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The Politics of Candidate Likability

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THE POLITICS OF CANDIDATE LIKABILITY

An Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for Graduation with

Undergraduate Research Honors

Georgia State University

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by

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by

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Under the Direction of Dr. Toby Bolsen

ABSTRACT

Voter turnout is one of the most widely examined phenomena of interest in Political Science; however, researchers have paid less attention to the specific traits that may determine a candidate's popularity among the electorate. The United States has a winner-takes-all political system, which indicates that in any given election, the stakes are too high. Consequently, every aspect of the candidate's life becomes a relevant factor. However, if we could identify which traits are important to the electorate, then we could focus on the important aspects of the political process- the candidate's stance on the issues. In this study, I focus on the effect that knowledge of a political candidate's participation has on the candidate's likability rating. Moreover, I study whether basketball or golf cause the greatest impact.

INDEX WORDS: Index term, Dissertation, Thesis guidelines, Graduate Services, Student, Graduate degree, Georgia State University

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DAHIANA ZICAVO

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Political Science

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Which are the factors that generate the greatest impact regarding a political candidate's likability among the American electorate? What features are effective predictors of a candidate's ability to attract voters? Are personality traits significant indicators of a candidate's projected campaigning success? These questions are of obvious importance for political scientists, political candidates, and campaign managers. Voter turnout is one of the most widely examined phenomena of interest in Political Science. Presidential candidates and their marketing teams, otherwise known as political campaign staff, have personal stakes in the political process; therefore, they work diligently to sale the image of an ideal candidate. The United States has a winner-takes-all political system, which indicates that in any given election, the stakes are too high. Consequently, every aspect of the candidate's life becomes a relevant factor. Yet, the extant literature fails to identify which specific personality traits reflect upon the image of political candidates. It is evident that more Americans participate in sports than in politics; however, does a candidate's publicized participation in sports directly affect a candidate's marketability. This study aims to analyze if knowledge of a political candidate's participation in sports positively or negatively affects the perceptions of American voters regarding that candidate. Furthermore, is the type of sport, basketball or baseball, have a bearing on the candidate's likability?

In this paper, I explore how individuals respond to political candidates who are associated with sports in general, candidates who are associated with basketball, and finally, candidates who are associated with golf. I utilize models of political evaluation, behavior, and personality to motivate my theory. Then, I utilize statistical tools to yield scientific results that contribute to the overall study of political phenomena.

A Political Psychology Theory of Candidate Evaluation

There are two fundamental process models of candidate evaluation: Memory-based and Impression-driven processing (Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989). The former model establishes a positive relationship between memory and judgment. In other words, the memory-based model asserts that individuals utilize the pros and cons stored in their memories in order to make evaluations (Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989). On the contrary, Impression-driven processing claims that judgment is made as pertinent information becomes available to the individual. As a result, the individual updates his/her “on-line” evaluation and is able to formulate another evaluation without having to commit new information to long-term memory. The type of process employed by individuals is a function of the individual’s intent; for instance, if the objective is to formulate an evaluative judgment then impression-driven is the most appropriate model to utilize. The memory-based model offers a simplistic explanation for candidate evaluation; individuals simply memorize positive and negative information about a particular candidate and outweigh such information in order to rationalize vote choice, however, research has produced little or no evidence to sustain the aforementioned claim. The main reason why the memory-based model fails to explain the development of candidate evaluations is because it is presumed that the average voter cannot possibly memorize every aspect of a political candidate’s career (e.g., stand on all issues) (Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989). However, voters are able to formulate evaluations regarding information they encounter.

