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ABSTRACT

Historically, a "feminine communication style" has not been a welcomed addition to the masculinized arena of American campaigning. But this style's personalized and interactive elements have started to gain a foothold in digital campaigning because it mimics the intimacy of retail politics and face-to-face campaigning. To examine whether candidates are incorporating a feminine communication style in a mediated campaign setting, this study features a content analysis of U.S. Senate candidates' campaign Twitter feeds during the 2012 election cycle, and explores the differences across candidate gender and electoral success for personalization and interactivity. Results revealed that men and women were similar in their incorporation of personalization, and women were more interactive than men. Further, the type of personalization and interactivity contributed differently to electoral success for women and men.

KEYWORDS

Digital campaigning; gender; interactivity; personalization; Twitter

American politics is a masculinized domain. The historic exclusion of women from public politics has created a cultural arena in which masculinized values and political values are often the same (e.g., Braden, 1996; Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Consequently, women and cultural perceptions of feminine gender are at odds with politics, and this tension is present at seemingly every turn for women candidates. For example, by and large, the public learns about politics via the news media (Graber, 2009). This source of information is particularly problematic for women because it tends to skew negatively, questions women's viability, focuses on their physical appearance and attractiveness, and can be overtly sexist (Bystrom, 2006; Dolan, 2006; Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011). If women candidates are also mothers, the chasm between femininity and elected office is captured in a question often put to women: Can you be a good mom and a good politician at the same time? If women call out sexism during a campaign, they may be accused of playing the "gender card." All of these factors often turn women's gender into a liability.

This damaging perspective of women and the role of femininity in politics, however, is not all-encompassing. Femininity can be a positive force in

politics. Voters like candidates who are honest, collaborative, and empathetic, all of which are perceived as "feminine character traits" (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; McGraw, 2003). There are discernable benefits to these traits: women politicians' emphasis on collaboration and consensus-building activities tends to keep their bills alive longer in the legislative process (Volden, Wiseman, & Wittmer, 2013). The benefits of feminine traits were also on display in 2013 when women senators said it was their ability to work together and across party lines that helped resolve the government shutdown (Steenland, 2013). Further, a "feminine communication style" can also be advantageous. Feminine styling, which will be discussed in greater detail later, is more personal, conversational, and interactive (Campbell, 1989; Jamieson, 1988). This style may prove to be particularly beneficial to contemporary candidates. Retail politics, with its small, intimate gatherings where candidates can have more direct contact with voters, is apt for feminine styling. Retail politics is still a mainstay in modern campaigns, but the rise and proliferation of the Internet and social media means candidates are increasingly trading face time for seemingly less intimate screen time. However, candidates could potentially bring the relational warmth of retail

politics to mediated spaces by mimicking the interactivity and personalized self-disclosure present in retail politics via a more feminized styling. Femininity could be a boon, not a bane, for campaigning.

To examine whether men and women candidates are embracing feminine communication styles on social media, this study content analyzes 24 U.S. Senate candidates' campaign Twitter feeds during their respective general elections, and examines how and to what extent candidates incorporated personalization and interactivity in their tweets. Twitter, and other social media, was built for interactivity and self-disclosure—signified by functions such as @replies and showcased by the original prompt, "What are you doing?"—making it a key platform to study given this study's focus. Additionally, though Twitter launched in 2006, it was not until 2012 that it became a go-to campaigning platform in American politics. All presidential candidates, as well as almost all U.S. Senate and House candidates, were on Twitter in 2012, contributing to a flurry of activity: tweet volume on Election Day in 2008 represented about six minutes of tweet volume during the general elections in 2012 (Sharp, 2012). Pew Research Center (2015) also found that 32% of millennials and 28% of Generation X and baby boomers on Twitter follow candidates, political parties, or elected officials, suggesting that candidate communication on Twitter does reach the public and may contribute to voters' impression-formation process. Building on this groundswell of political activity and attention, this study explores how women and men implemented feminine communication styles and how their styles corresponded with electoral success.

Gendered communication styles

The dominance of men in American politics, and slow integration of women in office, means that when women run in elections, gender often emerges as a salient feature in their communications, producing what we might call a gendered communication strategy. A gendered communication strategy is one in which a "performance of gender" is a core component. By this we mean gender is a constructed identity comprising stylized, performative, and repeated acts that

constitute what we as a society think it means to be a man or a woman, or to act manly or womanly (Butler, 1988).¹ In the words of Simone de Beauvoir (1949), "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman" through the appropriating and performing of cultural and historic discourses ascribed to gendered identities (p. 267). Numerous scholars have categorized certain communication acts and tendencies as evoking a "feminine style" or "masculine style." Campbell (1989) developed these styles in her analysis of early feminist rhetoric, and characterized a feminine style as communication "that displays a personal tone, uses personal experiences, anecdotes and examples as evidence, exhibits inductive structure, emphasizes audience participation, and encourages identification between speaker and audience" (p. 13). Davisson (2009) put forward a similar characterization of feminine styling, and, along with Jamieson (1988), attributed it to women and men traditionally occupying, respectively, private versus public spheres in society. Over time, communication in these spheres develops into certain speech patterns: The private/domestic sphere sets the expectation that communication will be more personal, intimate, and conversational than in the public sphere, which evokes more formality (Davisson, 2009). In turn, a more masculinized style is perceived as more impersonal, straightforward, factual, and analytical (Campbell, 1989; Davisson, 2009; Jamieson, 1988). Research has shown that women and men differentially incorporate these gendered styles. For example, women are more likely than men to self-disclose, and women believe that self-disclosure can foster intimacy in relationships (Cross & Madson, 1997; Dindia & Allen, 1992). This study is interested in how these gendered styles manifest in digital campaigning.

