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Which ingroup, when? Effects of gender, partisanship, veteran status, and evaluator identities on candidate evaluations

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Military service is acknowledged as one of many elements voters use to evaluate candidates, but it has primarily been studied as a univariate element of a candidate's biography. This project experimentally manipulates veteran status, gender, and partisanship as potentially interactive heuristics for evaluation of a hypothetical candidate specifically regarding military issues. We found an almost universal benefit enjoyed by veterans over civilians regardless of whether the candidate was a member of the participant's partisan ingroup or outgroup. We also found little evidence of a gender penalty, and even a benefit for women candidates who were veterans, though this benefit was restricted to evaluations from Republican women. We also found that Democratic respondents assigned a penalty to outgroup veteran men candidates. We explain these nuanced findings in the context of moderation by gender mis/alignment between participant and candidate. Implications of the study are offered.

Keywords: women candidates; United States Senate; veteran cues; gender and politics

Molly M. Hardy (PhD, University of Missouri) is an Associate Instructor of Communication at Maryville University. Calvin R. Coker (PhD, University of Missouri) is an Assistant Professor-Term in the Department of Communication at the University of Louisville. Michelle E. Funk (PhD, University of Missouri) is an alumnus of the University of Missouri. Benjamin R. Warner (PhD, University of Kansas) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri. *Correspondence*: Molly Hardy. Maryville University, 650 Maryville University Drive, St. Louis, MO, 63141. E-mail: mhardy2@maryville.edu
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Pundits hailed the 2018 American midterm election as a second "Year of the Woman," as 2018 has featured a record-breaking number of women running for elected office (Caygle, 2018), and subsequently winning (Zhou, 2018). Record breaking does not stop there; 2018 also featured significantly more veterans running than in past election seasons and relative to current numbers of veterans in office (Haslett & Barr, 2018). For each cycle of the past decade, the number of women veterans running for elected office has continued to rise, including a record breaking 14 this cycle (Best & Teigan, 2018). Though the 115th Congress included lower numbers of veteran representatives than many previous sessions, the incoming 116th Congress features the most women representatives, and the most women veterans, in American history (Zhou, 2018). Despite the tendency for pundits to exaggerate the import of novel elements of a midterm cycle, researchers should not consider 2018 an anomaly for increased numbers of women in office, especially those with combat experience. With military drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan, there will be no shortage of politically engaged veterans looking to serve on the home front (Barcott & Wood, 2017). It is increasingly likely that voters will decide races including women veterans as candidates.

Against this backdrop, we propose a study of the intersection of gender, party, and military as heuristics of candidate evaluation. With increased numbers of women and veterans running for office, researchers must adapt and update preceding understandings of candidate heuristics that have heretofore been dominated by the discussion of political party (e.g., Popkin, 1991). Contemporary research suggests that two of the most salient and public aspects of a candidate—party and gender—significantly influence initial evaluations. The interaction between different heuristics is contested however, with some scholars concluding that candidate party overwhelms other decision cues (e.g., Dolan, 2014; Hayes, 2011), even though gender stereotypes can be used to subvert or bolster evaluation of candidates (Bauer, 2016). As military status can subvert stereotypes of femininity (Cassese & Holman, 2018) and party issue ownership (Pope & Woon, 2009), our study is designed to assess what, if any, penalties or advantages are assigned to candidates' competence on foreign policy and terrorism management based on candidate veteran status, gender, and party.

We build on extant studies that suggest veteran status does not offer a uniform or predictable advantage for a candidate. McDermott and Panagopoulos (2015) suggested military service acts as a positive cue for voters, demonstrating that status as an Iraq war veteran increases vote preference for Democratic candidates but not for Republicans. Further complicating the interaction between veteran status and party is the role of gender. As women have only very recently been allowed to serve openly in every combat role in the U.S. Armed Forces (Koren, 2015), researchers have had little opportunity to rigorously examine the triple interaction of gender, party, and veteran status. If veteran status influences assessments of candidate traits in the same way that party (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1989) and gender (e.g., King & Matland, 2003) can, a more detailed evaluation appears appropriate. In this study, we

demonstrate the existence a largely uniform penalty on foreign policy and terrorism competence applied to civilian candidates relative to military candidates independent of political party, a finding that expands contemporary scholarship on the role of veteran status in candidate evaluation. Additionally, we suggest that the civilian penalty can be exacerbated, or mediated, in circumstances where members of congruent candidate identities (party and gender) evaluate candidates. Our experiment offers strong support for the existence of a civilian penalty that transcends party and gender, an existence especially important in light of low information rationality and increased veteran representation. We begin by detailing the theoretical underpinnings of the study, explaining the role that military experience plays as a cue for voter evaluation. Next, the experimental methodology is reported alongside the results of the analysis. Finally, we discuss implications of our results and future research directions.

Literature review

Popkin ([1991](#)) argued in *The Reasoning Voter* that salient characteristics of a politician, such as party identification or gender, offer voters "an informational shortcut or default value, a substitute for more complete information about parties and candidates" (p. 14). Popkin suggested individuals devote comparatively little cognitive efforts to candidate evaluation and vote choice. Instead, voters rely on distinguishing candidate characteristics to make decisions via heuristics (Popkin, [1991](#)). Party (Dolan, [2014](#); Rahn, [1993](#)), gender (Koch, [2000](#)), and group affiliation (McDermott, [2009](#)) can all influence evaluations of a candidate absent more robust information (Glasgow & Alvarez, [2000](#)). Furthermore, researchers have found heuristics complicated by changes to salience (Kiousis, Strömbäck, & McDevitt, [2015](#)), and contextual information presented to the voter (King & Matland, [2003](#)). Considering voter tendency towards low information rationality, we ought to better understand how these characteristics interact to influence how candidates are perceived.