Measuring public knowledge is a difficult and often unreliable method of data collection. However, there is reputable existing literature, which establishes that significant portions of American voters are largely uninformed about the most rudimentary political matters (Bartels, 2004). Moreover, surveys conducted in order to measure Americans’ view on taxes reveal that

34 percent of respondents don't know if they pay more in federal income, Social Security, or Medicare taxes; 28 percent didn't know if they qualified for the Earned Income Tax Credit; 42 percent don't know whether Americans pay more or less taxes than Western Europeans; 61 percent didn't know about an important policy under consideration, and most respondents falsely believe that "most families have to pay estate tax when someone dies" (2004, 20). Tax policy is at the forefront of every political debate, yet, if large numbers of the American citizenry cannot recall whether they pay more in federal income, Medicare, or Social Security taxes, then it would not be far reaching to conclude that they also fail to retain knowledge about the position of their elected officials on every political aspect. Therefore, in stances where an individual is uninformed, then he/she is more likely to employ the Impression-driven processing model because they simply do not have the information stored in their memory. The utilization of cues to formulate candidate evaluations is the main theory corroborating the possible implications of candidates who are associated with sports. *I hypothesize that knowledge of a candidate's participation in sports will positively affect the candidate's likability (hypothesis 1, H1).*

Cue-Taking Theory

According to the publication, "Competing Rhetoric Over Time: Frames Versus Cues", a cue is "a piece of information that allows individuals to make inferences without drawing on more detailed knowledge" (Druckman, Hennessy, Charles, and Webber 2010, 137). In other words, a cue is a shortcut that allows individuals to sort through extensive amounts of information in a task-effective fashion. The researchers concluded that online processors (Impression- Driven individuals) demonstrate opinion stability, meaning that frames which initially influenced their perception continue to do so over time (Druckman, Hennessy, Charles, and Webber 2010). On the contrary, individuals who utilize a memory-based approach recreate

their perceptions at a later time (2010). The aforementioned results have tremendous implications because if voters make evaluative statements as they encounter relevant information, then they often employ the impression-driven model of candidate evaluation, which signifies that the impressions they acquire about the candidate create a long-lasting effect on the individual's perception of the candidate. Intuitively, if the individual is exposed to positive cues regarding a candidate then the individual will continue to hold a positive perception of the candidate through time, all else equal. Conversely, if the received cues are negative then the individual will develop a long-lasting dislike for the candidate. Moreover, conditional responses explicate why cues influence behavior (Laibson, 2001). The Cues Model predicts that apparent trivial variation in situational cues can exert powerful changes in one's derived satisfaction from consumption (2001). For instance, as individuals approach the checkout lines in supermarkets, gum, candy, and other goods are ubiquitous because firms expect them to make impulsive purchasing decisions (2001). In politics, individuals are conditioned to expect persuasion from their political leaders; in other words, individuals understand that the goal is to win an election and manipulating the masses is the methodology. If individuals sense that they will be subject to persuasion, then they might rationalize that observing the candidate's personality will allow them to assess his or her trustworthiness.

The Impact of Personality

In the United States, many individuals hold a romantic view of politics where each new president represents a change that will lead the nation in the pursuit of the social and economical prosperity it once had. Political candidates invest a great deal of time, energy, and money constructing this persona that personifies the change that the electorate demands. Not surprisingly, spending on political advertising has increased exponentially resulting in the

development of sophisticated political marketing techniques (Hoegg & Lewis, 2011).

Researchers found that party identification functions in a similar matter to the marketing principle of brand loyalty (Hoegg & Lewis, 2011). As a result, the researchers found an existing connection between personality traits based on candidate appearance and party brand image. In other words, a candidate's appearance may signal personality traits to voters (Intelligent vs. Competent) which determine marketing considerations for party identification. Moreover, forming impressions of personality is an organized process (Mensch & Wishner, 1947).

According to the researchers, impressions of personality are "simple summation of independent traits...second, some traits are always of central quality...third, impressions are formed of the whole personality by the perception and organization of the dynamic interrelations of the traits of a given individual" (Mensch & Wishner 1947, 188). Therefore, the researchers claim that the Halo Effect should be questioned and impressions of personality are an accumulation of wholesome interactions (Mensch & Wishner, 1947).

