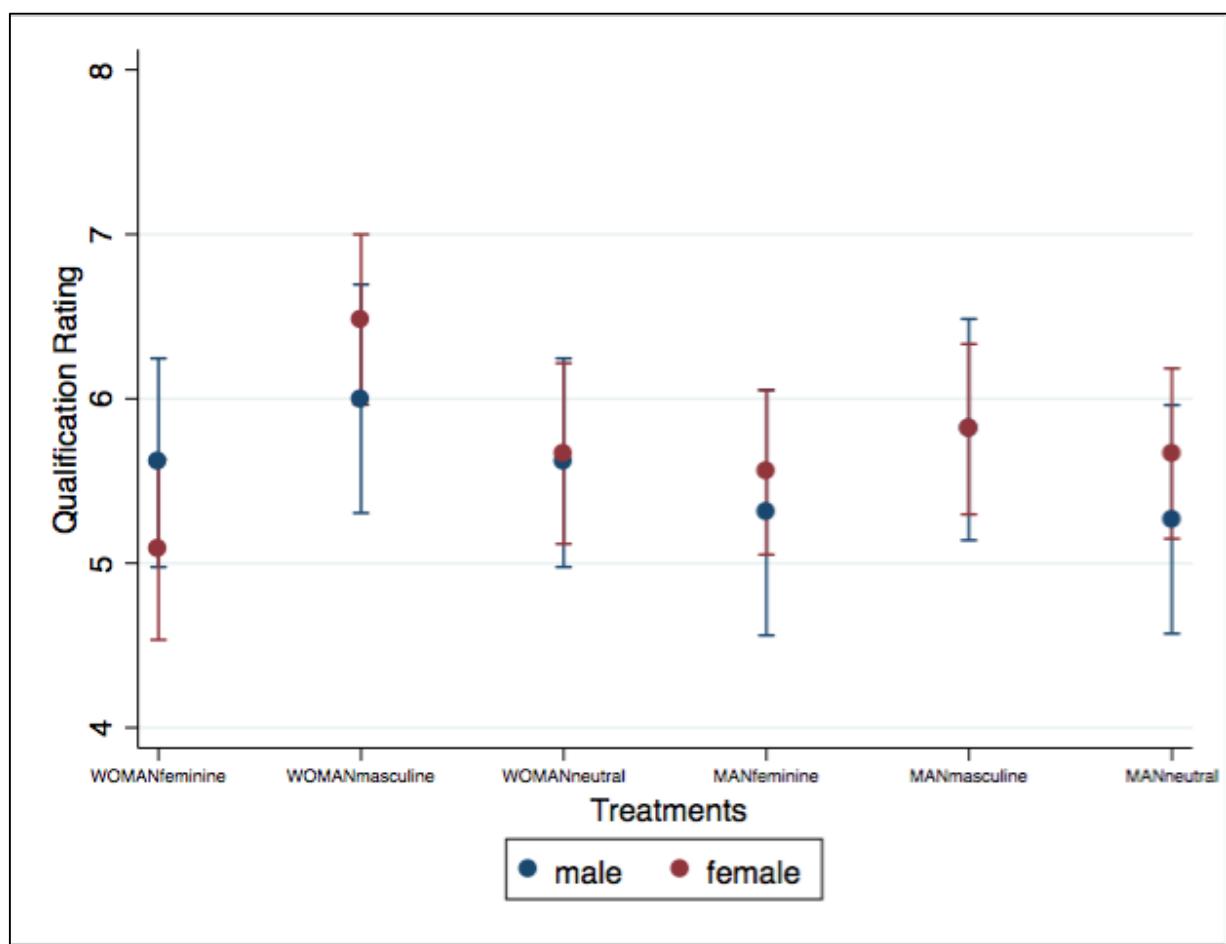


Figure 12: Qualification Ratings in Study 2, by Respondent Gender  
(neutral = control)

