An Analysis of the Differences in Social Media Use and Reaction to Their Use Based on Candidate Gender

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Abstract

Attempting to analyze
- Effect of Candidate Gender on Type of Social Media Use
- Effect of Type of Social Media Use on Reaction by Potential Voters

Identify extreme ends of scale of Social Media Use
1. Entirely Political
2. Entirely Personal

More Generally, Attempting to understand the relationship between campaigns and potential voters and the role that social media plays.
- Does Social Media Use affect voter's opinion of the candidate?
- Do candidates attempt to use social media to influence how they are perceived? Specifically, do women candidates appeal more to personability to be deemed more likeable?

What can the way voters interact with Political Campaigns tell researchers about their opinions on the candidate?
- Is the effect dependent on gender?

Use Facebook as the Social Media Platform

Background

Previous Research On Gender in Campaigns Has Shown
- Women Candidates are expected to act according to feminine stereotypes
- Women Candidates judged for not holding enough leadership qualifications which are typically associated with male stereotypes
- Women Candidates judged on whether they are deemed likeable
- Women Candidates more likely to be judged on appearance

Prior Research on Social Media and Campaigns
- Experiments with fake candidates asking participants questions about the candidate
- Study on how Female Candidates use Social Media
  - Women more likely to tweet about policy, women's issues.
  - Women more likely to use negative tweets
- All Studies have used Twitter as Social Media Platform
- Studies on Personability have been limited to experiments
  - Little Information about how real candidates attempt to act
  - Found that people react more positively to male candidates
- No Studies Linking Social Media Personability to Reaction of Potential Voters