A robust body of literature exists on both party and gender influence on candidate evaluation (e.g., Bauer, [2016](#); Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, [2003](#); Holman, Merolla, & Zechmeister, [2011](#), [2016](#)). Party influences how candidates are evaluated on specific issues (e.g., Rahn, [1993](#)), and research on issue ownership suggests party is a meaningful heuristic to determine whether a candidate is competent on an issue absent additional information (Petrocik, [1996](#)). Party ownership over issues does, however, change over time. Pope and Woon ([2009](#)) noted that gaps between Republicans and Democrats on education and social issues have been closing since the 1980s, and they isolated specific upsets like President Carter's handling of the economy from 1976 to 1980. Party issue ownership is further complicated by research on affective polarization (e.g., Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, [2012](#); Iyengar & Westwood, [2015](#)), suggesting divisions along party lines are not traceable through policy but through attitudes towards outgroups.

Other visible markers of a candidate, such as gender, are often treated as signifiers of political traits such as competence, leadership, and trustworthiness (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Bauer, 2016; Funk & Coker, 2016). Gender provides limited information to voters but nonetheless yields differences in evaluations of candidates in experimental settings (Herrnson et al., 2003). Though limited evidence suggests party overwhelms gender cues (e.g., Dolan, 2014; Sanbonmatsu, 2002), gender stereotyping persists in the political realm (Holman et al., 2016; Prentice & Carranza, 2002), and there is reason to believe stereotypic influence is more complex. Bauer (2016) suggested the conflicting empirical evidence on the extent to which gender stereotypes govern voter evaluation has led to a political environment in which women are neither discounted or advantaged in the abstract. Cassese and Holman (2018) substantiated this finding, noting that when information environments are robust, and men and women candidates are portrayed as competent, no noticeable difference in candidate evaluation occurs. In instances where a candidate is portrayed as less competent, however, women candidates are more severely penalized relative to men candidates. Gender, then, can act as a heuristic in a low information environment, but the overall behavior of that heuristic requires additional investigation.

Political context may play a large role in mediating the strength of heuristics (e.g., Bauer, 2016; Holman et al., 2016; Schneider, 2014). For example, gendered stereotypes surrounding politician competence on questions such as "women's issues" and foreign policy can be activated in different contexts to supersede party (e.g., Greenwood & Coker, 2016). One such context for activation exists in veteran status. McDermott and Panagopoulos (2015) indicated candidate military service cues voters to assess a hypothetical candidate as more capable of engaging military issues, but their results also suggest that party matters. They found additional positive evaluations occurred when military status was assigned to a hypothetical Democratic candidate but not to a Republican candidate. Their results suggest military experience fits into a broader network of candidate traits that voters evaluate in crafting a snap judgment of candidates. In line with this complicated interaction, we propose four hypotheses to separate the effects of individual penalties based on heuristics activated by particular identities. In crafting conditions containing a triple interaction of gender, party, and veteran status, we theorize potential "penalties" assigned to candidates. First, since veterans should be viewed as especially capable of handling issues related to foreign policy and terrorism, we propose a "civilian penalty" on these issues:

> H_1: *Participants will assess candidates with military experience as stronger than civilian candidates on (a) foreign policy and (b) terrorism.*

Using foreign policy and terrorism as outcome variables is specifically defensible because military service would not provide meaningful information to be used as a heuristic in all instances. For example, there is nothing intrinsic to veteran status that would make a candidate qualified to handle issues of education or health care (Holman et al., 2011). In contrast, war variables are among the areas where veteran status could function as a heuristic, even when paired with other salient information.

However, in line with the preceding caution on political contexts, we know that voters will not assess military status in a complete vacuum. For example, we suspect judgments of

women candidates, specifically women veterans, will be more complicated. Men politicians are often afforded small edges in evaluation over women on questions such as toughness and leadership (Holman et al., 2011), and those advantages are not immediately afforded to women candidates (Schneider & Bos, 2014), especially when information presented is counter stereotypic (Cassese & Holman, 2018). As such, we propose the existence of a "gender penalty" as measured through the following hypothesis:

> H₂: *Participants will assess men candidates as stronger than women candidates on (a) foreign policy and (b) terrorism.*

Military status and gender, though subject to stereotypes as indicated previously, are sometimes thought to be overwhelmed by the influence of party (Dolan, 2014; Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009). This is not to say voters glean a large amount of information from a candidate's party affiliation. Rather, identification with a political party offers group esteem in which adherents elevate themselves and denigrate non-group members. Building on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory (SIT) in the context of politics, Iyengar and Westwood (2015) suggested that political parties are increasingly used as cues to understand not only policy proposals but also evaluation of the political outgroup. They demonstrate that party is even more significant than race in motivating prejudicial evaluations of the outgroup. In this context, a candidate who identifies as a voter's co-partisan should receive immediate and positive evaluative benefits, whereas an outgroup politician of a different party should receive corresponding negative evaluations. Based on a social identity perspective, we theorize a partisan "outgroup penalty":