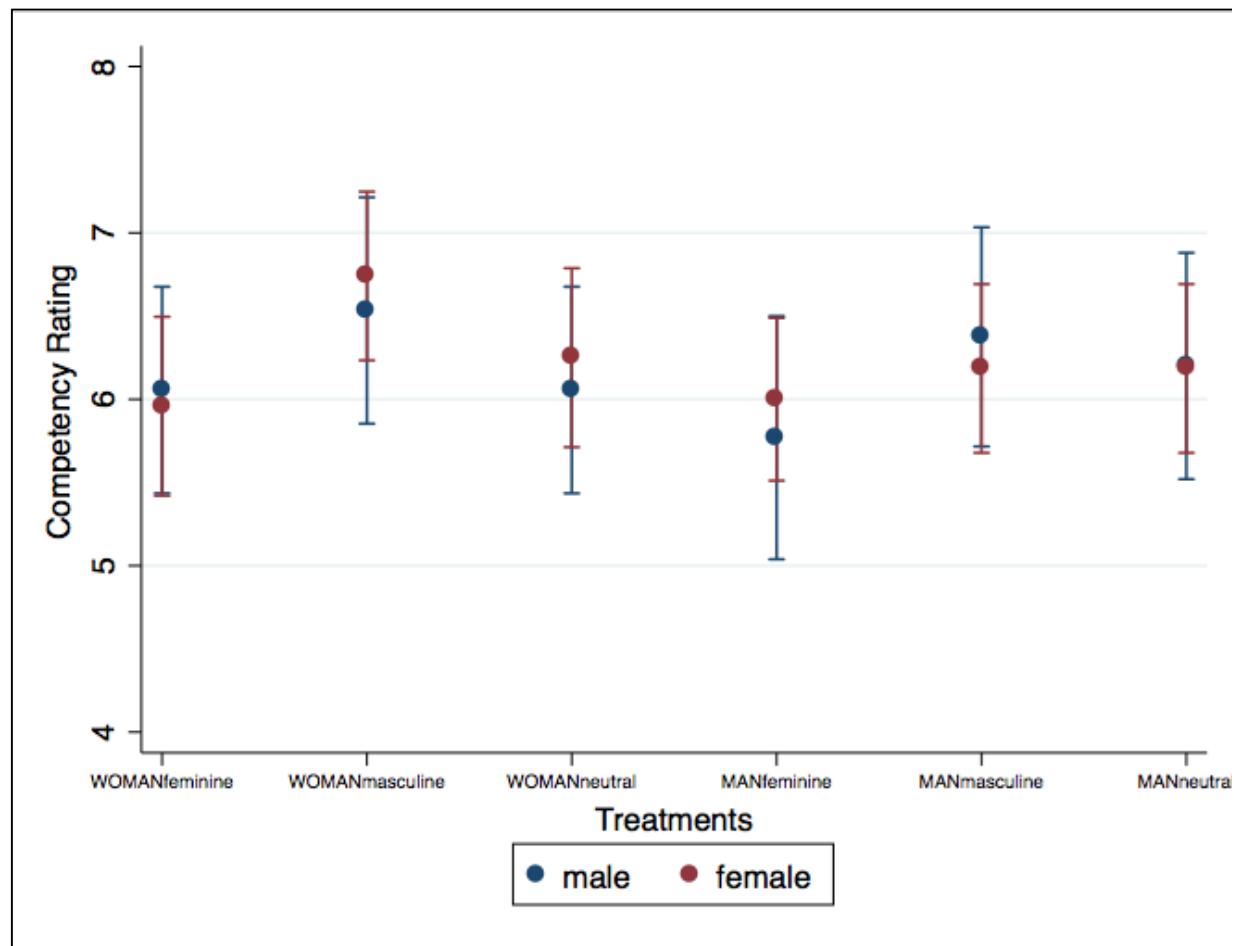


Figure 13: Competency Ratings in Study 2, by Respondent Gender  
(neutral = control)

