Credibility or Credulity?

Examining Political Organization-Public Relationships in an Election of Interloping Candidates

by

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Abstract

This national online survey (N = 493) examined the political organization-public relationship (POPR) that voters perceived with their own political party and their opposing political party, as well as voters' assessment of the credibility of candidates running for president during the primary season of the 2016 election. Results indicated that while credibility assessment of one's own party's candidate was much as expected, POPR with the Democratic Party was generally stronger than that with Republican Party across the board. Data showed no support that a poor POPR with one's own party would drive voters to support interloper candidates. Researchers conclude by reflecting on the importance of POPR with the opposing party and what weak relationships may mean for parties in the long term.

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The 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle provided an intense political public relations spectacle. From the length of the campaign – one of the longest presidential campaigns in U.S. history (Friedman, 2016) – to the candidates who took the stage vying for their party's nomination, there appeared to be no dearth of opportunities to examine the political campaign from a public relations standpoint. One storyline that attracted much media attention early in the campaign focused on the political actors – the candidates themselves.

As is typical during a primary, politicians declare their candidacy and hit the campaign trail. During this election cycle, Democrat Hillary Clinton opened her campaign on social media using the innovative tactic of a YouTube video (Chozick, 2015). The primaries, however, were not about the expected candidates, such as Clinton, so much as they were about the *unexpected* candidates running. On both sides, such unexpected candidates appeared – with some having even been members of other political parties for previous elections (Schor, 2016; Schwarz, 2015). While the thinning of the candidate field is a normal process during primary season, the media often covered specific candidates with a sense of surprise as to how well those candidates were received by the public. These so-called *interlopers* appeared to hold and even gain ground in the primaries, and eventually became serious candidates.

The word "interlopers" is defined as "one that intrudes in a place or sphere of activity" (Merriam-Webster). To conceptually define this in terms of political public relations, it is helpful to consider the political party as the organization and the interloping candidate as the intruder. Building on this conceptual application in political public relations, interloper could refer to several of the candidates during the early phases of a political party's primary season. Indeed, in recent presidential

elections the media has noted that not only has the election cycle become longer, but so too has the list of candidates. As such, an interloper in political public relations during a presidential primary would be a candidate who appears to be generally unwelcomed by the party establishment, regardless of political experience (or lack there-of). Applying this rationale to the 2016 U.S. presidential primary season, the mainstream media portrayed interlopers within both parties – namely, Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party, as well as businessman Donald Trump and medical doctor Ben Carson in the Republican Party (Brownstein, 2016). The media and political fact-checking websites alike detailed Sanders' political career affiliations as an "independent" and called him a 40-year outsider (Qiu, 2016), to the point of even quoting him famously saying that he was not a Democrat despite caucusing with them. Trump had gone on record in previous years making disparaging remarks about the Republican Party, and was noted to have donated money to help put Democrats in office. Carson, like Trump, did not have any political experience prior to running for president.

While the candidates themselves were widely different with regard to political experience, policy, and ideology, the media repeatedly portrayed Sanders, Trump, and Carson as not being the part of the establishment associated with the parties they ultimately affiliated with during the primary. Even though some argued that these interlopers were taking the attention away from the "real" candidates, a groundswell of public support continued to fuel these so-perceived non-establishment candidates. Using a political organization-public relationship (POPR) perspective, this study empirically examines how the key publics of an organization (e.g., political party) view so-called interlopers and the impact those views had on POPRs.

Literature Review

Relationship Theory

The relational perspective, as one of the most heuristic theories in public relations research (Sallot et al., 2003), has often been traced back to its modern-day roots stemming from Ferguson's

(1984) contention that actual relationships with the public should be the central focus for public relations research, and should include the holistic environment in which both the organization and its publics operate. This spotlight on relationship later became a paradigm for practicing public relations (Ledingham, 2001), to further extend the industry beyond mere messaging and publicity strategies.

Organization-public relationship (OPR) research spanned a multitude of contexts – from nonprofit to corporate. The closest predecessor to the newly emerging area of political public relations looked at government communication through the work of public information officers or public affairs officers. In this vein, Ledingham (2001) found the government-citizen relationship aided in community building, and that OPR could be used to predict citizen behavior. In this work, it was noted that public input was necessary in the relationship-building process, and Ledingham (2001) stressed the role of that input. Bruning et al. (2006) examined OPR between citizens and the city in which they lived. The researchers concluded "mutual benefit (a) provides a competitive advantage (b) is influenced heavily by respondent organization–public relationship perceptions, and (c) is an outcome that is specific, measurable, and unique to public relations" (Bruning et al., 2006, p. 38). As such, that research established the empirical evidence for mutual benefit, as opposed to such mutuality being intangible. Applying these findings to the concept of interlopers in an organization, it seems as if such a non-establishment player would upset the harmony in OPRs.

As different models of OPR developed, some of the approaches sought to understand antecedents where the perceptions and motivations of the public were investigated (Broom et al., 1997), as well as maintenance strategies (Grunig & Huang, 2000) that focused more on the strategic communication strategies the organizations undertook to maintain the relationship (Ki & Hon, 2007; Hung, 2007). Knowing the importance of organizational communication and perceived mutuality in the heuristic OPR concept, Sweetser and Kelleher (2016) operationalized communicative strategies in maintaining OPR. Their scale, based on decades of OPR research, focused on the concepts of *Communicated Commitment (CC)* and *Conversational Voice (CV)* as a means to measure the public's

perception of OPR. *CC* had been earlier defined by Kelleher (2009) as being "communication in which members of an organization work to express their commitment to building and maintaining a relationship" (p. 176). Similarly, Kelleher (2009) defined *CV* as "an engaging and natural style of organizational communication as perceived by an organization's publics based on interactions between individuals in the organization and individuals in publics" (p. 177). In the present study, constituents' perceived relationship with the two main political parties focused on the communicative strategies in maintaining OPR in order to understand how non-establishment candidates might wedge themselves into the fold to avoid being seen as interlopers and achieve a level of credibility as a presidential aspirant.

Seltzer and Zhang (2011a) noted that OPR models attempted to link relationship to behavioral outcomes. Most recently, Pressgrove and McKeever (2016) tested loyalty and behavioral intentions as a part of OPR, finding that these differed based on stakeholder type. They submitted that these differences were based on time spent with the organization, having suggested that those who volunteered and invested their time in support of the organization had greater loyalty and a stronger relationship (Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016).