Gendered communication styles and campaign spaces

For much of American political history, feminine communication styles, as compared to the norm of masculine styles, were seen to have no place in politics. The tide started to turn with the proliferation of television. Speaking in regard to politics, Hart (1999) noted, television brought "persons of great magnitude into our own, very modest living

rooms. They share themselves with us, persons whom they have never met" (p. 27).² This level of intimacy affected public discourse and communication styles. Jamieson (1988) noted that television "invites a personal, self-disclosing style that draws public discourse out of a private self" (p. 84), creating what she called a "womanly style." In turn, Jamieson (1988) posited that women may have an advantage on this medium because they are already culturally associated with this more feminine style, and that men's inability to self-disclose on this medium means the "manly" style is a noose" (p. 81). Women candidates, then, could potentially take advantage of the gender congruency between their style and the medium.

Social media also carry the hallmarks of a more feminine medium. Walton and Rice (2013) argue that social media value sharing and self-disclosure over privacy, and that both of these characteristics are norms in this environment. Personalization, as defined in this study, maps on closely with these norms and is present when candidates reveal some aspect of their personal life or identity, or make a personal connection between their lived experiences and campaign content. This definition corresponds with the concepts of personal self-disclosure and the privatization form of personalization (Van Aelst, Shearer, & Stanyer, 2012). Given social media's orientation toward self-disclosure, social media appear to encourage personalization, which can benefit candidates. We expect others to self-disclose on social media, and thus it is not abnormal for candidates to do so in this space. By following the norms of the space, candidates' self-disclosure could be seen as more natural versus being seen as pretense. Scholarship has found that candidates incorporate various forms of personalization on Twitter (e.g., Evans, Cordova, & Sipole, 2014; Evans, Ovalle, & Green, 2015; Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010; Graham, Broersma, & Hazelhoff, 2013)—suggesting that candidates have taken note of this norm.

In addition to fitting the norms of the space, personalization may be especially valuable in campaigns because people often seek an "everyman/woman" candidate whom they can relate to. Graham et al. (2013) posit that by adding personalization to their tweets, candidates can "convey the impression that politicians are grounded in reality

and know about people's concerns because they are 'just like us'" (p. 17). Consequently, this sense of familiarity can create a certain level of intimacy on Twitter, which may enable citizens to feel more personally connected with politicians (Golbeck et al., 2010). Scholarship has shown that personalization can create closeness and other benefits for candidates. Recent research examined the effects of personalized versus depersonalized tweets on candidate evaluations in South Korea and the United States, wherein personalized tweets from the candidate revealed some personal information about the candidate (Lee & Oh, 2012; Meeks, 2014). The personalized tweets triggered a stronger sense of direct conversation with the candidate, more positive evaluations, and stronger vote intention for the candidate. Ultimately, when candidates break down the divide between their public and private selves via the feminine styling of personalization, they may also be able to overcome the disconnected feeling of mediated campaigning.

Social media and television share a similar tilt toward personalization, but social media go a step beyond television in terms of being a more feminized space because of interactivity. Campbell (1989) noted that feminine communication styles invite more audience participation, and women's tendency to emphasize collaboration generally and in political settings suggests that interactivity is a more feminine style (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; McGraw, 2003; Volden et al., 2013). Before delving into the role of interactivity in social media, it is first important to conceptually define interactivity. This study combines several definitions of interactivity—Lee and Shin (2012), Rogers (2003), and Steuer (1992)—and defines interactivity as the degree to which communication is two-way, and participants in a communication process can exchange roles and modify the flow and content of a mediated environment. As such, interactivity via Twitter includes different users taking on and exchanging the roles of mentioning another user, replying to another user, or reposting another user's tweet content.

By diminishing physical obstacles to interaction and bringing interlocutors into the same space, social media facilitate interaction. This affordance is crucial to candidates and citizens seeking a stronger connection. Coleman and Blumler (2009) argue that direct representation requires

politicians and citizens to inhabit mutual spaces of everyday communication, and such spaces can foster closeness and mutuality. Whereas previous research has found that candidates use networked platforms for mostly one-way communication (see Larsson, 2013), a growing body of work has shown that candidates are taking advantage of Twitter's interactive features, and the majority of their dialectic exchanges are with citizens (e.g., Enli & Skogerbo, 2013; Graham et al., 2013; Larsson & Ihlen, 2015). Though this interaction could be characterized as controlled or thin, and best suited for mobilizing support versus contributing to rich democratic deliberations (see Stromer-Galley, 2014), research has shown that when candidates interact, there are multiple beneficial outcomes. A study conducted during the 2010 Dutch elections found that more interactive candidates on Twitter received more votes than less interactive candidates (Kruikemeier, 2014). Additionally, an experiment set in the Netherlands found that more interactive candidates prompted higher levels of perceived closeness with the candidate, and candidates who combined personalization with higher interactivity triggered the highest levels of perceived closeness (Kruikemeier, Van Noort, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2013). Overall, social media appear to foster a feminine communication style and the public values candidates' use of this style. In turn, just as Jamieson (1988) posited that women had an advantage with television, social media may afford women candidates the ability to showcase more feminine styling.