Presidential campaigns are notorious for emphasizing the personality traits of the candidates. For instance, the 2008 General Election between Obama and McCain was often illustrated as a battle between clashing personalities. On one side of the spectrum, Obama was portrayed as the "Muslim" candidate with the suspicious name who looks nothing like the previous presidents and does not salute the flag (Walsh, 2008). To that same spectrum, McCain was exhibited as the war hero who represented leadership and a safe choice (Walsh, 2008). On the other side of the spectrum, Obama was the highly intelligent and educated candidate while McCain was the aged candidate who struggled to communicate his stances on the economy, healthcare, education, and other stances (Walsh, 2008). Despite the result of the elections, one thing is certain; many of the personality traits attributed to these candidates continue to be

utilized today. In a study titled “The Role of Candidate Traits in Campaigns” by Kim Fridkin and Patrick Kenney, the authors concluded that voters rely on personality assessments in U.S. Senate campaigns (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). The authors also found that the news media encourages voters’ to rate sitting senators based on their personality characteristics. Voters are also more prone to rate incumbents based on personality traits, unless challengers increase their campaign spending which also increases their chances of being rated based on their personality traits (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011).

Moreover, in a publication titled, “Personalizing Politics: A Congruency Model of Political Preference”, authored by Philip Zimbardo and Gian Caprara, the researchers found that individuals vote for candidates whose personality traits align with those which correspond with their political ideology. Additionally, the authors found that individuals also select politicians whose traits match their own (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004). While it is logical to presume that individuals vote for candidates that most closely resemble their personal ideologies, it is counterintuitive to deemphasize the education, gender, and age of candidates in order to focus on personality traits (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004). As a result, political candidates become compelled to develop “favorable personal images and appealing narratives that please potential voters than with staunchly promoting a political ideology to voters” (Caprara & Zimbardo, p. 581). Relying heavily on candidate’s personality rather than political platforms can prove problematic because candidates who master the art of manipulation may take advantage of voters. Candidates utilize systematic patterns to evoke specific emotions (pride, anger, and enthusiasm) during political campaigns (Ridout & Searles, 2011). If voters are susceptible to the manipulation of their own emotions than they might vote not on the bases of reason, but rater on

more arbitrary measures, which could inevitably result in disillusionment if they realize that their candidate is not as equipped for the demands of his/her office as they initially presumed.

The literature described throughout this review aims to establish the position voters assume in the political contract, a position that can be swayed by subjective characteristics such as candidate personality. There are a vast number of published research studies dedicated to establish a relationship between received political messages and voter choice; however, Pamela Homer and Rajeev Batra exceeded beyond the correlation of campaign messages and voter behavior to determine the impact of negative or positive messages. In their study, the authors concluded that negative political messages outweigh positive advertising. In other words, when candidates are marketed heavily based on their character (likability and trustworthiness) versus their competence (expertise) then voter attitude forming will be highly vulnerable to negative messages (Homer & Batra, 1994). In spite of the vast literature discussing the numerous factors that influence voter behavior, it would not be far reaching to assume that participation in sports could also be an important factor instigating candidate likability.

Sports are the American pastime. Since Theodore Roosevelt, there has been a presidential tendency to share with America their favorite sport or competition (Spanberg, 2009). John F. Kennedy enjoyed flag football, Eisenhower was a fan of golf, Gerald Ford was a college football player, and most recently, Obama's fondness for basketball is highly televised (Spanberg, 2009). Is playing basketball positive for the president's image? Does it make him seem more like your "everyday" man? In contemporary times, politicians who are avid golf players are reluctant to admit their passion for the sport because they do not want to be perceived as elitist. Dan Tate Sr., a lobbyist in Washington, claims that politicians today are less likely to be publicly involved

with Golf than they had been in the past due to the sport's reputation of being a wealthy man's game (Macur, 2011). As a result, *I hypothesize that candidates who associate themselves with basketball will be more likable than those who associate themselves with golf (hypothesis 2, H2).*

Experiment: Participants, Design, Procedures

To test the predictions previously established, I embedded an experiment into a survey. The first part includes demographic information such as political affiliation, ideology, ethnicity, gender, age, income, and level of education. The aforementioned characteristics are all possible z-factors that could influence my dependent variable. The experiment involved exposing participants to an excerpt describing a factitious character and then they had to answer two questions regarding this character: Would you vote for Garrett Wright? How likely are you to vote for Garrett Wright?