> H₃: *Participants will assess partisan ingroup candidates as stronger than partisan outgroup candidates on (a) foreign policy and (b) terrorism.*

Thus far we have predicted the influence of three identity characteristics on candidate evaluation on issues. These hypotheses do not, however, facilitate an in-depth analysis of the ways these traits interact to cue candidate evaluations. For example, military stereotypes align with traditional masculine traits such as toughness, ambition, and strong leadership. Such traits are more highly valued over the stereotypically feminine traits of compassion, trustworthiness, and strong family orientation, especially in a role such as the presidency (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Moreover, Sheeler and Anderson (2013) articulated politics and the military as fields that are unwelcoming to women. Military service could also serve as a proxy for "toughness" and other qualities that are traditionally held by men candidates, which would be advantageous in a men-dominated field (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013); as such, women veterans might experience positive stereotypes of military service and subsequently be evaluated as more competent on foreign policy and military matters. Foreign policy and terrorism competence are also considered areas of Republican strength (Pope & Woon, 2009), with strength of party issue affiliation unclear in the context of the interaction.

Furthermore, SIT (e.g., Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) would suggest that voter identification with interacting social categories in a candidate would yield, in some contexts, positive evaluations. For example, Republican women may especially favor

Republican women candidates. Comparatively, the existence of a social category divergent from a voter would yield correspondingly negative evaluations of a candidate. The conflicting evidence on gender stereotyping, military status, and candidate and voter party all suggest that different contexts will result in differing weights assigned to the importance of a social category—a conclusion consistent with Tajfel and Turner's discussion of salience. As such, we propose a fourth hypothesis to assess the interaction of voter characteristics on candidate evaluation:

> H$_4$:   *In the preceding hypotheses, assessments of (a) foreign policy and (b) terrorism will be moderated by participant gender, such that alignment between candidate gender and participant gender will result in higher evaluations.*

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from communication and journalism courses at three Midwestern universities and one Pacific Northwestern university. Though the use of a convenience sample has numerous well-articulated disadvantages, the younger-skewing population surveyed was uniquely suited for the hypotheses. First, young people have unique social views and views on the military relative to older populations, and as such may be a population wherein military service is a less meaningful heuristic (and therefore an especially conservative test of the hypotheses). Survey data from the Harvard Institute of Politics suggests that while a plurality of voters aged 18–29 support military engagements in foreign conflicts, only 16% of those surveyed "said they 'have already,' 'would definitely' or 'would strongly consider' joining the U.S. military" (Perez, 2015, para. 2). Despite the reticence to serve, however, young people have a degree of deference and positive attitudes towards enlisted service women and men. This respect for the military persists despite social attitudes that are largely against military involvement, and critical of the military's handling of social issues such as LGBT service and sexual assault by soldiers (Colford & Sugarman, 2016). The previous (and rather limited) scholarship on military service as a heuristic has failed to account for changing attitudes in young populations, a gap our study can help to remedy. Second, a woman candidate's gender may not be enough of a "groundbreaker" for young people (Roberts, 2016), so participants may assess military competence equally between the genders.

Finally, young people represent an ideal test of "low information rationality," as they consume less political news, are less politically knowledgeable, and less politically interested than older cohorts (Mitchell, Gottfried, & Matsa, 2015). Moreover, older and more high-information people may in fact rely on candidate heuristics less. Since we seek to test how three potential heuristic cues operate in tandem with one another in a low information environment, young participants serve as a fitting population to test our hypotheses.

Students were offered extra credit in exchange for participation. Of the 1,262 students contacted, 851 elected to participate and 837 complete cases were recorded for analysis. The average age of respondents was 20.29 years (*SD* = 4.27), and ages

ranged from 16 to 60 years. Of the respondents, 480 (57.30%) identified as female and 357 (42.70%) identified as male. One participant (0.01%) withheld a sex identity and was excluded from the analysis. Six hundred and twenty-eight participants (75%) identified as Caucasian, 69 (8.20%) as Black or African American, 4 (0.50%) as American Indian or Alaska Native, 67 (8%) as Asian, 3 (0.40%) as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 44 as Hispanic (5.30%), and 22 (2.60%) as Other. Of the respondents, 343 (41%) identified as Republican and 494 (59%) as Democrat.

Procedures

This experiment was conducted during the spring and summer of 2016 using a randomized $2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects factorial design to test the hypothesized relationships. Participants were asked to complete a digital survey at a time and location of their convenience via the online survey software Qualtrics. Pretest items asked for participant attitudes on several political issues including police militarization in American communities, the death penalty, and immigration. The pretest also asked participants how politically participatory they were. After completing the online pretest, Qualtrics randomly assigned participants to one of eight conditions (detailed further in our stimulus description). In each condition, participants were asked to read the biography of a political candidate and were told that this candidate was running for U.S. Senate in 2016. Following exposure to the biography, all participants were prompted to complete a posttest. Posttest items asked participants to assess the strength of candidate performance on several political issues.