This affordance, however, may not be easy to employ. For much of modern politics, women have been told they must run like a man to be successful in America's masculine political system. In turn, many women candidates embraced a more masculinized style, and distanced themselves from femininity and its potential benefits. Jamieson (1988) noted this irony, arguing that in women's race for gender and political equality, they swept feminine styling aside and are now charged with the task of reclaiming it. However, just because television and social media have lifted the profile of feminine styling, American politics is still masculine and women looking to reclaim the feminine style may encounter a double bind. Jamieson's (1995) femininity/competence double

bind stipulated that women can meet societal expectations of femininity at the cost of being perceived as incompetent, or meet professional standards of competency and risk being perceived as not womanly enough. Because competency is often linked with masculinity (Jamieson, 1995), this double bind essentially represents a pull between femininity and masculinity. Women politicians are cognizant of this dilemma. Childs (2004) interviewed female Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, and while some noted the value of a feminine style and how this style is in line with their preferences, they also recognized that portraying femininity in a masculinized environment could limit one's effectiveness. It is plausible, then, that women cannot go all in on femininity. Recent research shows that women need to balance masculinity and femininity to be successful (Banwart & Kelly, 2013; Banwart & McKinney, 2005; Meeks & Domke, 2015). Therefore, even though women are culturally associated with feminine styles, and Twitter encourages a more feminine styling, women may hold back on their implementation of feminine styling to meet expectations of masculine politics.

Though Jamieson was speaking about feminine style broadly, this irony and double bind for women may be particularly present in personalization. A focus on a woman's private life mimics the focus of the news media's detrimental coverage. News framing often emphasized women's roles as mothers and wives, and used that framing to question women's experience, fit for office, and whether they could juggle domestic and political responsibilities (Braden, 1996). Women candidates may throttle their implementation of personalization so as to not feed into these marginalizing perceptions. For example, women candidates may not tweet as many references to their family or photos of their family out of concern that such photos may link them with being "mothers" as opposed to "candidates" or "leaders." Men, on the other hand, may need to increase their feminine styling and focus on personalization. Speaking again on the irony of this situation, Jamieson (1988) noted that men must "employ a once spurned 'womanly' style" if they want to prosper on more feminized media (p. 89). The same line of thinking may also extend to other

feminine spaces such as Twitter, and it may prompt men to, for example, self-disclose more about their families in this campaign space. Ultimately, we may see a leveling off effect with women holding back on personalization to some extent and men amping up their personalization to meet the demands of the campaign medium. Previous research on mediated candidate communication has found that men and women employ a personal tone or personalize in similar volumes (Banwart & Kelly, 2013; Banwart & McKinney, 2005; Evans et al., 2014). For example, Evans et al. (2014) examined U.S. House candidates' tweets in 2012 and found no significant difference in their use of personal tweets, and Banwart and Kelly (2013) examined U.S. House candidates' campaign Web sites and found no significant differences in men and women's discussion of personal experiences. Given these gendered dynamics, RQ1 asks: Do women and men employ personalization differently on Twitter?

The double bind regarding feminine styling may be less present for interactivity. Interactivity is part and parcel of politics. Being interactive as a politician has traditionally meant getting out to events to meet with constituents and potential voters, and to be "among the people." After all, the "campaign trail" is not a figurative phrase; we expect politicians to travel for meet-and-greets, whether it is down the block or crisscrossing the country. This expectation is a fundamental part of representational democracy. We elect politicians—fellow citizens—to represent us and our values and concerns as a community, and we expect politicians to learn about those concerns by both being a member of that community and by talking with citizens. In turn, interactivity does not carry the same stigma in politics as does personalization, and women may not shy away from this form of feminine styling.

Previous work on gendered communication styles supports this possibility. Tannen (1990) posits that women and men start learning types of talk in their childhood, and her work suggests that women may be more interactive in their communication than men. For example, Tannen (1990) notes that women engage in a language of rapport as a way to establish connections and relationships, whereas men engage in a language of report, which seeks to maintain independence

and status in a hierarchical social order. Empirical work has supported this gendered divide. Though there have been many studies on candidates' use of interactivity, very few have broken their analysis down by a candidate's gender. Evans et al. (2014), however, examined candidate gender and found that female U.S. House candidates were more likely to include @replies, their measure of interactivity, than male candidates. Collectively, women may be more interactive than men due to a trifecta of factors: (a) women are typically more interactive than men, (b) interactive styling is not as stigmatized in politics, and (c) Twitter was built for interactivity, making it a space that fosters this form of feminine styling. These factors lead to the following prediction: Women will be more interactive on Twitter than men (H1).

Thus far, this conceptual framework has examined gendered communication styles premised on the idea that men and women will engage in these styles to varying degrees because they either fit the gendered expectations we have of them, or meet the demands of the campaign space. Regardless of a candidate's motivation, their goal is the same: to win. Therefore it is valuable to also examine how the implementation of feminine styling corresponds with electoral success. With this in mind, RQ2 asks: Do electorally successful and unsuccessful women and men employ personalization and interactivity differently? As a content analysis, this study cannot claim causation, and personalization and interactivity are certainly not the sole predictors of success. Nonetheless, examining campaign styles of winning and losing women and men illuminates a piece of the puzzle at the intersection of gender and electoral success. Further, this examination extends previous work. Evans et al. (2015) analysed personal and interactive tweets of winning House candidates in 2012, but they did not include analysis of losing men and women. By examining winning and losing candidates, this study provides some general contours to how these styles were used effectively or ineffectively in 2012.

Methods

To examine these expectations and research questions I conducted a quantitative content analysis of U.S. Senate candidates' Twitter feeds during the

Table 1. Selected Senate elections and number of total tweets.