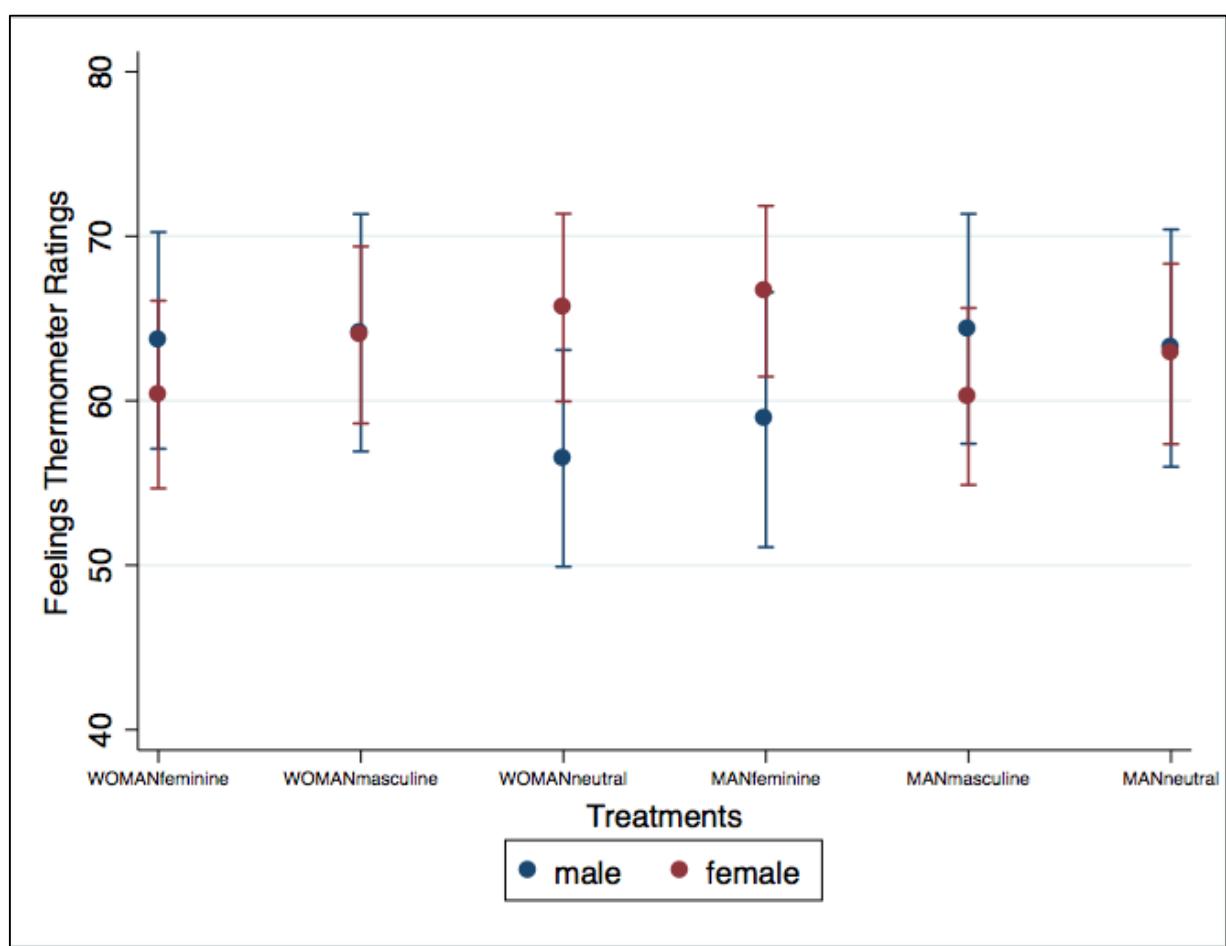


Figure 14: Feelings Thermometer Ratings in Study 2, by Respondent Gender (neutral = control)

#### Appendix A – Treatments

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The header includes the site's logo, navigation links for Canada, and options to subscribe, sign in, or search. The main title is "Mayor Foster up for Re-election". Below the title is a photo credit: "PRINCE ALBERT, SASK. THE CANADIAN PRESS 2 HOURS AGO". The article text discusses Mayor Foster's campaign for re-election, mentioning his speech and support from local residents. Several words in the text are highlighted in yellow: "assertive", "willing to take a stand", "ambitious", "analytical", "independent", and "self-reliant". To the right, there is a "TRENDING" sidebar with five numbered links related to current events.

**TRENDING**

- 1 Evening Update newsletter: Saudi Arabia, U.S. elections, Toronto real estate
- 2 The F-word can fly in French, broadcast watchdog says
- 3 Saudi purge escalates with more arrests, frozen bank accounts
- 4 Bitcoin surges over 10% to new high on reports software 'fork' suspended
- 5 These overlooked stocks have easily beaten the TSX in 2017

**A1:** Study 1, Treatment 2 - masculine terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The header includes the site's logo, navigation links like 'SUBSCRIBE' and 'SIGN IN', and a search bar. The main title is 'Mayor Foster up for Re-election'. Below the title is a byline: 'PRINCE ALBERT, SASK. THE CANADIAN PRESS 2 HOURS AGO'. The article text discusses Mayor Foster's campaign for re-election, mentioning his speech and support from a resident. At the bottom of the article are options to report an error, view comments (0), and read the next story.