Looking specifically at *CC* and *CV,* Sweetser et al. (2015) found that credibility and brand attitude predicted both of the communicative strategies in maintaining OPR. Though their study focused on native advertising as a public relations tool, their finding on the importance of credibility in building a strong relationship with a brand has implications for the current study. That is, if candidates who are portrayed by the media as being interlopers – by definition as an intruder to the group – how will perceived credibility of that non-establishment candidate impact OPR with the political party that candidates hopes to represent?

Political Public Relations and POPR

While certainly not the first to investigate political campaigns through the lens of a public relations campaign, Trammell (2006) concurred with the strategic nature driving both areas, as

identified by other scholars (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Nimmo & Combs, 1983), and suggested that political public relations represented an emerging segment of public relations scholarship.

Following that, Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) presented the most formal case in legitimizing the inquiry of political campaigns as public relations endeavors. In doing so, Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) defined political public relations:

> [Political public relations is] the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals. (p. 8)

Similarly, Seltzer and Zhang (2011a) drew commonalities between traditional public relations and political campaigns:

> Not only are public relations tools and strategies used by government agencies and private organizations, but also they are used by political parties to build support for policy initiatives, raise funds, recruit volunteers and new members, and of course, support their candidates. (p. 25)

Following the Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) definition of political public relations and the various contexts through which it could be practiced and examined, political public relations scholarship blossomed from the earlier seeds planted by scholars in the years before as a valid context for public relations research, alongside the contexts of nonprofit and corporate public relations.

Though political public relations studies were newer to the field, the area has proven heuristic. The framework of relationship appeared to be a common theoretical guide, as now more than a dozen studies over the past decade used relationship to understand political public relations, campaigns, and the candidates that represented these movements (e.g., Cacciatore et al., 2016; Levenshus, 2010; Painter, 2015; Seltzer et al., 2013; Seltzer & Zhang, 2011a, 2011b; Sweetser, 2015, 2017; Sweetser & Becktel, 2017; Sweetser et al., 2015; Sweetser & Tedesco, 2013; Wise, 2007; Zhang & Seltzer, 2010).

Seltzer and Zhang (2011a) provided the foundational work formally referring to POPR as they empirically examined the relationship one had with one's political party (Seltzer & Zhang, 2011a, 2011b). Later, applying POPR to the 2016 election using the communicative strategies in maintaining OPR scale, a national survey primarily made up of first-time voters found moderate-to-low levels of POPR with their political party (Sweetser, 2017).

With regard to the antecedents for POPR with one's political party, Seltzer and Zhang (2011a) found that time, interpersonal trust, mediated communication, interpersonal communication, and dialogic communication predicted the strength of POPR (Seltzer & Zhang, 2011a). Moving forward, POPR research appeared to further specialize in terms of the organization with whom the relationship occurs (e.g., political party, political group, candidate) or the public relations strategists running the campaign. To that point, empirical research lent itself to understanding the perceived relationship that is known as POPR, whereas additional qualitative research provided a rich understanding as to why and how practitioners employed relationship in their campaigns.

Looking at specific variables that might enhance or predict a relationship, Seltzer and Zhang (2011a) found that trust, political party identification (e.g., Republican, Democrat), and strength of that party affiliation (e.g., weak to strong) were antecedents to POPR. Sweetser et al. (2015) sought to predict POPR through political disposition variables. They found that low levels of political information efficacy (the feeling one has that one knows enough to cast an informed vote) and low political cynicism predicted the POPR factor of commitment. In an experiment comparing candidate public relations content where participants only saw a blog, video, or press release, researchers determined that the channel through which a candidate communicated did not impact POPR (Sweetser & Becktel, 2017).

Credibility

Credibility is commonly understood through decades of research to refer to source credibility, message credibility, or medium credibility (Berlo et al., 1969; Hovland et al., 1953; McCroskey &

Richmond, 1996; Metzger et al., 2003; Yang et al., 2010). Across all mass communication research there have been numerous operationalizations of the credibility concept; however, the general scholarly consensus is that credibility includes a number of different dimensional characteristics such as trust, qualifications, and believability, among others. Yang et al. (2010) summarized source credibility scholarship and its interconnectedness to core concepts and said "past research on source credibility has focused on the expertise or trustworthiness perceived by individual audiences of a communicator as the likelihood to provide credible information" (p. 476).

In public relations literature, the concept of credibility, and trust as a part of that, has always been woven into OPR, and later POPR research underscored its importance (Seltzer & Zhang, 2011a). Indeed, it is suggested that greater levels of these concepts led to stronger relationships with one's political party from the voter standpoint (Dennis & Owen, 2001; Rozell et al., 2006; Seltzer & Zhang, 2011a).

Focused on the larger concept of credibility, Heath (1997) suggested that strong credibility led to positive outcomes in crisis situations. Kim et al. (2015) found evidence that credibility, trust, and authenticity were impacted by public relations efforts. Researchers also found that the communicative strategies for maintaining OPRs (factors: *CC*, *CV*, and a third emerging factor of *Responsiveness*) all positively and moderately correlated with credibility (Sweetser & Becktel, 2017).

Public relations research has often examined credibility and trust alongside one another (Ledingham, 2003), and Kim et al. (2015) suggested they are "critical" (p. 237) variables for understanding public relations success. More finely focusing on the dimensions that make up credibility, Painter (2015) suggested that political trust and this concept of trust in the relational perspective are congruent and parallel. Levenshus (2010) revealed that campaign public relations practitioners viewed trust as a two-way symmetrical relationship, meaning that when the campaign opened up to its constituents it could create more success, and the public would also have greater trust in the campaign they helped shape. Trust is thus considered an antecedent to POPR (Seltzer &

Zhang, 2011a). To this point, Kim et al. (2015) found that trust and authenticity had significant effects on relationship outcomes. In support of that, a national survey during the 2016 election showed Democrats' POPR with their own party was predicted by the respondents' perception of the credibility of the Democratic Party, as well as authenticity of Clinton (who became the Democratic Party's eventually nominated candidate). Results from that study were similar, and stronger, for the Republicans in predicting POPR with the Republican Party based on credibility and authenticity of Trump (Sweetser, 2017).

As Painter (2015) pointed out, trust could be presented both in terms of trust and equally so in terms as *distrust*. Applying Parker's (2012) discussion of inter-party competition during a primary season, where candidates within the same political party attacked one another more than they attacked candidates in the opposing party, it became especially relevant to investigate a concept of trust/distrust when looking at how voters move to candidate choice. The current study will consider the larger concept of credibility, which includes trust as a dimension, to understand how constituents' perceived credibility of a candidate might interplay with their perceived POPR with political parties.