	Republican	Democrat	Election Dates
Arizona	Jeff Flake (n = 83)*	Richard Carmona (n = 253)	8/29-11/6
California	Elizabeth Emken (n = 2,347)	Dianne Feinstein (n = 52)*†	6/6-11/6
Connecticut	Linda McMahon (n = 754)	Chris Murphy (n = 307)*	8/15-11/6
Hawaii	Linda Lingle (n = 2303)	Mazie Hirono (n = 338)*	8/12-11/6
Indiana	Richard Mourdock (n = 1,101)	Joe Donnelly (n = 121)*	5/9-11/6
Massachusetts	Scott Brown (n = 170)*†	Elizabeth Warren (n = 337)*	9/7-11/6
Missouri	Todd Akin (n = 448)	Claire McCaskill (n = 157)*†	8/8-11/6
Nebraska	Deb Fischer (n = 132)*	Bob Kerrey (n = 866)	5/16-11/6
Nevada	Dean Heller (n = 1,053)*†	Shelley Berkley (n = 669)	6/13-11/6
New Mexico	Heather Wilson (n = 471)	Martin Heinrich (n = 454)*	6/6-11/6
New York	Wendy Long (n = 818)	Kirsten Gillibrand (n = 695)*†	6/27-11/6
Pennsylvania	Tom Smith (n = 423)	Bob Casey, Jr. (n = 310)*†	4/25-11/6

Notes. *indicates the winner of the election, and †indicates incumbent candidate in a closed race.

2012 general elections. The need to create effective online communication strategies is especially high in statewide elections given the geographic distribution of one's constituency. Focusing on Senate elections enabled this study to examine how candidates utilized the reach and functionality of Twitter to present themselves in such contexts. Further, Senate elections in 2012 provided several options for examining the dynamics of elections with women candidates.³ In total, 24 candidates were examined across 12 elections, thus representing approximately a third of the Senate elections in 2012 (Table 1). The selected elections included 12 men and 12 women, with six of the men winning their election and six of the women winning their election—creating an equal distribution of candidates across the intersection of gender and electoral success. The selected elections also included some geographic diversity, a mix of Republican and Democratic winners, open versus closed elections, and all-male, all-female, and male-versus-female elections. These factors help to create a more diverse cross-section of elections.

To analyze campaign communication I downloaded each candidate's campaign Twitter feed after the election via the official Twitter API

using a computer script.⁴ The API limits access to 3,200 historical tweets per account, but this easily accommodated the time frame of the general elections. To ensure that the script collected all of the tweets, I conducted a manual check on a subset of the candidates in which I periodically compared tweets from the download to tweets on the candidate's actual Twitter page. The manual check revealed a complete match between the two sources, thereby ensuring that the script pulled all of the tweets for each candidate for each time frame. I also verified each Twitter account by matching them against the accounts specified on the candidate's campaign Web site. For each candidate I coded the entire census of general election tweets, ranging from the day after the appropriate primary to Election Day on November 6, 2012. In total, there were 14,662 tweets, and women (n = 9,073) tweeted more than men (n = 5,589).

For the analysis, I created the following variables and operationalizations. The unit of observation and analysis was the individual tweet. Dimensions of each composite variable were coded as "Absent" (0) or "Present" (1), and then collapsed for parts of the analysis so that "0" indicated absence of the variable and "1" indicated that at least one dimension of the variable was present. Personalization is defined as when a person reveals or self-discloses information about their identity, life, or experiences. This study focused on several areas of personal self-disclosure, and personalization was coded as present when any of the following dimensions were included in an individual tweet: a candidate's gender, when a candidate references their own gender; uniqueness, when a candidate mentions their situational novelty, e.g., first person to do something due to their gender, race, ethnicity, etc.; family, when a candidate references their family members generally or by name; hobbies/sports, when a candidate mentions a hobby or sports team; religion, when a candidate references their religion or religious activities, e.g., going to religious services; personal photos, when a candidate posts a photo with family, friends, or pets; "other personal," when a candidate references other forms of disclosure, such as their favorite food, their alma mater, vacation experiences, etc. For example, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York included a reference to her family and a personal photo when she posted

a photo with her sons (see Figure 1) and tweeted: "Enjoying time with the boys today. From my family to yours, wishing you a happy & safe #4thofJuly!" An example of a tweet fulfilling the "other personal" dimension includes when Heather Wilson of New Mexico expressed her love of a certain burger spot when she tweeted: "Twice in one week. Owl Bar. #greenchilecheeseburger @ San Antonio, NM." All of these dimensions reveal some information about the candidate's personal life, identity, or experiences.

Interactivity is conceptually defined as the degree to which communication is two-way and participants in a communication process can exchange roles and modify the flow and content of a mediated environment. Interactivity was coded as present when any of the following dimensions were included in a tweet: *@mention*, when a candidate mentions another person(s)/organization(s); *@reply*, when a candidate replies to another user; *retweets/modified tweets*, when a candidate reposts another user's tweet in its entirety or modifies the content; *retweet plus*, when a candidate posts a retweet or modified tweet and also adds some of their own content to the tweet; *in situ photo*, which is a photo of the candidate "in position," interacting with people who are *not* family or friends. The conceptual definition of interactivity mapped on with the operationalization in multiple ways. For example, exchanging roles can occur when communication is two-way, with participants switching from sender to receiver, which can occur in *@replies*. Interactivity also occurs in *in situ* photos because

they visually capture candidates interacting with others. Also, retweets modify the flow of content because one user is lifting the content out of one timeline and inserting it into their own and thus becoming the new sender. An example of an interactive tweet included when Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts tweeted: "Shook hands at Broadway T Station today—same place I kicked off my candidacy for Senate a yr ago next week! #masen," which included the *in situ* photo in Figure 1.