**TRENDING**

- 1 Evening Update newsletter: Saudi Arabia, U.S. elections, Toronto real estate
- 2 The F-word can fly in French, broadcast watchdog says
- 3 Saudi purge escalates with more arrests, frozen bank accounts
- 4 Bitcoin surges over 10% to new high on reports software 'fork' suspended
- 5 These overlooked stocks have easily beaten the TSX in 2017

**A2:** Study 1, Treatment 3 - neutral terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The header includes the paper's logo, a navigation menu, and links for 'SUBSCRIBE', 'SIGN IN', and 'AdChoices'. The main title is 'Campaign kicks off in Yorkton'. Below it is a sub-headline: 'PRINCE ALBERT, SASK THE CANADIAN PRESS 2 HOURS AGO'. The article text discusses a campaign kick-off event for Julie King, a small business owner and community organizer. A quote from a current City Councilor is highlighted with yellow boxes around words like 'assertively', 'ambitious', 'independent', 'willing to take a stand!', 'analytical', and 'self-reliant'. Below the article is a sidebar titled 'TRENDING' with five numbered items. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'REPORT AN ERROR', 'LICENSING OPTIONS', and '30 COMMENTS'.

**Campaign kicks off in Yorkton**

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK  
THE CANADIAN PRESS  
2 HOURS AGO

The slate of candidates for Yorkton City Council grew by one yesterday. Small business owner and community organizer, Julie King, threw her hat in the ring at a campaign kick off event Tuesday.

King addressed a crowd of supporters and onlookers at the event. A current City Councilor said "She addressed the crowd assertively, welcoming everybody to the event and describing her community centered platform. She seems like an ambitious and independent woman who is willing to take a stand!" One passerby who heard the speech said "she appeared analytical and self-reliant as she spoke."

Mark your calendars for election day this January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and don't forget to bookmark our Election Coverage page to stay on top of all the latest news on this year's candidates.

① REPORT AN ERROR ② LICENSING OPTIONS

30 COMMENTS

**TRENDING**

- 1 Wilfrid Laurier graduate student delivers a wake-up call
- 2 Toronto families in 'panic mode' as Ontario enforces new after-school care rules
- 3 Can the government save the middle-class wannabe homeowner in Toronto and Vancouver?
- 4 These 10 unloved dividend stocks have outperformed
- 5 These overlooked stocks have easily beaten the TSX in 2017

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**A3:** Study 2, Treatment 2 – perceived-female candidate, masculine terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The header includes the site's logo, navigation links for politics, a search bar, and user options like 'SUBSCRIBE' and 'SIGN IN'. The main title is 'Campaign kicks off in Yorkton'. Below it is a sub-headline: 'PRINCE ALBERT, SASK THE CANADIAN PRESS 2 HOURS AGO'. The article text discusses a campaign kick-off event for Yorkton City Council, mentioning Julie King and her speech. A sidebar on the right is titled 'TRENDING' and lists five top stories. At the bottom, there are buttons for reporting errors, licensing options, and a comment section with 30 comments.

**Campaign kicks off in Yorkton**

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK  
THE CANADIAN PRESS  
2 HOURS AGO

The slate of candidates for Yorkton City Council grew by one yesterday. Small business owner and community organizer, Julie King, threw her hat in the ring at a campaign kick off event Tuesday.

King addressed a crowd of supporters and onlookers at the event. A current City Councillor said "She addressed the crowd in a friendly manner, welcoming everybody to the event and describing her community centered platform. She seems like a helpful, happy and tactful woman." One passerby who heard the speech said "she appeared adaptable and sincere as she spoke."

Mark your calendars for election day this January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and don't forget to bookmark our Election Coverage page to stay on top of all the latest news on this year's candidates.