Political Information Efficacy

Efficacy is a much-examined concept in scholarship looking at political communication, and even political public relations. Campbell et al. (1954) defined efficacy in terms of the power one felt one and "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, that is, that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties" (p. 187). Many variables, in fact, could be said to impact that power the voter feels. Important to the area of political public relations is the power that one could gain from exposure to media content.

Focused on the role of media and information communicated through its channels, Kaid et al. (2004, 2007) developed a theory of political information efficacy (PIE). This work built on earlier political communication concepts from the 1950s of political efficacy in general, as well as that from Murphy (2000) and Delli Carpini (2000), which suggested that people did not vote because they felt

as if they did not have enough information to make an informed choice. PIE then focused on internal efficacy and subsequently placed great power on the ability of the media to create that feeling of knowing enough about politics and issues to cast a vote. As such, Kaid and colleague's PIE supported Tan's (1980) assertion that being well-informed led to casting a ballot. Where PIE differed from other concepts of political efficacy in more general political communication literature was that PIE emphasized the "voter's confidence in his/her own political knowledge and its sufficiency to engage the political process (to vote)" (Sweetser & Kaid, 2008, p. 71).

Kaid et al. (2007) found that young voters had lower levels of PIE than older voters. Having looked only at young voters during the 2008 election, Tedesco (2011) found that young voters reported increases in their own PIE throughout that experiment. The study also noted that young voters were not dissuaded by negative information during the campaign, and that exposure to such negative messaging did not reduce the young voters' PIE (Tedesco, 2011). Sweetser and Tedesco (2014) did not find PIE to be impacted by political public relations messages of bipartisanship (e.g., in support of, or against) in their experiment.

The majority of Kaid and colleagues concept of PIE has focused on the young voter. As such, this study sought to provide a look at a more generalized set of constituents and examine the role of PIE during the primaries.

Research Questions

As outlined previously, POPR research has examined one's relationship with their own political party as well as with the Democratic and Republican parties separately, but research has not yet compared one's relationship with one's own political party and that same constituent's opposing political party. In any election, there is only one winner, meaning there are always a block of voters from the losing party who are eventually served by a candidate from the opposing political party. As such, studying the relationship one has with the opposing political party would be helpful in creating a baseline of understanding. Infusing the key construct of credibility here, this study asks:

RQ1a: How does POPR differ between one's own political party and the opposing political party?

RQ1b: How, if at all, does POPR vary on the basis of political party identification?

RQ2a: How do voters assess interloper credibility?

RQ2b: How, if at all, does that assessment vary on the basis of political party identification?

RQ3: How is POPR impacted by interloper credibility?

RQ4: How does POPR with political parties differ during a primary, based on demographics?

Method

Using an IRB-approved online survey of voting-aged adult citizens living in the 14 Super Tuesday states[1], this study sought to understand the relationship voters held with candidates in the week leading up to Super Tuesday during the U.S. presidential primaries for the 2016 election. For parsimony in a very active and large field of candidates during the primary, the survey was deployed in the early spring of 2016 (February 24 through March 1), one week preceding the Super Tuesday primaries, after a series of key debates and a narrowing of the field. At the time the survey was deployed, there were five Republican candidates and two Democratic candidates vying for their parties' nominations.

Given this study focused on interloping candidates, candidates were categorized as being either mainstream or interloping. Interloping candidates represented an interesting perspective of POPR research, given that interlopers are not considered within the in-group of the organization. The categorization as an interloper occurred based on whether the candidate had held elected office before, whether the candidate was new to the party from which he sought nomination, and a review of media coverage characterizing the candidate (Brownstein, 2016). Taking heavy cues from media coverage, which repeatedly painted Sanders, Trump, and Carson as outsiders, this study considered

[1] States holding a primary election on Super Tuesday were: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, North Dakota, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Wyoming, Vermont, and Virginia.

these candidates interlopers for the purpose of this analysis. Republican candidates Ted Cruz, John Kasich, and Marco Rubio were considered mainstream candidates, along with Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

Sample and Procedure

The researchers employed Amazon Turk (MTurk) as a subject pool for recruitment. MTurk is an online system where "workers" are paid for performing tasks. MTurk offers researchers the ability to widen their subject pools (Bates & Lanza, 2013; Buhrmester et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2013; Mason & Suri, 2012; Steelman et al., 2014), and several public relations-focused studies have used MTurk for this purpose (see Kinsky et al., 2015; Li, 2016; McKeever et al., 2016; Men & Tsai, 2015; Sweetser et al., 2016). The researchers paid workers $0.50 to complete a 15-minute survey instrument.

There was a nearly even split between respondents who identified as male (50.7%; *n* = 250) and as female (49.3%; *n* = 243). The average age of respondents was 37.19 years old (*SD* = 12.70; *Mdn* = 33). The majority of participants were White (76.9%; *n* = 379), though African Americans (7.9%; *n* = 39) and those of Hispanic (6.9%; *n* = 34) and Asian origin (4.7%; *n* = 23) were represented. For the most part, respondents had some higher education, with 27.6% having "some college" (*n* = 136). A majority of respondents actually had earned a post-secondary school education, with 8.7% who indicated having earned an associate's degree (*n* = 43), 39.4% a bachelor's degree (*n* = 194), 12.2% a master's degree (*n* = 65), and 1.2% a doctoral degree (*n* = 6). A very small portion of the respondents said that they had not finished high school (0.8%; *n* = 4) and just 8.7% (*n* = 43) had only a high school diploma. Only two respondents did not provide education information. Regarding

income, the average salary as reported by respondents was $60,248 (*SD* = $68,202), with a median salary of $47,000.[2]

The sample was made up of Democrats (45.6%; *n* = 225), Republicans (27.4%; *n* = 135), those who identified themselves as "Independent" (24.9%; *n* = 123), and "other" (2%; *n* = 10).

Instrument

The key concepts at play in this research study were POPR, credibility of the candidates in the 2016 primary, and PIE.