The coding process was manual and was as follows. First, once the codebook was constructed, two pilot tests were conducted, with each test including the coding of 100 tweets, for a total of 200 tweets. The codebook was revised based on these pilot tests. Second, training for two coders included first reviewing the codebook, and then independently applying the codebook to 100 tweets in a practice round of coding. Revisions were made to the codebook based on this practice round. Third, the two coders independently coded a random sample ($n = 735$) for a formal test of intercoder reliability. The size of the random sample met and exceeded the minimum required based on Riffe, Lacy, and Fico's (2005) equation for selecting an appropriate size. Calculated using Krippendorff's alpha, coefficients met appropriate acceptance levels (Krippendorff, 2004): personalization ($\alpha = .82$) and interactivity ($\alpha = .91$). Because parts of the analysis drill down into the individual dimensions of these composite variables, it is also important to note the alphas for these variables: gender ($\alpha = .93$), uniqueness ($\alpha = .85$), family ($\alpha = .88$), hobbies/sports ($\alpha = .74$), religion ($\alpha = .81$), personal photos ($\alpha = .94$), other personal ($\alpha = .73$), *@mention* ($\alpha = .80$), *@reply*



Figure 1. Left, Kirsten Gillibrand and her family; right, Elizabeth Warren interacting with voters.

($\alpha = .81$), retweets/modified tweets ($\alpha = .99$), retweet plus ($\alpha = .87$), and in situ photo ($\alpha = .96$).

The hypothesis and research questions were investigated using descriptive statistics for each comparison. No tests for statistical significance were included because analysis included the entire census of tweets for each candidate during their general election. Therefore inferential statistics were not necessary.

Results

The first research question examined whether women and men employed personalization differently (RQ1). Overall, 11.8% ($n = 1,726$) of candidate tweets included some form of personalization. Regarding differences between men and women, men (12.6%, $n = 706$) had a slight advantage over women (11.2%, $n = 1,020$) in their use of personalization, but ultimately the difference was very small, suggesting women and men personalize similarly in terms of volume.⁵

To dig deeper into how men and women used personalization, the top half of Table 2 focuses only on tweets that included personalization and presents what proportion of those tweets featured a particular dimension of personalization.

Within Table 2 we can see some similarities and differences in how candidates implemented the various forms of personalization. First, women were more likely to emphasize their gender, uniqueness, and religion, and men were

more likely to focus on family and include personal photos. In fact, for these personalization-oriented tweets, men referenced their family (12.7%) over twice as often as women (5.5%), and included personal photos featuring family and friends in twice as many tweets (15.6% versus 7.1%). Second, women and men were equally likely to mention sports or hobbies in their tweets. Culturally, sports are typically seen as a more "masculine" endeavor and family is seen as more "feminine." In this study, men and women did not stick to gendered cultural divisions regarding these areas, which will be discussed more later. Finally, men and women were more likely to focus most of their personalizing energy into the other category, which was a catchall for topics that did not fit into the aforementioned categories, such as referencing food, music, or general previous life experiences. Ultimately, men (76.5%) utilized this other category of personalization more than women (71.9%).

The next area of analysis explored interactivity and was guided by the prediction that women would include more interactivity in their tweets than men (H1). Overall, interactivity was much more prominent in tweets than personalization: Interactivity was present in 69.5% ($n = 10,187$) of all tweets. Once we focused on comparing men and women, H1 was supported: Women (74.5%, $n = 6,762$) were more interactive in their tweets than men (61.3%, $n = 3,425$).

To further examine interactivity in all its manifestations, the bottom half of Table 2 focuses only on tweets that included interactivity and presents what proportion of those tweets featured a particular dimension of interactivity. The results in Table 2 revealed several notable findings. First, women were three times more likely than men to include @replies, retweets, and retweet pluses. Therefore, women were much more likely to either communicate directly with another Twitter user via @replies or promote another Twitter user's voice in their feed via retweets and retweet pluses. Second, men were more likely than women to include @mentions and in situ photos, and thus they were more likely to integrate the presence of others in their feeds by either mentioning their names or by including a photo of them. Third, another trend was

Table 2. Percentage of personalization-oriented and interactive-oriented tweets by candidate gender.

	Women	Men
<i>Personalization</i>	<i>n=1020</i>	<i>n=706</i>
Gender	7.8%	2.1%
Uniqueness	3.0%	0.7%
Hobbies/Sports	10.3%	10.1%
Family	5.5%	12.7%
Religion	6.7%	4.4%
Personal Photo	7.1%	15.6%
Other	71.9%	76.5%
<i>Interactivity</i>	<i>n= 6762</i>	<i>n=3425</i>
@mention	61.5%	75.8%
@reply	25.6%	7.5%
RT/MT	34.7%	10.5%
RT Plus	8.0%	2.3%
In situ photo	14.8%	25.6%

Notes. Percentages do not add up to 100% because individual tweets could contain more than one form of each variable. The women and men categories included 12 candidates each.

present as well across both halves of Table 2: Men were more likely to include personal photos and in situ photos, suggesting that men were more likely to take advantage of Twitter's ability to include visuals. The inclusion of more personal photos is particularly interesting because it is possible that women hedged their use of such photos so as to avoid familial associations that may put them at odds with masculinized politics.