Participants

A total of 441 participants participated in this study in exchange for payment. I obtained my sample of respondents by utilizing Mechanical Turk, which is an online market place where one can request participants to complete Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) in exchange for monetary compensation. Mechanical Turk allows requesters to create qualifications that the respondents must meet in order to participate in the HIT. I set two important qualifications: participants must be 18 or older and they must live in the United States. The description of the survey was I am a student at Georgia State University conducting a research study you are invited to share your opinion about a candidate. Participants themselves decided whether to participate on the survey or not. Data was collected in July 2012.

I utilized *Qualtrics.com*, in order to create an electronic version of my survey. While I could have created my survey in Mechanical Turk, the survey-creating functions are very limited

and it is extremely difficult to create a rate-survey within the HIT. As a result, I opted to utilize *Qualtrics.com* as a complement. I coded the surveys' website into my HIT so that once participants entered the HIT; they could click on a link that would redirect them to my survey in *Qualtrics.com*. Once they completed the survey, they clicked "next" which yielded a completion code that then had to be copied into the HIT as proof of completion for the survey

Experimental Design

I had four versions of the same survey; however, there were slight manipulations in three of the surveys. The first survey is my control group; therefore, it did not contain any manipulations. The second version of the survey contained a sport manipulation, meaning that the candidate described in this survey participated in sports. The third version contained a basketball manipulation, meaning that the candidate described in this survey was associated as a basketball participant. The fourth version contained a golf manipulation, meaning that the candidate described in this survey was associated as a golf participant. The manipulations were placed in the same location for every survey, after the demographical information, strategically written before the respondent filled out the last two questions, which are the questions pertinent to the dependent variable in this study. For instance, the control group (N=111) received a survey, which read:

- ▶ READ: Garret Wright is considering running as the state senator of your state. He is 42 years old, married, to Katherine Wright, 38, former schoolteacher, has two kids, Andrew, 9 years old, and Lauren, 5. Wright excelled as an Ivy League College student graduating in the top 5 percent of his class.

The respondent for that version of the survey read the passage written above and then answered whether they would vote for Garrett Wright (I do not know, Yes, No). Then they were asked to

rate “How likely they are to vote for Garrett Wright” (Not likely at all, Not likely, Likely, I don’t know). All manipulated versions follow the same guidelines explained above.

The Sport Manipulation (N=110)

- ▶ READ: Garret Wright is considering running as the state senator of your state. He is 42 years old, married, to Katherine Wright, 38, former schoolteacher, has two kids, Andrew, 9 years old, and Lauren, 5. Wright excelled as an Ivy League College student graduating in the top 5 percent of his class. Recently, his passion for sports has led him to campaign at several sport events throughout the state.

The Basketball Manipulation (N=110)

- ▶ READ: Garret Wright is considering running as the state senator of your state. He is 42 years old, married, to Katherine Wright, 38, former schoolteacher, has two kids, Andrew, 9 years old, and Lauren, 5. Wright excelled as an Ivy League College student graduating in the top 5 percent of his class. Recently, his passion for Basketball has led him to campaign at several basketball matches throughout the state.

The Golf Manipulation (N=110)

- ▶ Garret Wright is considering running as the state senator of your state. He is 42 years old, married, to Katherine Wright, 38, former schoolteacher, has two kids, Andrew, 9 years old, and Lauren, 5. Wright excelled as an Ivy League College student graduating in the top 5 percent of his class. Recently, his passion for Golf has led him to campaign at several Golf tournaments throughout the state.

Procedures & Measures

Participants who desired to participate in the study were invited to share their opinions about a candidate. They were instructed to fill out the six demographical questions first and then they were asked to read the candidate's description carefully before making any assessment. The participants had to answer a battery of questions: (1) Which Political affiliation and ideology do you mostly identify with?, (2) What is your ethnicity?, (3) What is your gender?, (4) How old are you?, (5) Which income bracket mostly closely resembles your household's income level?, (6) What is the highest level of school you have completed or highest degree you have received? (7) Would you vote for Garrett Wright? (8) How likely are you to vote for Garrett Wright? Once they completed the survey, Qualtrics would give them a confirmation code, which enabled me to compensate the participants for completing the HIT.