Stimulus

For all conditions, participants were presented with the website biography of a fictional candidate running for U.S. Senate to represent Missouri. The hypothetical candidate was Marshall Thompson. His biography described him as a native of Springfield, Missouri, the father of one daughter, and married to an opposite-sex partner. The biography also contained statements regarding policy preferences and willingness to represent the party. To increase ecological validity, our biography was adapted from an actual Senate candidate's biographical website. In particular, we designed two biographies: a military biography and a civilian biography.

Based on our a priori conception of veteran status, we sought to activate its salience. In particular, in order to capture potential differences, we needed manipulations that reflected actual differences between veteran and civilian candidates. Godfrey, Lilley, and Brewis (2012) contended the military body manifests as disciplined, gendered, and cyborgian, such that it is "capable of performing the labour that the organization requires of it" (p. 542). As such, a veteran candidate profile should feature action. In our military biography, we included a photo of the candidate wearing a military uniform and standing in front of a fighter plane. We also included two paragraphs detailing the candidate's military experience and background, articulating how the candidate's veteran status was a salient part of his political identity. An image of this candidate biography is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Veteran Marshall Thompson web page biography.

The second condition served as a "civilian" control. Here, participants were also presented with Marshall Thompson's biography as a member of their political ingroup. To effectively present our conception of a candidate running as a civilian businessperson, we replaced the action-oriented military photo with a professional headshot of a plain-clothed candidate. In addition, the paragraphs detailing the candidate's military background were omitted. An image of this candidate biography is presented in Figure 2.

To test if there were differences in candidate evaluation based on gender, we developed additional conditions consisting of women versions of the biographies referring to Maria Thompson. Her biography pages mirrored those of Marshall's conditions, and her biography contained the same generic information. Likewise, we distinguished experimental differences based on the presence or absence of the military photo and military paragraphs. Complete images of these candidate biographies are presented in Figures 3 and 4, respectively.

The final distinction in conditions took place based on participant partisan identification. To assess the influence of partisan group cuing, half the sample was asked to evaluate an ingroup candidate (i.e., Republicans evaluated a Republican candidate) and half the sample was asked to evaluate an outgroup candidate (i.e., Republicans evaluated a Democratic candidate). Our Qualtrics design ensured the equal and random distribution of ingroup versus outgroup, men versus women, and veteran versus civilian assignments. This yielded eight final groups into which participants were sorted: Ingroup Man Military ($n = 110$; 13%); Ingroup Man Civilian ($n = 106$; 13%); Ingroup Woman Military ($n = 95$; 11%); Ingroup Woman Civilian ($n = 106$; 13%); Outgroup Man Military ($n = 109$; 13%);

Figure 2. Civilian Marshall Thompson web page biography.

Figure 3. Veteran Maria Thompson web page biography.

Figure 4. Civilian Maria Thompson web page biography.

Outgroup Man Civilian (*n* = 105; 13%); Outgroup Woman Military (*n* = 100; 12%); and Outgroup Woman Civilian (*n* = 106; 13%).

Variables and measures

Issue Performance

After exposure to the candidate biography, participants were instructed to choose the extent to which they agreed the candidate would perform on 10 policy issues: foreign policy, marriage equality, economy, terrorism, health care, education, Social Security, college debt, minimum wage, and gun ownership. Candidate performance was assessed on a 5-point scale from *not very well* (1) to *very well* (5). Based on our hypotheses, the war issues were of specific interest: *foreign policy* (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = 1.00) and *terrorism* (*M* = 3.30, *SD* = 1.09). In analyzing the other eight policy issues, results arose in ways we expected based on party issue ownership. For instance, Democrats assessed Democratic candidates as strong performers on *marriage equality*, but they assessed Republican candidates as weak performers. Also, Republicans assessed Democratic candidates as weak performers on *gun ownership*. Assessments of war issue competencies were unique to our targeted interaction of candidate gender, party, and veteran statuses.

Participant Partisan Identification

We asked for participant partisan identification on a 1–7 Likert scale, from *Strong Republican* to *Strong Democrat*. Fifteen percent (*n* = 176) initially selected *Independent*. These participants were then presented with a prompt stating: *I know you don't have a preference between the two parties, but if you had to pick, who would you be more likely to vote for?* Fifty-nine Independent participants became Republicans, and 117 became Democrats[1].

Participant Gender

For the analysis, participants were further divided by the interaction of their gender identity and partisan identification. By examining the interaction of participant gender and partisanship, we further isolated any potential moderating effects on evaluating candidate competence. In total, there were 21.0% (*n* = 176) Republican men, 20.0% (*n* = 167) Republican women, 21.6% (*n* = 181) Democratic men, and 37.4% (*n* = 313) Democratic women.

Results

Analytic procedures

Hypotheses were tested in path analysis using the *Lavaan* software developed by Rosseel (2012) for the *R* ecosystem. Path analysis allows the simultaneous estimation of the influence of candidate and participant traits on multivariate outcomes (i.e., competence on foreign policy and terrorism). To test the hypotheses, we specified a multiple group model to distinguish among the four participant groups (Republican man, Republican woman, Democratic man, Democratic woman). Foreign policy and terrorism performance evaluations served as the variables of interest. For all analyses, we controlled for age, race, levels of political interest, and levels of political information efficacy. Political interest and political information efficacy were specified as latent variables in the path model. The model fit the data well: χ^2 (400) = 4,599.552, $p < 0.000$, RMSEA = 0.056 (0.047–0.065), CFI = 0.956, NNFI/TLI = 0.937, SRMR = 0.054. For all analyses, we chose *Ingroup Man Veteran* as the referent and utilized dummy-variables for the other experimental conditions to assess the extent to which a candidate was advantaged or penalized for belonging to an identity category that was not masculine, veteran, or political ingroup. SEM results are presented, according to gender and party of participants, in Tables 1–4.