Moving beyond the sole impact of gender, the next area of analysis examined whether electorally successful and unsuccessful women and men employed personalization and interactivity differently (RQ2). Based on volume alone, losing women tweeted the most ($n = 7,362$), followed by losing men ($n = 3,261$), then winning men ($n = 2,328$), and finally winning women ($n = 1,711$). As such, tweeting more in general was not associated with winning in this study. Once we dig into personalization across winning and losing candidates, there are three notable findings. First, winning and personalization differed between men and women. In particular, winning women (15.8%) were *more* likely to personalize than losing women (10.2%); whereas, winning men (10.6%) were *less* likely to personalize than losing men (14.1%). Second, winning candidates were less interactive than losing candidates. Specifically, winning women (68.3%) were less interactive than losing women (76%), and winning men (55.7%) were less interactive than losing men (65.3%). As such, while personalization and interactivity have been found to be beneficial in experiment-driven studies, these factors alone in a real-world setting did not uniformly translate into victory. That said, when we compare winning candidates, we see that winning women were more personalizing and interactive than winning men. Specifically, based on the percentages above, winning women topped winning men in personalization by 5.2%, and winning women outpaced winning men in interactivity by 12.6%. Collectively, then, electorally successful women were more likely to implement these more feminized communication styles than winning men.⁶

To expand upon these aggregate results, Tables 3 and 4 break down personalization and interactivity into their subcomponents across candidate gender and electoral success. As before,

Table 3. Percentage of personalization-oriented tweets by candidate gender and electoral success.

	Women Candidates		Men Candidates	
	Winning ($n = 271$)	Losing ($n = 749$)	Winning ($n = 246$)	Losing ($n = 460$)
Gender	6.6%	8.3%	1.2%	2.6%
Uniqueness	0.0%	4.1%	0.4%	0.9%
Hobbies/sports	10.0%	10.4%	8.5%	10.9%
Family	11.1%	3.5%	19.5%	9.1%
Religion	3.7%	7.7%	4.9%	4.1%
Personal photo	8.1%	6.7%	19.9%	13.3%
Other	76.8%	70.1%	76.0%	76.6%

Notes. Percentages do not add up to 100% because individual tweets could contain more than one form of personalization. Each of the four candidate categories included six candidates each.

Table 4. Percentage of interactive-oriented tweets by candidate gender and electoral success.

	Women Candidates		Men Candidates	
	Winning ($n = 1,168$)	Losing ($n = 5,594$)	Winning ($n = 1,297$)	Losing ($n = 2,128$)
@mention	77.1%	58.3%	73.6%	77.2%
@reply	5.7%	29.7%	7.2%	7.6%
RT/MT	17.6%	38.3%	11.6%	9.7%
RT Plus	3.9%	8.8%	4.6%	0.9%
In situ photo	23.7%	12.9%	29.4%	23.4%

Notes. Percentages do not add up to 100% because individual tweets could contain more than one form of interactivity. Each of the four candidate categories included six candidates each.

these tables focused only on tweets that included some form of personalization or interactivity.

The percentages in Table 3 provide some similarities and differences between winning and losing women and men. First, winning women and men were *more* likely than losing women and men to personalize via references to their family and by posting personal photos. Second, winning women and men were *less* likely than losing women and men to incorporate gender and uniqueness references. In fact, winning women never referenced their own uniqueness in the election. Third, winning candidates lagged behind losing candidates in two other areas: (a) winning men made slightly fewer references to hobbies/sports than losing men and (b) winning women were less likely than losing women to personalize via references to religion. Ultimately, winning women and men dominated the same categories: family and personal photos.

Data in Table 4 regarding interactivity indicate several differences. We first examine winning and

losing men. Winning men took the lead for retweets, retweet pluses, and in situ photos, winning men fell behind losing men for @mentions, and winning and losing men included @replies in a similar fashion. That said, the differences between candidates for these areas were relatively small, especially when compared to the differences for women. Specifically, the largest difference was for in situ photos, when winning men outpaced losing men by 6%. Differences for women, on the other hand, were much larger. Winning women took the lead on @mentions and in situ photos, and winning women lagged behind losing women on @replies, retweets, and retweet pluses. The differences on these dimensions ranged from 4.9% for retweet pluses to 24% for @replies. In fact, differences for the other three dimensions—@mention, retweets, and in situ photos—were in the range of 20%. These findings are also different from those in personalization where winning candidates favored the same dimensions. For interactivity, winning men and women candidates had different areas of predominance and only overlapped on one dimension: in situ photos.

Discussion

This content analysis of 24 U.S. Senate candidates' campaign Twitter feeds during the 2012 general elections examined whether and to what extent candidates incorporated personalization and interactivity into their tweets. In particular, this study focused on whether a candidate's gender influenced their implementation of these gendered communication styles, and, through a series of layered analysis, whether the intersection of gender and electoral success affected how these styles manifested in this mediated setting. The analysis revealed three overarching trends. First, personalization and interactivity were present in candidates' communication, suggesting that candidates are embracing a feminine communication style that also aligns with some of the norms of Twitter. Just over one in ten tweets included some form of personalization. Previous examinations have found that anywhere from approximately 6% to 30% of candidates' tweets include personalization (Evans et al., 2014; Golbeck et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2013), which places this study's candidates on the lower end of this spectrum. Further, seven in ten tweets

included some interactive element, which was much higher than other studies that have found interactivity present in approximately 15% to 31% of tweets (Evans et al., 2014, 2015; Graham et al., 2013). It is worth noting that this study took a more expansive view of interactivity by including in situ photos, which most likely contributed to the higher levels of interactivity. Notably, winning men and women were more likely to include in situ photos than losing men and women, respectively, which suggests that in situ photos are a valuable form of interactivity. Finally, this higher rate of interactivity demonstrates that candidates are not using Twitter as simply a one-way tool, as found in previous research (see Larsson, 2013). Rather, candidates are capitalizing on the interactive affordances of social media.