Demographical Results of Survey version 1 (Control Group):

The dominant political ideologies in this survey were Liberal Democrats (34%), Liberal Independents (18%), Moderate Democrats (14%), and Moderate Independent & Conservative Republican (9%). Most individuals were 18-24 years old (48%), followed by 25-30 years old (22%). The vast majority of participants were Caucasian (68%), the second most represented group were Asians (16%). There were 66 percent males and 34 percent females represented in this sample. The most represented household income group is \$35,001- \$85,000 (42%), followed by \$10,001- \$35,000 (34%). Most participants had some college but no degree (34%) and 27% have a bachelor's degree.

Demographical Results of Survey version 2 (Sports Manipulation):

The dominant political ideologies in this survey were Liberal Democrats (30%), Liberal Independents (18%), and Moderate Democrats (16%). Most individuals were 18-24 years old

(51%), followed by 25-30 years old (29%). The vast majority of participants were Caucasian (73%), the second most represented group were Asians (13%). There were 78 percent males and 22 percent females represented in this sample. The most represented household income group is \$35,001- \$85,000 (34%), followed by \$10,001- \$35,000 (25%) and \$85,001- \$150,000 (25%). Most participants had some college but no degree (39%) and 27% have a bachelor's degree [Look at Table 1.5 for a complete list of educational level].

Demographical Results of Survey version 3 (Basketball Group):

The dominant political ideologies in this survey were Liberal Democrats (34%), Liberal Independents (15%), Moderate Democrats (14%), and Moderate Independent & no specific affiliation or ideology (11%). Most individuals were 18-24 years old (51%), followed by 25-30 years old (35%). The vast majority of participants were Caucasian (65%), the second most represented group were Asians (21%). There were 67 percent males and 33 percent females represented in this sample. The most represented household income group is \$35,001- \$85,000 (33%), followed closely by \$10,001- \$35,000 (31%). Most participants have a bachelor's degree (41%) and (33%) had some college but no degree.

Demographical Results of Survey version 4 (Golf Group):

The dominant political ideologies in this survey were Liberal Democrats (34%), Liberal Independents (16%), Moderate Democrats (11%), and Moderate Independent (12%). Most individuals were 18-24 years old (49%), followed by 25-30 years old (33%). The vast majority of participants were Caucasian (77%), the second most represented group were Asians (12%). There were 74 percent males and 33 percent females represented in this sample. The most represented household income group is \$35,001- \$85,000 (38%), followed by \$10,001- \$35,000

(25%). Most participants have a bachelor's degree (37%) and (34%) had some college but no degree.

Findings

The dependent variable in this study is candidate likability; therefore, the last question which asks participants to rate how likely they are to vote for Garrett Wright represents my dependent variable. The responses to the questions are coded as follow: 1. NOT likely at all, 2. NOT Likely, 3. Likely, 4. VERY Likely, and 5. I do not have an opinion. The mean for the control group was 4.05 (N=111). The mean for the Sports Manipulation was 3.98 (N=110). The mean for the Basketball Manipulation is 3.77 (N= 110). The mean for the Golf Manipulation is 3.35 (N=110). By simply observing the means one can observe that there are changes; however, it is necessary to conduct a regression model in order to observe if the treatments are affecting the dependent variable. Regressing my dependent variable in Stata revealed that I had a total of 434 observations, however, the majority of these observations where "I do not have an Opinion" responses, which are irrelevant to the purpose of this study because those responses do not allow me to determine likability. Therefore, I generated a response that enabled me to discard everyone who responded, "I do not have an opinion". After discarding these responses, my number of observations decreased to 224 participants. Since I discarded the fifth option, my dependent variable is clearly ordinal; therefore, the most appropriate test to run for this particular set of data is an Ordered Logistic Regression.