Civilian penalty

Hypothesis 1a predicted that veteran candidates would be rated more highly than civilian candidates on foreign policy competence. We found almost all veteran candidates were assessed as stronger on foreign policy than civilian candidates, with one

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[1] The data was also analyzed with these participants excluded, and the results were substantively the same.

Table 1. Democratic Men.

	B	(s.e.)	LLCI	ULCI	β
Foreign Policy Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−0.83	0.27	−1.35	−0.28	−0.27**
Ingroup Male Civilian	−0.95	0.28	−1.44	−0.35	−0.29**
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.20	0.27	−0.33	0.72	0.07
Outgroup Male Civilian	−1.02	0.27	−1.56	−0.52	−0.34***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−0.79	0.27	−1.35	−0.28	−0.26**
Outgroup Male Veteran	−0.69	0.27	−1.22	−0.15	−0.22*
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.28	0.27	−0.78	0.25	−0.10
Terrorism Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−0.80	0.29	−1.37	−0.23	−0.24**
Ingroup Male Civilian	−1.0	0.30	−1.60	−0.42	−0.30**
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.25	0.29	−0.32	0.81	0.08
Outgroup Male Civilian	−1.00	0.29	−1.60	−0.48	−0.31***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−1.00	0.29	−1.51	−0.37	−0.27**
Outgroup Male Veteran	−0.47	0.29	−1.05	0.11	−0.14
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.03	0.28	−0.58	0.53	−0.01

Asterisks on β reflect results of the Wald test of significance; * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$
Confidence intervals are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table 2. Democratic Women.

	B	(s.e.)	LLCI	ULCI	β
Foreign Policy Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−1.00	0.19	−1.41	−0.67	−0.34***
Ingroup Male Civilian	−0.66	0.19	−1.07	−0.33	−0.23***
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.34	0.20	−0.04	0.74	0.11
Outgroup Male Civilian	−0.96	0.19	−1.40	−0.66	−0.33***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−0.68	0.19	−1.10	−0.36	−0.23***
Outgroup Male Veteran	0.05	0.18	−0.37	0.36	0.02
Outgroup Female Veteran	0.22	0.19	−0.19	0.56	0.07
Terrorism Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−1.4	0.19	−1.81	−1.06	−0.45***
Ingroup Male Civilian	−1.0	0.19	−1.41	−0.67	−0.33***
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.15	0.20	−0.23	0.57	0.05
Outgroup Male Civilian	−1.2	0.19	−1.62	−0.87	−0.39***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−1.2	0.19	−1.62	−0.87	−0.39***
Outgroup Male Veteran	−0.38	0.19	−0.79	−0.05	−0.13*
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.21	0.19	−0.62	0.14	−0.07

Asterisks on β reflect results of the Wald test of significance; * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$
Confidence intervals are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table 3. Republican Men.

	B	(s.e.)	LLCI	ULCI	β
Foreign Policy Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−1.14	0.24	−1.62	−0.66	−0.41***
Ingroup Male Civilian	−1.05	0.25	−1.52	−0.54	−0.36***
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.12	0.26	−0.46	0.54	0.04
Outgroup Male Civilian	−1.13	0.27	−1.65	−0.60	−0.35***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−1.32	0.26	−1.83	−0.82	−0.43***
Outgroup Male Veteran	−0.35	0.27	−0.86	0.19	−0.11
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.35	0.27	−0.84	0.23	−0.11
Terrorism Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−1.67	0.25	−2.14	−1.15	−0.52***
Ingroup Male Civilian	−1.19	0.26	−1.66	−0.64	−0.36***
Ingroup Female Veteran	−0.26	0.27	−0.91	0.13	−0.08
Outgroup Male Civilian	−1.72	0.28	−2.26	−1.17	−0.46***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−1.95	0.26	−2.46	−1.42	−0.55***
Outgroup Male Veteran	−0.25	0.27	−0.79	0.30	−0.07
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.15	0.28	−0.62	0.48	−0.04

Asterisks on β reflect results of the Wald test of significance; $^{*} p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$
Confidence intervals are unstandardized regression coefficients

Table 4. Republican Women.

	B	(s.e.)	LLCI	ULCI	β
Foreign Policy Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−0.47	0.28	−1.01	0.05	−0.15
Ingroup Male Civilian	−0.28	0.26	−0.79	0.23	−0.09
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.78	0.28	−0.23	1.32	0.24**
Outgroup Male Civilian	−0.59	0.25	−1.07	−0.07	−0.20**
Outgroup Female Civilian	−0.79	0.26	−1.25	−0.26	−0.28**
Outgroup Male Veteran	0.14	0.25	−0.32	0.64	0.05
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.24	0.27	−0.74	0.30	−0.08
Terrorism Evaluation					
Ingroup Female Civilian	−0.79	0.29	−1.35	−0.24	−0.23**
Ingroup Male Civilian	−0.80	0.28	−1.35	−0.27	−0.24**
Ingroup Female Veteran	0.56	0.29	−0.03	1.11	0.15
Outgroup Male Civilian	−1.14	0.27	−1.67	−0.62	−0.35***
Outgroup Female Civilian	−1.44	0.27	−1.98	−0.94	−0.45***
Outgroup Male Veteran	−0.16	0.26	−0.67	0.35	−0.05
Outgroup Female Veteran	−0.54	0.28	−1.08	0.01	−0.16