Second, although there were some similarities between women and men, there were more differences between candidates based on their gender. At the aggregate level of analysis, women and men were similar in their use of personalization on Twitter—differing by only 1.4%. This lack of substantial difference between women and men regarding personalization has been found in other studies of mediated candidate communication (Banwart & Kelly, 2013; Banwart & McKinney, 2005; Evans et al., 2014). Therefore, even though personalization is a more feminine communication style, and Twitter fosters self-disclosure, women did not deploy this style more than men. When it comes to interactivity, however, there were differences. Namely, women were more interactive than men. This finding supports both the communication styles literature by Campbell (1989) and Tannen (1990), as well as more empirical work such as that of Evans et al. (2014). Therefore in the aggregate, women and men were similar in their efforts to self-disclose, but women were more likely to be interactive. Once we introduced electoral success, there were additional differences between women and men. Specifically, winning women were more personalizing and interactive than winning men. This suggests that women can effectively incorporate feminine styles into their campaigns and do so at a higher rate than winning men. It is also important to note that winning men were less personalizing and interactive as compared to *losing* men. Therefore, even though Twitter encourages a feminine style, and winning men did include feminine

styling, there may be limits on how much men can embrace this gender-incongruent style.

Third, the type of personalization and interactivity also contributed differently to electoral success for women and men. As we moved analytically from aggregate comparisons of women versus men to winning women versus winning men, differences in the subcomponents of personalization and interactivity dwindled or varied, but there were a few notable differences between subcomponents that persisted throughout these analytic steps. Women at both stages of the analysis lead in comparisons on the use of gender in personalization and retweets in interactivity. Discussing gender is a tricky endeavor for women in politics and often creates a double bind. If women emphasize their gender it could set them at odds with voters who are not fully confident that women can handle the office, and women could also be accused of playing the "gender card." But completely ignoring their gender or downplaying this aspect of their identity is also problematic. When Hillary Clinton sought the presidency in 2008 she did not overly emphasize her gender and the historic nature of her presidential bid, and thus "ceded the mantle of barrier-breaker entirely to Barack Obama," prompting senior adviser Ann Lewis to call this the "biggest missed opportunity" of that primary contest (Chozick & Martin, 2015). Perhaps in the wake of this event, as well as the slow, but noted rise of women in office, women running in 2012 felt more confident in emphasizing their gender and using it as a way to connect with voters. Women also took note of another aspect of their identity by incorporating more retweets. Retweets are a unique feature of Twitter, and enable users to raise other user's voices in tandem with their own by incorporating these voices directly within their feeds. Women typically engage in more communal, egalitarian, and collaborative styles that tend to share information and power (e.g., Arnold & Nesbitt, 2006; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006). Women's heightened use of retweets makes conceptual sense, and it demonstrates how off-line communication styles get translated into online settings via a medium's distinct affordances.

Men, on the other hand, were more predominant in their references to family, and in their incorporation of personal photos and *in situ*

photos. Notably, men took the lead on personalization via family and personal photos, as well as *in situ* photos at each stage of the analysis. This trend presents two noteworthy findings. The first finding is that men were more likely to reference their family, be it via textual references to family, or via visual references to their family via the inclusion of personal photos. This finding is in keeping with previous scholarship: Bystrom, Robertson, Banwart, and Kaid (2004) examined campaign ads in mixed-gender races between 1990 and 2002, and found that men were more likely to include their family in the ads than women, and Stalsburg and Kleinberg (2015) examined campaign Web sites in 2008 and 2010 and found that men were more likely than women to emphasize their family, especially in photos. Family, as with gender, is again tricky terrain for women. Women, who are traditionally and stereotypically seen as the primary caregivers of children, are more likely than men to face the question, "Can you be a good mom and a good politician?" suggesting that the private domain of family and public domain of politics do not necessary mix. To avoid this false dichotomy, women may downplay references to family. Men, on the other hand, are not typically plagued by this questioning, and therefore may emphasize family to create a relatable, everyman image.

The second finding for men is that they were more likely to adopt Twitter's ability to include photos, be they personal or interactive in nature. Incorporating photos on Twitter is important for three reasons. First, it provides candidates with another way to present their image and their message, and perhaps create more resonance with people who are more inclined to visuals. Second, because of visual media—spanning from TV to Instagram—we live in a world of "seeing is believing" and "pics or it didn't happen." By incorporating visual evidence via their photos, men may have been viewed as more authentic in their personalization and interactive efforts. In other words, instead of followers depending on a candidate's tweet text to verify their efforts, followers could see those efforts. Even though these photos could still be staged, it may have created more visible confirmation for some followers that what the candidate was saying was not just lip service.

Third, photos can generate more visibility. Twitter conducted their own analysis of how the inclusion of photos can impact whether tweets get retweeted (Rogers, 2014). In general they found a 35% bump in retweets for tweets with photos versus tweets without photos. Photos increased retweets more than any other measure they included in the analysis, which also featured tweets with videos, quotes, hashtags, or numbers. This increase was even more substantial in the world of politics. Twitter broke down their aggregate analysis by the type of account, and examined verified accounts of people within the realm of government and politics. Within this segment of the analysis, the inclusion of photos created a 62% bump in retweets over tweets that did not include a photo—more than twice that of the next highest feature, hashtags, which created a 30% increase. In turn, men's consistently greater use of photos may have enabled them to capture a bigger audience and potentially build a more authentic image.