Relationship was measured through the abbreviated measures for communicative strategies for maintaining OPRs (see Sweetser & Kelleher, 2016). This newly adapted 11-item measure was tested and reduced from a traditional 25-item battery, making it a more efficient tool for measuring OPR (cf. Sha, 2016). The two-factor solution included concepts of *Communicated Commitment* (*CC*), illustrated in survey questions such as "communicates a desire to build a relationship" or "implies relationship has future/long term commitment with its publics," and *Conversational Voice* (*CV*), seen as items such as "uses a sense of humor," "makes communication enjoyable," or "would admit mistakes." In the present study, the statements were measured first with the prompt toward "my political party" and then a second time for "the other political party," both on a 7-point Likert-type scale. This approach kept the point of reference constant, even though respondents may have had different political parties. During the analysis phase respondents were later categorized, when needed, as a Democrat assessing the Republican party ("other political party") or Democrat assessing the Democratic party ("my political party"). The same approach was employed for categorizing Republicans. Independents were excluded from MANOVA analyses examining party relationships.

As traditionally done with the abbreviated measures for communicative strategies for maintaining OPR, the items were factor analyzed using principal factor analysis and Varimax

[2] This large standard deviation results from wealthy outliers in the sample, with 14.2% (*n* = 70) reporting an average salary of $100,000 or more – with one participant claiming to earn $1 million per year.

rotation. Two factor analysis procedures were employed in the same fashion: once for the 11 items on communicative strategies for maintaining OPRs with one's own party and once for the 11 items measuring perceived communicative strategies for maintaining OPRs with one's opposing political party. These factors for OPR with one's party and the opposing party were built based on the survey prompt where respondents created their own reference points for OPR, regardless of party affiliation. For both factor analysis procedures, the two expected factors emerged, explaining 77.6% of the variance for one's own party and 74.2% of the variance for one's opposing party. For both sets of the relationship concept, the Sweetser and Kelleher (2016) factors were adopted, where *CV* was the first factor and *CC* was the second. The first factor, in both cases, showed reliability for one's own party (Cronbach's α = .92) and the opposing party (Cronbach's α = .93), as did the second factor (own party Cronbach's α = .94; opposing party's Cronbach's α = .90). While several items in the *CC* factor for the opposing political party dual loaded, the factor make-up otherwise loaded as expected. Strong dual-loading variables were present only in regard to the relationship with the opposing party. Considering the construct validity of these measures in past studies (Sweetser, 2016; Sweetser & Becktel, 2017; Sweetser & Kelleher, 2016), as well as the expected loading here regarding one's own party, these dual-loading variables measuring one's political relationship with the opposition party were standardized into factor scores according to expected loading. See Table 1 for factor loading details for one's own party and Table 2 for details about POPR with the other (opposing) party.

- - Table 1 About Here - -

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Credibility was measured for each of the candidates in the primary at the time the data were collected. Given the importance of trust as an element of credibility, a scale which incorporated trust was selected. A 6-item semantic differential scale using bipolar opposite adjectives allowed respondents the opportunity to mark each candidate on a 7-point scale in terms of word pairs such as

untrustworthy/trustworthy, unqualified/qualified, and unreliable/reliable, among others (Yang et al., 2010). This scale was repeated for all candidates running in the primary at the time data were collected, resulting in 7 separate candidate credibility indices. The Cronbach's alpha reliability scores were as follows: .96 for Trump, .94 for Cruz, .94 for Rubio, .94 for Kasich, .93 for Carson, .93 for Clinton, and .96 for Sanders.

PIE measured the degree to which one believed that he or she knew enough to make an informed political decision. Because this was a self-perception, PIE didn't actually measure knowledge or understanding; rather, it focused on how one felt about one's own understanding of politics. This survey employed three political information efficacy questions which measured whether the respondents considered themselves qualified to participate in politics, better informed about politics and government than most people, and the degree to which the respondents reported understanding the important political issues facing the country (cf. Kaid et al., 2007). These items were summed into a single reliable index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

The survey also asked questions about political ideology, vote choice, and other demographic probes. For example, respondents were asked on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 7 how often they participated in specific political activities such as attending political rallies, actively supporting a candidate, talking about a candidate to others, intending to vote, and discussing the election with others.

Results

Relationship

The researchers first sought to answer how POPR might differ between one's own party and the opposition (*RQ1a*) and how POPR might differ on the basis of party identification (*RQ1b*). Respondents indicated their relationship both with their own and their opposing political party, resulting in the two previously discussed factors for each party-match relationship. An analysis of

variance determined whether members of a specific party had a different relationship either with their own party or the opposing party.

Focused on the relationship with one's own party, an ANOVA compared the two major parties and Independents showed main effects for the *CC* factor (F (483, 3) = 17.69, $p \leq .001$). Democrats reported higher standardized mean scores for their *CC* relationship with their own party than both Republicans (*Mdiff* = .51, $p \leq .001$) and Independents had with their parties (*Mdiff* = .66, $p \leq .001$).

To examine relationship with one's opposing political party, an ANOVA showed main effects when comparing the *CC* factor with political party identification (F (3, 475) = 4.41, $p = .004$). In this case, Independents had a higher standardized *CC* relationship score with the opposing political party than did Democrats (*Mdiff* = .313, $p = .20$).

In answering *RQ1a*, it appears that POPR manifests in similar ways in judgments to one's own party and the opposition, with *CC* relationship emerging as a differentiating factor. In regard to *RQ1b*, it appeared that *CC* played a significant role in the difference between POPR in one's own and the opposing party based on political party identification. In other words, increased communicated commitment drove higher satisfaction with voters' relationships with both their own and the opposition party.

Credibility

The next set of *RQ*s asked how voters assessed the credibility of interloper candidates (*RQ2a*) and how, if at all, those assessments differed based on party identification (*RQ2b*). Respondents rated each candidate for credibility, using a 7-point Likert-type scale. Resulting indices for each candidate expressed how credible respondents on average found the politicians, and represented that credibility using the same 7 points from not credible (1) to very credible (7). Among the candidates, both Democratic candidates showed the highest level of credibility with Sanders leading (M = 5.03, SD = 1.76), followed by Clinton (M = 4.04; SD = 1.82). The Republican candidates were ranked moderate-

to-low in credibility: Kasich (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = 1.44), Rubio (*M* = 3.69, *SD* = 1.45), Cruz (*M* = 3.51, *SD* = 1.61), Carson (*M* = 3.34, *SD* = 1.69), and Trump (*M* = 2.81, *SD* = 1.90).