Asterisks on β reflect results of the Wald test of significance; $^{*} p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$
Confidence intervals are unstandardized regression coefficients

exception. Though Republican women penalized Democratic civilian candidates, they assigned neither a reward nor a penalty to Republican civilian candidates. In other words, Republican women saw Republican civilian candidates as equal to Republican veteran men candidates on foreign policy competence. Thus, Hypothesis 1a was generally supported. These results are reported in Table 4. Furthermore, Hypothesis 1b predicted that veteran status would outperform civilian status on terrorism competence, and we found this to be the case universally among groups.

Gender penalty

Hypothesis 2a predicted men candidates would outperform women candidates on foreign policy competence. We found that almost all women veteran candidates were assessed as equal to men veteran candidates on foreign policy competence, with only two findings running counter to our expectations. First, Democratic men (Table 1) penalized men veteran candidates of their partisan outgroup, indicating the opposite gender penalty we had anticipated. Second, Republican women (Table 4) rewarded their partisan ingroup veteran women candidate on foreign policy competence. Therefore, we found no support for Hypothesis 2a. Moreover, Hypothesis 2b predicted men candidates would outperform women candidates on terrorism competence. All women veteran candidates were assessed as equal to men veteran candidates on terrorism competence. Yet, one finding counter to our expectations was that Democratic women (Table 2) penalized men veteran candidates of the partisan outgroup on terrorism competence. As such, Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

Partisan outgroup penalty

While Hypothesis 3a predicted partisan ingroup candidates would outperform partisan outgroup candidates on foreign policy, we found little evidence of such a penalty. In fact, consistent penalties were assigned only when the partisan outgroup candidate was a civilian. In most instances, partisan ingroup and outgroup veterans were assessed equally on foreign policy competence, suggesting that veteran status overwhelmed party cues when candidates were evaluated on military matters. In addition, Hypothesis 3b predicted partisan ingroup candidates would outperform partisan outgroup candidates on terrorism competence. This prediction was generally not supported, and like foreign policy competence assessments, comparisons of ingroup and outgroup veterans were largely equivalent regarding terrorism competence.

However, we discovered two instances in which partisan outgroups were penalized. Democratic men penalized Republican men veteran candidates on foreign policy competence, while Democratic women respondents penalized Republican men veteran candidates on terrorism competence. In other words, the presence of a partisan penalty was complicated not only by the veteran status of the candidate but also by respondents' partisanship and gender. Democrats tended to punish,

rather than reward, veteran status among Republican men candidates. No evidence of the same phenomenon within Republican participants existed.

Participant gender identity moderation

Regarding Hypothesis 4, there was one instance in which participant gender identity interacted with candidate gender to overwhelm the discrete effects reported previously. We found evidence of a gender reward enhanced by a candidate's veteran status, in that Republican women participants rewarded Republican veteran women candidates on foreign policy performance. In other words, Republican women reversed the gender penalty in evaluating an ingroup veteran woman candidate. We also detected an effect of partisan ingroup status within Republican women, since party identification as a Republican insulated candidates from the civilian penalty we detected elsewhere. That is, Republican women assessed Republican civilian candidates as equal to the Republican man veteran (the referent) on foreign policy performance. While Republican women also rated Republican women veterans higher than the referent on terrorism performance, this finding was not significant. Regarding other groups, such co-gender moderation did not materialize among women Democrats, men Democrats, nor men Republicans—instead, effects became evident in cross-stereotyped groups. In the discussion that follows, we offer explanations for the findings.

Discussion

This study tested the interactive influence of candidate partisanship, gender, and veteran status on evaluations of war issue competence. Furthermore, we considered the interaction of candidate cues with participant identities. Our findings suggest that veterans enjoy a sizable benefit on these issues, a benefit significant enough to overwhelm the influence of partisanship in some instances. This "civilian penalty" behaved almost exactly as hypothesized—even within Democratic participants, thus supplementing the limited empirical data on veteran status as a heuristic. However, as we will discuss, accepting this effect as uniform is problematic when taken in the context of the interaction between veteran status and partisan outgroup status. With minimal and mixed evidence supporting the second and third hypotheses, we turn to the fourth and final hypothesis to extrapolate beyond ingroup as it relates to party alone, and examine how gender ingroups moderate the main effects. We highlight first the existence of a strong and consistent civilian penalty, and second, we dissect specific instances where the civilian penalty behaved counter to hypotheses.

Our analysis provides abundant evidence of a civilian penalty. Almost across the board, civilian candidates were penalized compared to the referent, regardless of co-partisanship. Such a finding suggests that a civilian candidate's political partisanship alone was generally not a strong enough insulator from criticism on matters of war competence. This finding runs counter to literature proposing that partisan

identification overrides other salient identity categories (e.g., Dolan, 2014; Hayes, 2011), and suggests that some elements of candidate evaluation can be influenced by certain heuristics. Empirical support for a civilian penalty regardless of partisanship supplements the previous and limited scholarship on veteran status as a heuristic (see McDermott & Panagopoulos, 2015). Our findings support longstanding conventional wisdom concerning the desirability of military service in the political sphere, suggesting a disadvantage for those wishing to enter public service from the civilian sphere alone.