REPORT AN ERROR LICENSING OPTIONS

30 COMMENTS

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**TRENDING**

- 1 Wilfrid Laurier graduate student delivers a wake-up call
- 2 Toronto families in 'panic mode' as Ontario enforces new after-school care rules
- 3 Can the government save the middle-class wannabe homeowner in Toronto and Vancouver?
- 4 These 10 unloved dividend stocks have outperformed
- 5 These overlooked stocks have easily beaten the TSX in 2017

**A4:** Study 2, Treatment 3 – perceived-female candidate, neutral terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

The screenshot shows a news article titled "Campaign kicks off in Yorkton" from The Globe and Mail. The article is by PRINCE ALBERT, SASK, THE CANADIAN PRESS, posted 2 HOURS AGO. The text discusses a campaign kickoff event for Yorkton City Council candidates, mentioning Dave Newsom and his speech. The text includes several highlighted terms: "cheerfully", "loyal", "compassionate", "sympathetic", "warm", and "understanding". Below the article, there are links to "REPORT AN ERROR" and "LICENSING OPTIONS". A comment section shows "30 COMMENTS". At the bottom, there's a call to support journalism with "JUST 99¢ PER WEEK FOR THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS" and a "START TODAY" button.

**Campaign kicks off in Yorkton**

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK  
THE CANADIAN PRESS  
2 HOURS AGO

The slate of candidates for Yorkton City Council grew by one yesterday. Small business owner and community organizer, Dave Newsom, threw his hat in the ring at a campaign kick off event Tuesday.

Newsom addressed a crowd of supporters and onlookers at the event. A current City Councilor said "He addressed the crowd cheerfully, welcoming everybody to the event and describing his community centered platform. He seems like a loyal, compassionate, and sympathetic man." One passerby who heard the speech said "he appeared warm and understanding as he spoke."

Mark your calendars for election day this January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and don't forget to bookmark our Election Coverage page to stay on top of all the latest news on this year's candidates."

REPORT AN ERROR LICENSING OPTIONS

30 COMMENTS

SUPPORT QUALITY JOURNALISM JUST 99¢ PER WEEK FOR THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS START TODAY

**A5:** Study 2, Treatment 4 – perceived-male candidate, feminine terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The header includes the site's logo, navigation links for politics, subscribe, sign in, and search, along with an AdChoices icon. The main title is "Campaign kicks off in Yorkton". Below it is a sub-headline: "PRINCE ALBERT, SASK THE CANADIAN PRESS 2 HOURS AGO". The article text discusses a campaign kick-off event for Yorkton City Council, mentioning Dave Newsom and his speech. A sidebar on the right lists five trending topics, each with a small icon and a brief description. At the bottom, there are buttons for reporting an error, licensing options, and 30 comments, followed by a "SUPPORT QUALITY JOURNALISM" section and a "START TODAY" button.

**Campaign kicks off in Yorkton**

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK  
THE CANADIAN PRESS  
2 HOURS AGO

The slate of candidates for Yorkton City Council grew by one yesterday. Small business owner and community organizer, Dave Newsom, threw his hat in the ring at a campaign kick off event Tuesday.

Newsom addressed a crowd of supporters and onlookers at the event. A current City Councilor said "He addressed the crowd assertively, welcoming everybody to the event and describing his community centered platform. He seems like an ambitious and independent man who is willing to take a stand." One passerby who heard the speech said "he appeared analytical and self-reliant as he spoke."

Mark your calendars for election day this January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and don't forget to bookmark our Election Coverage page to stay on top of all the latest news on this year's candidates."

REPORT AN ERROR LICENSING OPTIONS

30 COMMENTS

SUPPORT QUALITY JOURNALISM JUST 99¢ PER WEEK FOR THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS START TODAY

**TRENDING**

- 1 Wilfrid Laurier graduate student delivers a wake-up call
- 2 Toronto families in 'panic mode' as Ontario enforces new after-school care rules
- 3 Can the government save the middle-class wannabe homeowner in Toronto and Vancouver?
- 4 These 10 unloved dividend stocks have outperformed
- 5 These overlooked stocks have easily beaten the TSX in 2017

**A6:** Study 2, Treatment 5 – perceived-male candidate, masculine terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

The screenshot shows a news article from The Globe and Mail. The header includes the newspaper's logo, a navigation menu, and links for 'SUBSCRIBE', 'SIGN IN', and 'AdChoices'. The main title 'Campaign kicks off in Yorkton' is displayed prominently. Below the title, the byline reads 'PRINCE ALBERT, SASK. THE CANADIAN PRESS 2 HOURS AGO'. The article text discusses a campaign kick-off event for Yorkton City Council, mentioning Dave Newsom and his speech. A sidebar on the right is titled 'TRENDING' and lists five top stories. At the bottom, there are options to 'REPORT AN ERROR', 'LICENSING OPTIONS', and a link to '30 COMMENTS'.