The researchers examined these perceived credibility differences further, using paired-sample t-tests to evaluate differences in candidate credibility ratings within each party. Among Democrats, Sanders was viewed as significantly more credible than Clinton, *Mdiff* = 1.03, $t(220) = 7.524$, $p < .001$. Examining the credibility of interloper candidates relative to mainstream candidates within the Republican party produced few significant differences. Republican respondents viewed Carson as no more or less credible than his counterparts. Regarding assessments of Trump, only Rubio emerged as significantly more credible, *Mdiff* = .45, $t(134) = 2.11$, $p < .05$. It appears that Republicans differed little in their assessments of their candidates' credibility, mainstream or otherwise, while Democrats appeared more welcoming of Sanders as an interloper.

To answer *RQ2b*, the researchers tested how credibility assessments of the candidates might differ on the basis of an individual's party. A one-way MANOVA using party affiliation (coded -1 = Democrat, 0 = Independent, 1= Republican)[3] as a fixed factor and credibility assessments as the dependent variable was conducted. The test proved significant with considerable effect size, Wilk's $\lambda = .48$, $F(14, 920) = 28.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .31$.[4] Follow-up ANOVAs for each candidate proved highly significant: Trump, $F(2, 466) = 69.45$, $p < .001$; Cruz, $F(2, 466) = 49.91$, $p < .001$; Rubio, $F(2, 466) = 47.99$, $p < .001$; Kasich, $F(2, 466) = 12.81$, $p < .001$; Carson, $F(2, 466) = 57.61$, $p < .001$; Clinton, $F(2, 466) = 79.96$, $p < .001$; Sanders, $F(2, 466) = 114.57$, $p < .001$. Generally, respondents who identified with a particular party saw that party's candidates as more significantly credible than individuals identifying with the opposition party or as Independents. The interloping Republican

[3] The 10 respondents who listed "other" as their political party were excluded from further analysis for the sake of parsimony.

[4] When Independents were removed from the sample, this same MANOVA – and follow-up ANOVAs – remained significant and the effect size doubled (Wilk's $\lambda = .40$, $F(7, 343) = 73.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .60$), further indicating the consequence of party affiliation on credibility judgments of primary candidates.

candidates (Trump and Carson) showed the greatest differences in credibility when comparing Republican respondents' assessments to that of candidates in other parties. While a similar trend emerged for the Democratic interloping candidate (Sanders), that did not hold true on all comparisons. See Table 3 for post-hoc test credibility index comparison.

- - Table 3 About Here - -

Of primary interest to the researchers was how the four political party relationship factors discussed above would vary based on differences in credibility assessments, demographics, political ideology, and political behavior. Because these relationship factors were based in party affiliation, the researchers included only those who identified as either Democrat or Republican in the analyses that follow. The remaining sample used from this point forward in analysis (N = 360) included 62.5% (n = 225) Democrats and 37.5% (n = 135) Republicans.[5]

-- Table 4 About Here --

Continuing the focus on credibility in answering how POPR impacted credibility (*RQ3*), a series of one-way MANOVAs used *CV* and *CC* relationship variables as dependent variables and credibility assessments for fixed factors were conducted. First, credibility assessments for each candidate were trichotomized to create nominal grouping variables (coded -1 = not credible, 0 = average, 1 = highly credible). The resulting MANOVAs proved significant for each candidate: Trump, Wilk's $\lambda = .91$, F (8, 674) = 3.62, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$; Cruz, Wilk's $\lambda = .87$, F (8, 674) = 5.87, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$; Rubio, Wilk's $\lambda = .85$, F (8, 674) = 7.00, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$; Kasich, Wilk's $\lambda = .92$, F (8, 674) = 3.54, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$; Carson, Wilk's $\lambda = .87$, F (8, 674) = 6.16, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$; Clinton, Wilk's $\lambda = .92$, F (8, 674) = 3.48, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$; Sanders, Wilk's $\lambda = .87$, F (8, 674) = 6.07, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Therefore, follow-up ANOVAs were analyzed for each candidate, employing the Bonferroni method for all post-hoc analysis.

[5] Of the subset of participants, 97.8% (n = 352) were registered voters, and responses to a 7-point Likert indicated high intention to vote in the primaries (M = 5.67, SD = 1.88). These individuals were thus deemed likely voters.

For Trump, an interloper candidate in the present study, the *CV* for the opposition party (F (2, 340) = 5.24, $p < .01$) and the *CC* (F (2, 340) = 3. 49, $p < .05$) and *CV* (F (2, 340) = 3.09, $p < .05$) for one's own party were significant. Post-hoc tests using the Bonferroni method revealed that, compared to individuals viewing Trump as not credible, those who rated him as average in credibility reported a better *CV* relationship with the opposition party (M_{diff} = .40, $p < .01$). Additionally, compared to those who viewed Trump as not credible, individuals who rated him as highly credibility reported a worse *CC* relationship with their own party (M_{diff} = -.31, $p < .05$) and individuals who rated him as average in credibility reported a worse *CV* relationship with their own party (M_{diff} = -.32, $p < .05$).

For Cruz, both the *CC* (F (2, 340) = 10.18, $p < .001$) and the *CV* (F (2, 340) = 9.58, $p < .001$) for the opposition party were significant. According to Bonferroni post-hoc tests, compared to those who found Cruz not credible, both individuals rating him as highly credible (M_{diff} = .51, $p < .001$) and average in credibility (M_{diff} = .51, $p < .001$) reported better *CC* relationships with the other party. The same pattern emerged regarding *CV* relationships, which were better for those reporting high (M_{diff} = .57, $p < .001$) and average credibility (M_{diff} = .31, $p < .05$) compared to those who found Cruz less credible.

For Rubio, both the *CC* (F (2, 340) = 5.47, $p < .01$) and *CV* (F (2, 340) = 16.43, $p < .001$) relationships with the opposition party were significant, as was the *CC* relationship with one's own party (F (2, 340) = 5.95, $p < .01$). Bonferroni post-hoc tests showed that those rating Rubio average in credibility reported better *CC* relationships with the other party than those rating Rubio as not credible (M_{diff} = .42, $p < .01$). Higher quality *CV* relationships with the other party were also perceived by those who rated Rubio as highly credible, in comparison to both those who reported average (M_{diff} = .33, $p < .05$) and low credibility (M_{diff} = .72, $p < .001$). Moreover, those who viewed Rubio as average in regard to credibility also reported better relationships with the other party than those who saw Rubio as not credible (M_{diff} = .39, $p < .01$). Lastly, in comparison to individuals who

rated Rubio as not credible, those who viewed him as average in credibility reported a worse *CC* relationship with their own party (M_{diff} = -.43, p < .01).