Independent of party, veteran candidates were considered stronger on foreign policy and terrorism. Republican candidates received higher evaluations on terrorism performance than Democratic candidates received, but in each party, the penalty for being a civilian candidate was similarly strong. This is to say that Republicans did not *automatically* benefit from the party's military issue ownership enough to close the overall gap between evaluations of terrorism performance in Democratic military candidates and civilian Republican candidates. Anecdotal and empirical evidence conflicted on the question of veteran status and party; where a compelling political narrative maintained a desirability of military service, McDermott and Panagopoulos (2015) suggested that benefits of veteran status only occurred for Democratic candidates. Their explanation, grounded in issue ownership literature and political context, suggests that party presented a meaningful cue that was supplemented by veteran status. Our findings supplement, but also complicate, this conclusion.

We find that indicators of military experience are generally robust against party differences, and only specific contexts may be able to mitigate or reverse expected penalties. These findings are a departure from a perspective that privileges party as the most meaningful heuristic and invites further scholarship on the intersection of partisan identification and other meaningful candidate attributes that may become salient when voters make snap judgments in inter or intra-party campaigns. Though party still serves as a highly meaningful heuristic of citizens' vote choice (Popkin, 1991), candidate evaluation can be influenced by other salient candidate characteristics. Our findings suggest that regardless of party, veteran status is one such characteristic. Candidates possessing veteran status were rated more positively, almost universally, on foreign policy and terrorism competence.

Our findings concerning the significant main effects of veteran status, and the lack of main of effects for gender, warrant deeper analysis as well. Despite no evidence of a uniform "gender penalty" and mixed evidence of a penalty toward partisan outgroup members, two notable interactions occurred among two isolated groups. Republican women and Democratic participants defied theoretical expectations regarding the application of the civilian penalty in candidate evaluation and thus illuminated how our main effects acted upon candidate evaluations in more nuanced ways. This finding, which confounds theoretical expectations regarding both gender and veteran status as a heuristic, is examined in the following.

The "civilian penalty" was defied in the context of young Republican women evaluating women Republican candidates on foreign policy performance. Rather than penalize

civilian women of their political ingroup, young Republican women evaluated civilian women ingroup candidates the same as the veteran referent. Additionally, on the topic of foreign policy performance, young women rewarded the veteran partisan ingroup woman candidate compared to the veteran man candidate. This finding, though initially theoretically inconsistent, is understandable in the context of both SIT and the unique social position held by Republican women. As of 2014, Pew Research Center suggests that just 36% of women identify as Republicans, making them a minority in the overall voting body of women (Doherty & Weisel, 2015). Moreover, as we noted previously, the 2016 Presidential election was taking place throughout the duration of our experiment. In a study of Presidential voting habits, the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (2016) found that among young Republicans, 39% of women felt that Donald Trump was not qualified to serve as President, and 37% were bothered by Mr. Trump's treatment of women. While young Republican women may have been reticent to support their party's 2016 Presidential nominee, they may have been uniquely primed to herald a woman member of their party who was "more like them."

Additionally, prior literature suggests gendered stereotypes loosely align with political party stereotypes such that the Republican Party is "masculine" and the Democratic Party is its "feminine" counterpart (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009; Winter, 2010). Women who occupy this cross-stereotypical space may feel that their somewhat unusual identities as Republicans are more salient than their identities as women. Our results are explained, in part, by the unique intersection of social identities for young Republican women and how those identities would bear out during candidate evaluation. As found in Hypothesis 2, candidate gender alone did not affect evaluations on military competence. Only when candidate gender and veteran status interacted were differences in evaluations on terrorism performance evident. Young Republican women were the only participants who responded outside of this general pattern, giving no penalty to partisan ingroup candidates for civilian status, and a large boost of support specifically to veteran partisan ingroup women candidates.

Hypothesis 4 illustrates one of the possible reasons why this deviation may have occurred. It appears that gender ingroups are highly conscious of co-gender candidate interaction with other social identities. This awareness manifested as more strongly rewarding values desired in their partisan ingroup. Recall, young Republican women's identification with the party and gender of women Republican candidates resonated more strongly in the presence of military experience. Women embedded in an otherwise conservative culture might triumph a woman breaking traditional gender roles in a way that will be rewarded, rather than punished, by their families and peers. Conversely, the lack of equivalent support within Democratic women might suggest they do not desire similar validation through military association, implying enthusiasm for areas untouched by military service, such as domestic and social issues.

Furthermore, participant party and gender and candidate veteran status interacted such that young Democratic men displayed unique characteristics compared to

Democratic women and Republican men. Such men penalized men Republican candidates with veteran status on foreign policy performance, a finding we might explain in the stereotyping of the Democratic party and its adherents as "less masculine." In this way, traditionally masculine attributes are not embraced by all men, particularly when they collide with party ideals. As previous scholars have suggested, party affiliation can diminish gender loyalty (e.g., Dolan, 2014; Hayes, 2011)—however, this phenomenon may be moderated by gender stereotypes, especially in cases where participant and candidate genders were similar. For instance, Republican women embrace and reward "toughness," thereby defying gender stereotypes while adhering to party stereotypes.