**Campaign kicks off in Yorkton**

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.  
THE CANADIAN PRESS  
2 HOURS AGO

The slate of candidates for Yorkton City Council grew by one yesterday. Small business owner and community organizer, Dave Newsom, threw his hat in the ring at a campaign kick off event Tuesday.

Newsom addressed a crowd of supporters and onlookers at the event. A current City Councilor said "He addressed crowd in a friendly manner, welcoming everybody to the event and describing his community centered platform. He seems like a helpful, happy, and tactful man." One passerby who heard the speech said "he appeared adaptable and sincere as he spoke."

Mark your calendars for election day this January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and don't forget to bookmark our Election Coverage page to stay on top of all the latest news on this year's candidates.

REPORT AN ERROR LICENSING OPTIONS

30 COMMENTS

**SUPPORT QUALITY JOURNALISM** JUST 99¢ PER WEEK FOR THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS START TODAY

**A7:** Study 2, Treatment 6 – perceived-male candidate, neutral terms (BSRI terms have been highlighted in this image for presentation in this paper)

## Appendix B – Question Wording

The screenshot shows a survey interface with a dark header containing the word 'ARTS' in large white letters. Below the header is a question in white text: 'What is the gender of the candidate you just read about? If you cannot remember, make your best guess based on what you can recall from the article.' Three options are listed in separate light gray boxes: 'Male', 'Female', and 'Other gender (for example: non-binary, gender non-conforming person, Two-Spirit, etc.)'. In the bottom right corner of the main content area, there is a dark blue button with a white right-pointing arrow.

What is the gender of the candidate you just read about? If you cannot remember, make your best guess based on what you can recall from the article.

Male

Female

Other gender (for example: non-binary, gender non-conforming person, Two-Spirit, etc.)

**B1:** Respondent's view of questionnaire for Study 1 survey

ARTS

Do you agree that the following word describes the candidate you just read about? Rate on a scale from 0-10, where 0 is **Strongly Disagree**, 5 is **Neither Agree nor Disagree**, and 10 is **Strongly Agree**.

Strongly Disagree

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

## Competent



## Qualified



**B2:** Respondent's view of questionnaire for Study 2 survey  
(respondent can move sliders)

# ARTS

I'd like you to rate how you feel about the candidate you just read about, using a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the warmer or more favourable you feel toward that person. The lower the number, the colder or less favourable you feel. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. You can pick any number between 0 and 100.

0      10      20      30      40      50      60      70      80      90      100



**B3:** Respondent's view of questionnaire for Study 2 survey  
(respondent can move slider)

### Appendix C – Regression Results

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>P &gt;   z  </i>
<b>Study 1</b>	.0865723	.379206	0.819

**C1:** Logistic Regression for Study 1, masculine vs. feminine treatment

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>P &gt;   t  </i>
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> Vs. <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b>	-.3405316	.2864605	0.238
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> Vs. <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	.6594684	.3165522	0.040
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b> Vs. <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	1	.2921448	0.001
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> Vs. <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b>	-.0819491	.2907518	0.779
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> Vs. <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	.290144	.2807372	0.304

<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> Feminine Treatment Vs. <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> Masculine Treatment	.372093	.293069	0.208
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C2: Regression results for Study 2, qualified variable

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>P &gt;   t  </i>
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> Neutral Treatment Vs. <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> Feminine Treatment	-.1899225	.2825715	0.503
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> Neutral Treatment Vs. <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> Masculine Treatment	.4844961	.3226627	0.137
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> Feminine Treatment Vs. <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> Masculine Treatment	.6744186	.3056719	0.030
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> Neutral Treatment Vs. <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> Feminine Treatment	-.2602436	.2534329	0.307
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> Neutral Treatment Vs. <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> Masculine Treatment	.0653378	.2783786	0.815

<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	.3255814	.2630606	0.219
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C3: Regression results for Study 2, competency variable

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>P &gt;   t  </i>
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b>	.2851606	3.343235	0.932
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	2.215393	3.450485	0.523
<b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>FEMALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	1.930233	2.989728	0.520
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b>	1.280204	2.88366	0.658
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Neutral Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b>	-1.184912	3.048882	0.699

<b>Masculine Treatment</b>			
<b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Feminine Treatment</b> <b>Vs.</b> <b>MALE CANDIDATE</b> <b>Masculine Treatment</b>	-2.465116	2.691945	0.362

C4: Regression results for Study 2, feelings thermometer variable