For Kasich, both the *CC* (F (2, 340) = 3.68, p < .05) and the *CV* (F (2, 340) = 8.70, p < .001) for the opposition party were significant. Based on Bonferroni post-hoc tests regarding relationships with the opposition party, those who rated Kasich as highly credible reported worse *CC* relationships than those who saw him average in credibility (M_{diff} = -.33, p < .05) and better *CV* relationships than those who saw him as not at all credible (M_{diff} = .523, p < .001).

For Carson, the other Republican interloper candidate in the present study, both the *CC* (F (2, 340) = 8.87, p < .001) and *CV* (F (2, 340) = 10.22, p < .001) relationships with the opposition party were significant, as was the *CC* relationship with one's own party (F (2, 340) = 5.66, p < .01). Bonferroni post-hoc analyses revealed that, in comparison with those who rated Carson as not credible, those who saw him as average in credibility (M_{diff} = .33, p < .05) and highly credible (M_{diff} = .50, p < .001) reported better *CC* relationships with the opposition party. The same pattern held for *CV* relationships with the opposition party (M_{diff} = .42, p < .01; M_{diff} = .53, p < .001). Lastly, those who rated Carson as highly credible reported worse *CC* relationships with their own parties than those who found him not at all credible (M_{diff} = -.38, p < .01).

For Clinton, only the *CC* relationship with one's own party proved significant (F (2, 340) = 11.89, p < .001). Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed that those who found her highly credible reported significantly better *CC* relationships with their own parties than did individuals who rated her as not credible (M_{diff} = .57, p < .001).

For Sanders, the Democratic interloper candidate in the present study, both the *CC* (F (2, 340) = 3.46, p < .05) and *CV* (F (2, 340) = 3.48, p < .05) relationships with the opposition party were significant, as was the *CC* relationship with one's own party (F (2, 340) = 17.86, p < .001). Compared to those rating Sanders as average in credibility, those viewing him as very credible reported significantly worse *CC* relationships with the opposition party (M_{diff} = -.32, p < .05) and

significantly worse *CV* relationships with the opposition party (M_{diff} = -.35, $p < .05$). Additionally, those who viewed Sanders as credible reported significantly better *CC* relationships with their own party than those who rated him as average in credibility (M_{diff} = .43, $p < .001$) or not at all credible (M_{diff} = .68, $p < .001$).

Relationships and Other Political Factors

Given that credibility assessments of each candidate resulted in variance in the relationship variables, the researchers continued analysis and used a one-way MANOVA to test for differences in *CC* and *CV* both in regard to one's own party and the opposition party based on one's candidate preference. Significant differences were found among these relationship constructs based upon candidate preference, Wilk's $\lambda = .83$, F (24, 1163) = 2.67, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Follow-up ANOVAs were significant for the *CV* relationship with the opposition party (F (6, 336) = 2.54, $p < .05$) and the *CC* relationship with one's own party (F (6, 336) = 4.84, $p < .001$). Bonferroni post-hoc analysis of the *CV* relationship with the opposition party revealed only that Carson supporters reported better *CV* relationships than did Sanders supporters (M_{diff} = .87, $p < .05$). Bonferroni post-hoc analysis of the *CC* relationship with one's own party showed that Clinton supporters reported better *CC* relationships than did both Cruz (M_{diff} = .72, $p < .01$) and Rubio supporters (M_{diff} = .73, $p < .05$), and that Sanders supporters reported better *CC* relationship than did Cruz supporters (M_{diff} = .60, $p < .05$).

Next the researchers investigated differences based on how strongly one identified as Democrat or Republican. To create this grouping variable, the researchers multiplied party affiliation and the strength of one's party identification (coded 1 = weak, 7 = strong) to create the ratio variable of political spectrum (code -7 = strong Democrat, 7 = strong Republican). Political spectrum was then trichotomized to create a nominal grouping variable (coded -1 = Strong Democrat, 0 = centrist, 1 = Strong Republican).

Using a one-way MANOVA, the researchers tested for differences in *CC* and *CV* difference based on respondents' political spectrum. Significant differences were found among these

relationship constructs based upon political spectrum, Wilk's $\lambda = .84$, F (8, 674) = 7.58, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Follow-up ANOVAs for both *CC* (F (2, 340) = 19.86, $p < .001$) and *CV* (F (2, 340) = 6.44, $p < .01$) in relation to one's own party proved significant. Strong Democrats reported significantly better *CC* relationships with their party than did either centrists ($M_{diff} = .40$, $p < .01$) or strong Republicans ($M_{diff} = .67$, $p < .001$). Similarly, strong Democrats also reported better *CV* relationships with their own party than centrists ($M_{diff} = .48$, $p < .01$) and strong Republicans ($M_{diff} = .27$, $p = .06$), though in this case only the strong Democrat/centrist difference was statistically significant.

The researchers next investigated how PIE and political activity might relate to POPR evaluations in regard to political party among the entire sample. Given that the data were collected prior to the field significantly narrowing and months before each party's nominating conventions, respondents did not report extreme activity in campaigns; however, they appeared to be engaged in discourse and planned on voting in the upcoming election. The least reported active political behavior among respondents was attending a political rally or meeting ($M = 1.52$, $SD = 1.20$). Respondents were slightly, but not much, more likely to support specific candidates actively ($M = 2.39$; $SD = 1.81$), talk to others about why one should vote for a specific candidate ($M = 3.43$; $SD = 2.02$), and discussed the upcoming presidential election with other people ($M = 4.91$; $SD = 1.86$). Though not extremely involved at the time of the survey, respondents did indicate overall participation in the election through intention to vote ($M = 5.50$; $SD = 1.90$). While there were some distinctions among these items, overall they demonstrated sound inter-item reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$), and thus a political activity summative index was created and used in subsequent analyses.

To test for differences among the relationship constructs based on PIE and political activity, the two variables were dichotomized along their medians to create nominal grouping variables (code 0 = low, 1 = high). A series of independent samples *t*-tests were then conducted. Individuals with high PIE scores were significantly more likely to report dissatisfaction in their *CC* relationships with the other party than those low in PIE (t (345) = -4.93, $p < .001$, $M_{diff} = -.50$), but significantly more

likely to report positive *CC* relationships with their own parties (t (353) = 2.42, p <.05, M_{diff} = .24). There were no significant differences in the value of party relationships between those high and low in political activity.