[Insert Table 1 here]

To evaluate the data I collected, I estimated an OLR regression, Table 1 data reveals that my experimental condition one (Sports Manipulation) is statistically significant (P-value 0.018), meaning that I can assert with 95 percent confidence that my manipulation affected the dependent variable. My second experimental condition (Basketball Manipulation) is not statistically significant (P-value 0.126), although, since my hypothesis is directional, I can reduce the p-value to 0.063 and state with 90 percent confidence that the difference observed in this manipulation did not occur by chance. The most important experimental condition, in terms of statistical significance, is experimental treatment three (Golf Manipulation, P-value 0.000). The extremely low p-value indicates that I can assert with 99 percent confidence that the applied treatment had an effect upon the dependent variable.

The most prominent finding of this study is that the results are counterintuitive. All of my treatment conditions (participation in sports, participation in basketball, and participation in golf) have a negative effect on candidate likability. For instance, in comparison to the control group, experimental condition 1 (participation in sports) has a coefficient of -.993 (Std. Err. .4213). Experimental condition 2 (participation in basketball) has a coefficient of -.619 (Std. Err. .4046). Experimental condition 3 (participation in golf) has the most negative effect upon candidate likability, it has a coefficient of - 1.78 (Std. Err. .400). The result of this OLR analysis is that all of my conditions, which are essentially variations of a political candidate's participation in sports, have a negative effect on that candidate's likability. Therefore, I fail to reject the null hypothesis. My *hypothesis 1* is erroneous; *knowledge of a candidate's participation in sports negatively affects the candidate's likability*. I summarized the effects of the experimental components in Table [**Insert Table 2 Here**]. In addition, according to Table 3, none of

independent variables I accounted for have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable (Political Affiliation, Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Income, and Education).

[Insert Table 3 Here]

The second component of this experiment was to study if the type of sport, between Basketball and Golf, has an effect on the candidate's likability. I conducted a descriptive statistics model for each survey: Control, Sport Treatment, Basketball Treatment, and Golf Treatment. Table 4 illustrates the means, standard deviations, and the minimum and maximum values for the table. The table exhibits two variables, DV and Response, DV has a larger number of observations because that number describes all of the participants in that group. However, "response" represents the number of participants who responded to the dependent variable (tossed out "I do not have an opinion"). In order to test if the difference of means between the basketball and golf treatments, I conducted a T-test. I utilized the survey data with 110 observations (this number includes ALL survey responses, even those who answered, "I do not have an opinion"). The two-tailed P value equals 0.0182; this difference is considered statistically significant. The mean of Basketball minus Golf equals 0.41818200, the 95 percent confidence interval of this difference is .07172856 to 0.76463544, meaning that we can be 95 percent confident that the difference of means between the golf and basketball conditions is statistically significant. Recall from Table 1, the coefficient for the experimental Basketball condition was -.619336, on the other hand, the coefficient for the experimental Golf condition was -1.78799. The coefficients are negative meaning that both experimental conditions have a negative impact on the dependent variable (candidate likability). Moreover, since the coefficient for the Golf condition is greater, we can assume that respondents dislike candidates who participate in golf tournaments more than they dislike candidates who participate in basketball

games. The difference of means test and the coefficients granted by the ordered logistic regression allow me to reject the null hypothesis. My hypothesis 2, *candidates who associate themselves with basketball will be more likable than those who associate themselves with golf* is correct.

Discussion

The results exhibited above offer strong evidence to support that a political candidate's participation in sports negatively affects his or her likability ratings. Many Americans are avid sports fans; therefore, the results might appear counterintuitive. However, a feasible explanation might not be associated with the realm of likable personalities but rather a function of the current economic condition of the United States. In times where economic hardships are rampant, a candidate who is perceived as a simple, "sports guy" might be deemed incompetent to overtake the tremendous political pressure that characterizes stagnant economies. On the other hand, the explanation might be simpler: Americans want their politicians working, not dedicating their time to the leisure on sports.