On the other hand, by the same process, Democratic men may shun "brutishness," or the militarization of foreign policy, in this case causing a stronger punishment levied against the political outgroup. Young Democratic women also distrusted outgroup veteran men regarding terrorism performance, suggesting that Democrats in general hesitated to give their full support to outgroup veteran men. As mentioned previously, this ran counter to our initial expectation that veteran men would receive universal boosts of support—it is not therefore advisable to assume that a veteran candidate is always best equipped to win the committed votes of his or her (in the case of this finding, his) constituents. The behavior of veteran status *and* outgroup party status as variables within this examination, which can mute the effects of each other under specific circumstances, demonstrates that gender and partisanship can confound penalties that might otherwise be universal.

This study demonstrates the need for social identity research to remain as intersectional as possible, as it is not enough to assume that all candidates will be perceived uniformly according to stereotypes associated with their party, gender, or veteran status alone. Presumably this also applies to other immediately apparent social identifiers used by voters in low information races, such as ethnicity. Theoretical implications provided through this experiment may also provide dialogue within research related to self-categorization theory, wherein people—here, candidates—may hop between acting as exemplars of any one of their identities to appeal to subsets of their constituency (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), instead providing evidence that activating more niche and intersectional self-categories can gain even more lasting positive perceptions from voters.

More practically, there may be an opportunity for women candidates in conservative parties to forge a path for increased women representation, although this representation may be limited to identity, and not necessarily policy changes. Conservative parties may find it advantageous to elect women candidates over men candidates because of this resonant effect within women, which may translate to more committed voting behavior in conservative women. Certainly, such representation may seem desirable, as higher visibility of women in political roles may encourage younger generations of women to aspire to more executive roles in government. However, such women leadership may leave something to be desired, given that such representation appears to flourish only when couched in a structure that privileges traditionally masculine qualities and thus privileges women who "fit" into an existing masculinist paradigm. Although no clear

"woman penalty" was found in this study regarding terrorism performance and foreign policy performance, women candidates may still wish to exhibit "toughness" to overcome a presumed over-arching gender penalty, evidence for which has been found in candidate evaluations on other issues (Bauer, 2016).

While it may at first appear as though these findings suggest strong implications for women candidates in only the Republican Party, the effects of candidate competition may push Democratic women to embrace stronger military platforms. It is unclear if this strategy of keeping pace with women of the military-Right would be effective in a hypothetical race between two women nominees from the Democrat and Republican parties, or if, as in the 2016 presidential election, Leftist constituents of the Democratic party would perceive such a shift as "hawkish" and therefore unsuitable for the party's full support. What may instead satisfy more Left-leaning and centrist Democrats simultaneously would be a veteran woman candidate who can offer both the narrative of first-hand experience in wartime, and who can demonstrate that she has "earned" an informed skepticism toward undiscerning or offensive counter-terrorism policy—a woman who has proven that she can be "tough" but who operates on a platform of nonmilitant diplomacy.

Limitations and future directions

The first limitation was use of an American college student sample. Though student samples are criticized as not generalizable to a broader population, our aim was not to make population estimates. Mook (1983) noted that while we cannot generalize artificial laboratory findings in many cases, experimental scholars are not seeking population generalizability. Findings from a laboratory setting contribute to an understanding of processes that are taking place, and instead of predicting results from the laboratory to the real world, we should aim to use theory to predict what participants *ought* to do in the laboratory setting (Mook, 1983). Echoing Mook, Hayes (2009) stated that unlike population inferences, process inferences are appropriate for researchers who examine whether a process is at work. Future studies can use the findings presented here to assess the extent to which veteran status and gender interact in interesting ways in actual campaigns settings where, though the numerous idiosyncratic factors unique to each race will preclude internally valid tests of the findings presented here, the real-world context will allow some assessment of the external validity of our findings. Additionally, there is value in examination of an emerging-adult population, as this sample will have been recently exposed to influence beyond that which is familial, and will presumably be in an environment where media choices are unrestricted for the first time, allowing researchers to gain insight into the early attitudes of a voting population with the highest longevity.

Second, we look forward to research that builds upon this piece by accounting for participant experiences with military so that a discussion of veterans' social identities can be added to our findings related to gender ingroup and political ingroup. Although we firmly recognize the ability for university populations to make inferences related to processes, this population was not adequately positioned to make such inferences related to effects of veteran identity. Additionally, as compulsory service has not been practiced in

the United States since 1971, the notion of volunteer service may be a stronger factor of masculine identity in the United States than in other countries where service is mandatory. Constructions of masculinity in such places may be less tied to military identity, and thus to related notions such as battle courage, chivalry, or even aggression.

As women's political representation rises in the United States, researchers must be equipped to revisit previous assumptions about voter attitudes to determine the role that gender plays in candidate evaluation. Considering greater presence of women in both the military and the political sphere, it is of the utmost importance that researchers determine the ways that voters evaluate and understand the shifting and more visible role of women in the public sphere. The present study pushes closer towards that understanding, as it will empower us to determine the extent to which military service helps or hinders women candidates. Additionally, we hope to continue studying traditional gender stereotypes in evaluations of women who simultaneously defy and conform to the roles of politician, mother, wife, soldier, and civilian.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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