Relationships and Demographic Factors

Finally, to examine how POPR might differ based on demographics (*RQ4*), the researchers wished to test for differences in relationship constructs during the primary season based on the demographics of age, income, gender, education, and race. Age and income were dichotomized along their medians to create nominal grouping variables to be used in *t*-tests. Younger individuals were significantly more satisfied with their *CC* relationships with the other party than were older individuals (t (345) = 2.96, p <.01, M_{diff} = .31), while wealthier individuals were more satisfied with their *CV* relationships with the other party than were their poorer counterparts (t (345) = 3.15, p <.01, M_{diff} = .33). Concerning gender, women rated both their *CV* (t (353) = 3.01, p <.01, M_{diff} = .31) and *CC* (t (317.53) = 2.94, p <.01, M_{diff} = .29)[6] relationships with their own parties as better than did men.

A series of MANOVAs was used to investigate the effects of education and race on the dependent relationship variables. The MANOVA for education was significant (Wilk's λ = .89, F (24, 1156) = 1.71, p < .05, η^2 = .03), but none of the follow-up ANOVAs for the individual relationship constructs proved significant at the p = .05 level. The MANOVA for race was nonsignificant, Wilk's λ = .91, F (24, 1163) = 1.41, p = .09, η^2 = .03. Thus it appears that the relationship factors do not differ significantly along the lines of education level or race.

Discussion

The idea of an interloper – someone that *intrudes* by driving rhetoric and engaging in agenda building – evolving from dark horse to viable candidate seems out-of-step with how an organization might promote candidates to power positions. That is, if an organization was actively using relational maintenance strategies with their publics, then it is expected that the organization understood what

[6] Levene's test was significant, therefore equal variances could not be assumed.

those publics wanted in a leader, a candidate, and a nominee. By all accounts, given the media framing of the interloping candidates as a shock to the standard political party system, this is not what happened in the 2016 election. Prior to the election, an article in the *Atlantic* pondered the rise of Trump and Sanders, who they considered to be "fringe" candidates. In that article, Brownstein (2016) submitted "By speaking to the discontents of neglected groups of voters, the two men—who share little else in common—have both found political success." This discontent of key publics within an organization seemed to create the environment in which an interloper became a viable candidate. As such, the 2016 election provided a key moment to look at the state of POPR that voters have with their political party and the factors that go into creating a strong relationship.

The key constructs examined in the present study were credibility and POPR with both one's own party and the opposition party. Not surprisingly, members of a given political party tended to find their own party's candidate to be significantly more credible than was found by either members of the opposition party or Independents. Of greater interest to public relations scholarship and practice is how those differences in credibility assessments were manifested in the reported quality of relationships one had with each political party.

As stated at the outset of this study, the researchers expected to see similarities in relationship evaluations among the supporters of interloper candidates regardless of specific party affiliation. Specifically, it seemed possible that supporters of Trump, Carson, and Sanders would report greater dissatisfaction in their relationships with their parties in comparison to supporters of more mainstream candidates, which in turn might lead them to support interloper candidates. In virtually no way do the results here bear this out.

Few differences in relationship quality emerged using candidate preference as a fixed factor in the MANOVA conducted. In truth, the differences in POPR based on credibility assessments of each candidate were far more telling. While those rating Trump and Carson as more credible tended to report less satisfaction in their relationships with their own party, the same held true for Rubio. On

the other hand, those who rated Sanders as more credible reported greater satisfaction in their relationships with their own party, directly contradicting the thesis that dissatisfaction leads to the interloper's rise to power. Moreover, this same positive effect emerged regarding credibility assessments of Clinton. The findings from the MANOVA using political spectrum as a grouping variable further corroborated these findings: strong Democrats were significantly more satisfied with their relationship with their party than strong Republicans were with their own.

The connection between candidate credibility assessments and relationship quality with the opposing party followed similar, party-line patterns. Generally, those who saw Republican candidates as more credible reported higher levels of satisfaction with the opposition party. The opposite was true for Sanders; those who found him more credible reported poorer relationships with the opposition party.

Keeping in mind that candidate credibility was highly influenced by party affiliation, it appeared that Republicans were generally dissatisfied with their relationship with their own party, yet satisfied with their relationship with the Democratic Party, whereas Democrats were satisfied with their relationships with their own party, but dissatisfied with their relationship with the Republican Party. Taken together, these findings are even simpler: Across the board, individuals appear satisfied with their relationship with the Democratic Party and dissatisfied with their relationship with the Republican Party, regardless of party affiliation.

Looking beyond party differences, other factors influenced perceived relationship quality with political parties. Individuals high in PIE reported dissatisfaction in their relationship with the opposition party, but satisfaction in their relationship with their own party. Additionally, women tended to report better relationships with their own party than did men.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. Though the study moved data collection off a college campus to get a more general population set of respondents focused in Super Tuesday states, it did

not apply a stratified sample, which would have guaranteed a more equal subset of Democrats and Republicans.

The categorization of interlopers here also provides a bit of a limitation. First, the candidacies of Sanders, Trump, and Carson all presented a wide degree of difference. That is to say, these three candidates were different in terms of their political experience and connection to the party from which they sought nomination. The categorization here was based on statements made by all the candidates, their past behaviors and official political party identification, as well as the media's portrayal of the candidates within the primary pool. In the absence of previous literature and research to drive a definition of an interloper, especially with regard to POPR, the researchers here worked to develop that conceptual definition resulting in a limitation which should provide heuristic value for future scholars to more closely examine.

More to this point, some may take issue with the categorization of Sanders as an interloper in the present study. Certainly Sanders had experience in working alongside with the Democratic Party, caucusing with them for a decade, and shared many of their broad ideological views; however, he is often quoted as defining himself as not being a Democrat. Furthermore, the media coverage of his candidacy portrayed him (however inaccurately) as the anti-establishment candidate in comparison to Clinton. Taking his own definition of himself ("I am not a Democrat") alongside with the media portrayal during the time of the data collection, he appeared to be an intruder by definition into the Democratic Party. While he may have been a welcomed intruder, he had spent more of his career outside of the party than he had in it.

Given that the categorization for interloping candidates here so closely relied on media coverage in defining which candidates were non-establishment interlopers, this study sought to employ an OPR measure that captured the essence of constituents' perception of communication from the political parties. The Sweetser and Kelleher (2016) scale focused on the communicative strategies in maintaining OPR seemed to be a parsimonious fit for measuring POPR here. That said,

the scale measured only two dimensions of OPR, as opposed to the more traditional scales with more factors. Given that it is a newly developed scale, the communicative strategies in maintaining OPR scale has thus only experienced limited use by scholars and would benefit from a fuller body of research behind it.