Furthermore, this study suggests that participating in golf has the greatest negative impact upon that candidate's likability. A possible explanation for the strong dislike for golf might be the sport's reputation of being elitist- a highly undesired trait in contemporary politics. The most important experimental conditions proved to be sports and golf. In other words, participating in general sports decreases candidate likability and the effect becomes particularly adverse when the sport is golf. The Impression-Driven Theory perfectly explains why a candidate's participation in sports becomes relevant to his or her campaign. The participants in my study did not have much information about the fictitious political candidate that was presented to them;

however, they were able to utilize cues (family life, education, sports participation) in order to make a decision.

The main limitation in the present study is the utilization of Mechanical Turk. While mturk is an effective tool to recruit participants, there is no effective way to analyze if the participants are properly reading the conditions and answering the questions truthfully. On the contrary, for the low wage of .20 cents a survey, survey takers might systematically and randomly select answers in order to receive the monetary compensation. Future research, conducted in a more controlled environment might produce results that are more significant.

Conclusion

Political Scientists have studied voter turnout rigorously, however, they have paid less attention to the specific traits that may determine a candidate's popularity among the electorate. If we could identify which characteristics have an impact on a candidate's perception then we would be able to focus on the aspects that are fundamental to the political process- the candidate's stances on the various issues that are important to the electorate. However, when we fail to understand that trivial matters sometimes trigger our decisions, then we undermine the political process by making campaigns a battle of personality traits rather than an intellectual debate to promote solutions to our most pressing problems.

This study promotes is the first step towards a more profound understanding of political behavior. Additionally, the results in this study challenge common sense. Some authors claim that politicians have become more open about their past times and sports because they think that it helps with win over votes. However, in the pursuit of selling the image of the common man, they might actually be foregoing votes.

Table 3 Manipulation Effect on Candidate Likability, 2012

Independent Variable	All	Control	Sports	Basketball	Golf
	<i>DV:</i>				
	<i>Candidate</i>				
	<i>Likability</i>				
Political Aff.	.010	.014	.011	.010	.009
	(.018)	(.018)	(.018)	(.018)	(.018)
Ethnicity	.027	.039	.046	.043	.032
	(.030)	(.031)	(.031)	(.032)	(.030)
Gender	-.15	-.132	-.113	-.117	-.136
	(.104)	(.105)	(.108)	(.108)	(.104)
Age	-.022	-.026	-.021	-.019	-.020
	(.028)	(.028)	(.029)	(.029)	(.028)
Income	.085	-.072	.064	.066	.082
	(.044)**	(.045)	(.046)	(.046)	(.045)
Education	.009	.014	.011	.009	.006
	(.035)	(.035)	(.036)	(.036)	(.035)
Cons	2.85	2.42	2.51	2.48	2.67
	(.261)***	(.252)***	(.26)***	(.258)***	(.252)***
Adjust R- Squared	.0865	.0540	-0.0009	0.0031	0.0689
R-Squared		0.0837	0.0305	0.0344	0.0981

Note: Stata Data, Entries are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. ***p < .05; *p < .10

Table- 2 Experimental Condition Effects On Candidate Likability, 2012

Independent Variable	DV1
	<i>DV- Candidate Likability</i>
Experimental Condition 1 (Sports in General)	-.993 (.421)**
Experimental Condition 2 (Basketball)	-.619 (.405)*
Experimental Condition 3 (Golf)	-1.79 (.400)***
Total	998

Note: Stata Data, Entries are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. ***p < .05; *p < .10

TABLE 4

Golf Treatment

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
howlikelya~w	110	3.354545	1.351767	1	5
response	71	2.450704	.7129162	1	4

Control

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
howlikelya~w	111	4.054054	1.118748	1	5
response	51	2.941176	.6453453	1	4

Basketball treatment

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
howlikelya~w	110	3.772727	1.253685	1	5
response	60	2.75	.7507059	1	4

Sports Treatment

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
howlikelya~w	110	3.981818	1.233938	1	5
response	48	2.666667	.6302088	1	4

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