This study is not without limitations. The findings of this study can only speak to the tweeting tendencies of 24 Senate candidates across 12 elections in one election year. Replication of this study's design in other election cycles or for other levels of office is necessary to examine whether this study's findings are more generalizable. Additionally, the components of the personalization variable could use some improvement. Other studies that have content analyzed for personalization have either, at least according to their published works, had one overarching category and did not break down what types of personalization were present, e.g., Evans et al. (2014, 2015) and Golbeck et al. (2011), or they tracked a few broad aspects of personalization, e.g., Kruikemeier (2014) examined personalization via references to candidates' emotions, professional activities, and personal life. This study aimed to provide a more nuanced perspective on personalization by tracking and reporting on six specific dimensions of personalization, which included tracking personal photos, along with a catchall "other" category. Based on pilot studies and general reading of campaign tweets, these six dimensions appeared to cover a great deal of the personalizing terrain. However, the results painted a different picture

because typically 70% or more of the personalizing references fell into the other category. To gain a better understanding of candidates' personalization efforts, it would be valuable for future work to further break down how personalization manifests in candidates' communication and the effects of these dimensions.

In recent years, each new election cycle seems to bring with it a new communication technology. Each of them offers candidates yet another way to share their identity and connect with constituents. Just as the television ushered in greater acceptance of feminine communication styles, so have social media. Experimental work is showing that interactivity and personalization on Twitter are prompting a number of electoral benefits. But experimental results mean little if candidates are not actually incorporating these styles. This study found that candidates were implementing these styles in their Twitter feeds: approximately 72% of tweets included either a form of interactivity or personalization. This high percentage indicates that the once pariah feminine style is now a common feature of modern campaigning, and that femininity plays an important role in America's masculinized political arena. This study also found that men and women candidates incorporated this style in different ways—thus creating differing connective spaces via the same medium. These different implementations suggest some weakening of the classic double bind. Winning women included more personalization than losing women, and they also incorporated more personalization and interactivity than winning men. These trends indicate that women can reclaim feminine styles and still win. However, aspects of the double bind may still be dictating women's campaign strategies. Winning men included twice as many references to family and included twice as many personal photos as winning women. These two elements in particular cut right to the heart of the double bind, of the idea that a woman's role has historically and culturally been in the private sphere, as wife and mother, and thus set apart from the public sphere of politics. Ultimately, women candidates may be able to go all in on interactivity in feminized campaign spaces, but they may still need to walk a delicate line when it comes to embracing elements of personalization if they want to win.

Notes

1. It is important to note that these constructions are primarily heteronormative, and thus social and political expectations are based on what heterosexual men and women should do when they perform their gender. These gendered conceptions, then, do not take into account how gender and sexual orientation may intersect, which limits this study's scope.
2. It is worth noting that several scholars, including Hart (1999), disparage the "personalization of politics," claiming that it moves the focus away from policy and encourages voters to evaluate candidates based on personality, and who is the most charismatic and exciting on screen.
3. In 2012, there was one mixed-gender and zero all-female gubernatorial general elections.
4. The code for this process is available here: https://github.com/rainersigwald/twitter_archiver
5. Table 1 in the Appendix provides the percent of personalization- and interactivity-oriented tweets for each candidate. To assess whether a single outlier candidate could have skewed the aggregate results provided for RQ1 and H1, I ran descriptives (percentages in this case) for personalization and interactivity 24 times, each time excluding one candidate and assessing whether the pattern of results still held with the excluded candidate. For example, I ran descriptives for personalization, excluded Chris Murphy from the calculations, and then compared women and men's percentages for personalization. I then reran the descriptives, this time including Murphy but now excluding Linda McMahon, and so on. This process of systematic exclusion and comparison revealed that no single candidate disrupted the pattern of results presented for RQ1 and H1.
6. Tests of significance were not necessary in this analysis because the analysis included the entire census of data for the 24 candidates during their respective general elections. That said, it is possible to view these 24 candidates as a potential sample of all Senate candidates in 2012, which prompts the question of whether the differences and similarities between candidates were significant. I ran difference of proportion tests for the topline results for RQ1, H1, and RQ2. For RQ1, the difference between men and women's use of personalization was not statistically significant. For H1, women were significantly more interactive than men, $p < .05$. For RQ2, all of the following results were significant at $p < .05$: Winning women were more personalizing and less interactive than losing women, and winning men were less personalizing and less interactive than losing men.

Notes on contributor

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Appendix

Table 1. Percentage of personal and interactive tweets by candidate.

Women	Personal	Interactive	Men	Personal	Interactive
Berkley (n = 669)	12.3	62.3	Akin (n = 448)	4.2	51.8
Emken (n = 2347)	8.7	91.4	Brown (n = 170)	22.9	51.8
Feinstein (n = 52)	13.5	55.8	Carmona (n = 253)	25.7	75.9
Fischer (n = 132)	9.1	47.0	Casey, Jr. (n = 310)	1.9	46.8
Gillibrand (n = 695)	22.4	73.8	Donnelly (n = 121)	21.5	77.7
Hirono (n = 338)	12.4	76.0	Flake (n = 83)	21.7	84.3
Lingle (n = 2303)	9.3	70.4	Heinrich (n = 454)	7.7	68.7
Long (n = 818)	15.9	82.5	Heller (n = 1053)	13.4	48.1
McCaskill (n = 157)	12.1	54.8	Kerrey (n = 866)	20.1	51.6
McMahon (n = 754)	7.6	55.0	Murdock (n = 1101)	11.4	77.9
Warren (n = 337)	10.4	65.6	Murphy (n = 307)	6.5	55.0
Wilson (n = 471)	13.2	68.2	Smith (n = 423)	8.7	73.5

Note. *n* represents the total number of tweets during the candidate's general election.