Future Research

As with any study, more research must be done. Thinking through one's weak OPR with one's own party, there are many questions yet to be answered. Presumably, party members become dissatisfied with their relationships with their own party if they felt their interests weren't represented. Panning outward from these findings, to some degree, the relationship with a political party may depend on how a political party is defined in the first place. These questions began during the 2016 election. Who defines a political party? If a political party is bound by a common published platform, how do voters and party members define the party and its platform? How do they see their role and investment in that process? To some extent, this may be similar to the distinction between identity (what the organization says it is) and reputation (what publics perceive the organization to be). These questions open up a series of new scholarly areas for political public relations scholars. Future scholarship in OPR, and especially POPR, should delve into how a constituent comes to join a party and what that constituent then expects from that party by way of championing the party ideals.

Building on the questions about one's own party, this look at POPR with the opposing party provides illumination on what happens after the election. Respondents here showed an overall stable relationship with the Democratic Party (regardless of affiliation), but appeared to have a weak relationship with the Republican Party. Considering that the Republican Party won the presidency and a number of other key posts nationally in 2016, more research must be done on both the role of relationship with a party other than your own as well as the Republican Party's public relations strategies and tactics in engaging their party members and as well as constituents who do not share their beliefs. Scholars, and political public relations scholars especially, should focus their empirical

efforts in studying the relationship and satisfaction of the out-group (e.g., those in the opposing party) after an election instead of only focusing on the role of POPR during an election.

While the data here did not examine POPR in a longitudinal manner, the proposition that relationship bonds with one's political party may be deteriorating deserves greater importance in light of this study. The mere fact that a candidate once considered an interloper in his party both won his party's nomination and later the election underscores a deep discord and disconnect between the party and the voter. Future research should examine the role and rise of the interloper.

Conclusion

General OPR research considered trustworthiness and the greater concept of credibility, as it was examined here, central to building and maintaining relationships. In this political public relations study, the candidate with the absolute highest level of credibility (Sanders: $M = 5.30$ out of 7) during the primary season failed to earn his party's nomination. The candidate with the absolute lowest level of credibility (Trump: $M = 2.81$ out of 7) not only won the nomination, but was eventually elected president. The media portrayed both candidates, different as they are, as non-establishment interlopers during the primary. The party with the most stable relationship (e.g., Democratic Party) lost the election to the party with the most distressed relationship overall (e.g., Republican Party). These empirical data, mixed with the case study of the 2016 election, underscored the complexity of relationship and political public relations in general. What is known from both these data and the subsequent media coverage since the election is that political public relations practitioners on the winning side must work to build a relationship with all constituents, establish a degree of trust and credibility for their new party leader, and repair the system apparently so disconnected from the people of the party that it entertained three interlopers as viable candidates for so long during the primary season.

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Table 1. Factor Analysis for Measures of Communicated Strategies for Maintaining OPR with My Own Political Party

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Factor 1: *Conversational Voice*		
Makes communication enjoyable	.78	
Provides prompt/uncritical feedback when addressing criticism	.76	
Would admit mistakes	.73	
Provides connections to competitors	.72	
Positively address complaints or queries	.71	
Uses a sense of humor in communication	.67	
Factor 2: *Communicated Commitment*		
Communicates desire to build relationship		.86
Implies relationship has future/long term commitment		.84
Demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a relationship		.81
Uses a positive/optimistic tone		.64
Expresses cheer & optimism about the future		.61
Variance explained	68.7%	8.9%

Table 2. Factor Analysis for Measures of Communicated Strategies for Maintaining OPR with The Other (Opposing) Political Party

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Factor 1: *Conversational Voice*		
Positively address complaints or queries	.80	
Makes communication enjoyable	.79	
Would admit mistakes	.79	
Provides prompt/uncritical feedback when addressing criticism	.76	
Provides connections to competitors	.71	
Uses a sense of humor in communication	.73	
Factor 2: *Communicated Commitment*		
Implies relationship has future/long term commitment		.88
Communicates desire to build relationship		.88
Demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a relationship		.77
Uses a positive/optimistic tone	.59	.48
Expresses cheer & optimism about the future	.65	.41
Variance explained	61.2%	12.9%

Table 3

Bonferroni Comparisons for Candidate Credibility based on Political Party Identification

Comparisons	Mean Differences	Sig.
Donald Trump (R)		
Rep. vs Ind.	1.43	$p < .001$
Rep. vs Dem.	2.17	$p < .001$
Ind. vs Dem.	0.73	$p < .001$
Ted Cruz (R)		
Rep. vs Ind.	1.16	$p < .001$
Rep. vs Dem.	1.61	$p < .001$
Ind. vs Dem.	0.44	$p < .01$
Marco Rubio (R)		
Rep. vs Ind.	1.03	$p < .01$
Rep. vs Dem.	1.42	$p < .001$
Ind. vs Dem.	0.39	$p < .05$
Ben Carson (R)		
Rep. vs Ind.	1.20	$p < .001$
Rep. vs Dem.	1.80	$p < .001$
Ind. vs Dem.	0.59	$p < .01$
John Kasich (R)		
Rep. vs Ind.	0.63	$p < .01$
Rep. vs Dem.	1.03	$p < .01$
Ind. vs Dem.	NS	
Hillary Clinton (D)		
Dem. vs Ind.	0.82	$p < .001$
Dem. vs Rep.	2.19	$p < .001$
Ind. vs Rep.	1.37	$p < .001$
Bernie Sanders (D)		
Dem. vs Ind.	0.68	$p < .001$
Dem. vs Rep.	2.40	$p < .001$
Ind. vs Rep.	1.72	$p < .001$

Note: Credibility was rated as 6-item index on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strong disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7).

Table 4

General Effects of Increased Candidate Credibility on Relationship Factors

Candidate	*CC* Relationship with Opposition Party	*CV* Relationship with Opposition Party	*CC* Relationship with Own Party	*CV* Relationship with Own Party
Trump		Positive		Negative
Cruz	Positive	Positive		
Rubio	Positive	Positive	Negative	
Kasich	Positive	Positive	Negative	
Carson				
Clinton			Positive	
Sanders	Negative	Negative	Positive	