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:
- Women candidates will attempt to be more personable online than man candidates.
  - This is because women candidates have more motivation to behave differently on social media than on the campaign trail.
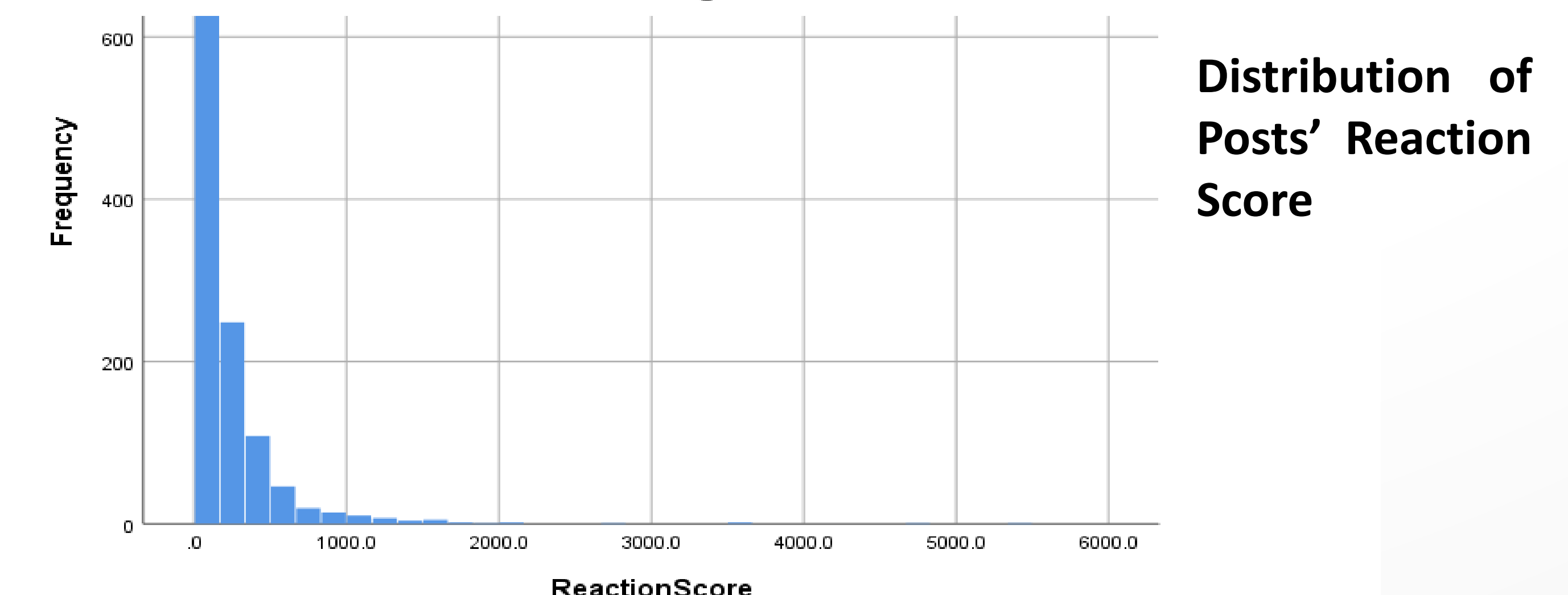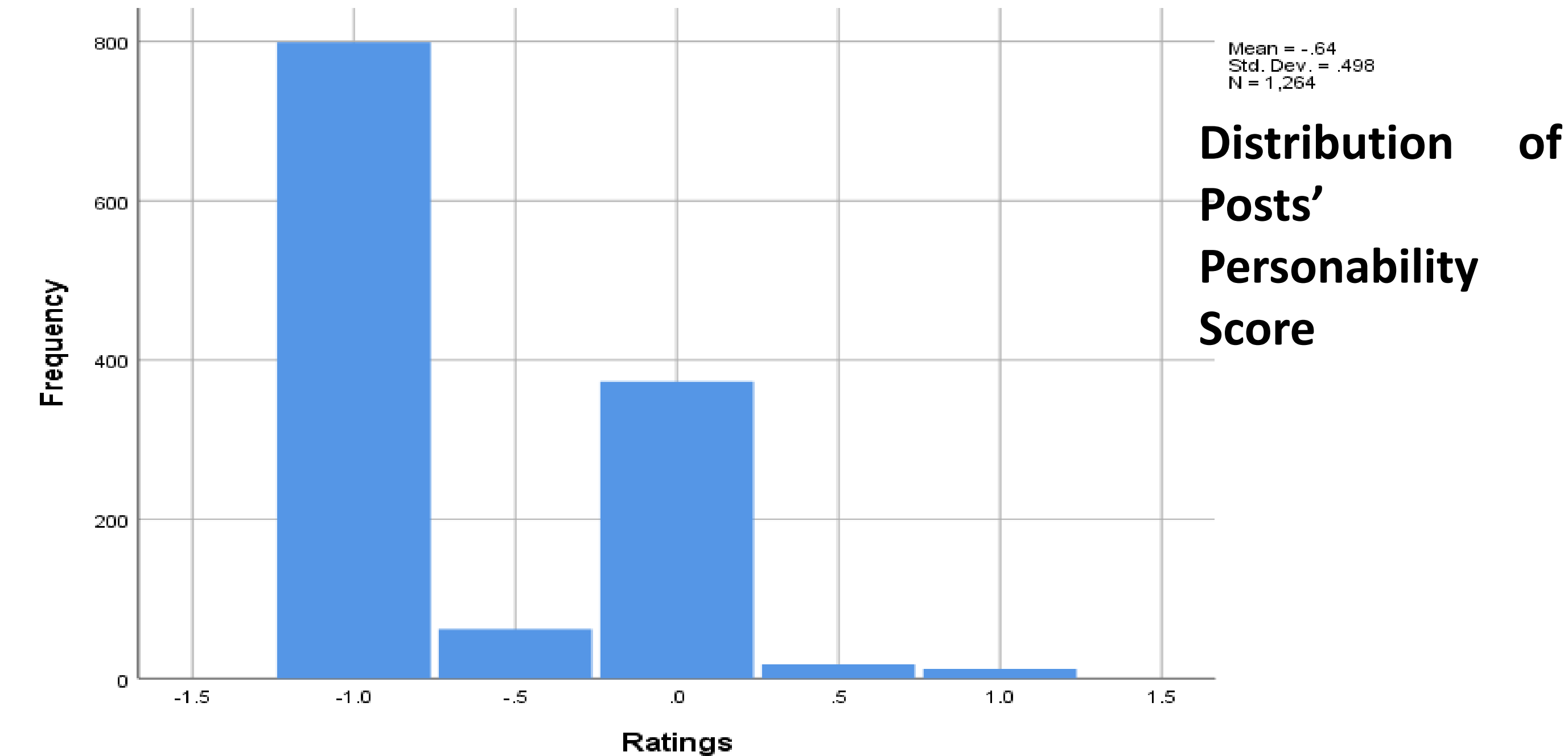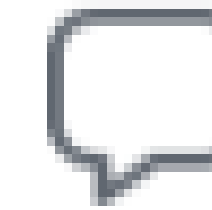
Hypothesis 2:
- In general, Facebook users will react more positively to personal posts than political posts.

Materials and Methods

Looking at Candidates' Facebook Profile in the 2 weeks prior to the Election Method
- Create a scale for Political to Personal
  - -1 (Political)
  - -0.5 (Mostly Political)
  - 0 (Neutral)
  - 0.5 (Mostly Personal)
  - 1 (Personal)
- Weight Reactions to Posts
  - Angry Reactions
    - 0x
  - Surprise Reactions
    - 0x
  - Sad Reactions
    - 0.5x or 1.5x
  - Laugh Reactions
    - 0.5x or 1.5x
  - Likes
    - 1x
  - Heart Reactions
    - 2x
  - Comments
    - 0.5x
- Analyze all posts by candidate in the 2 weeks prior to Election Day
  - From October 23rd, 2018 to November 6th, 2018
- Average the Score of all posts to get overall personability of the candidate
- Calculate the Reaction of each post, then average reactions to get overall reaction of the candidate

Distribution of Posts' Personality Score


Distribution of Posts' Reaction Score

Results

Hypothesis 1:
- Data failed to show that there was a significant difference between personability of posts for candidates of different genders.
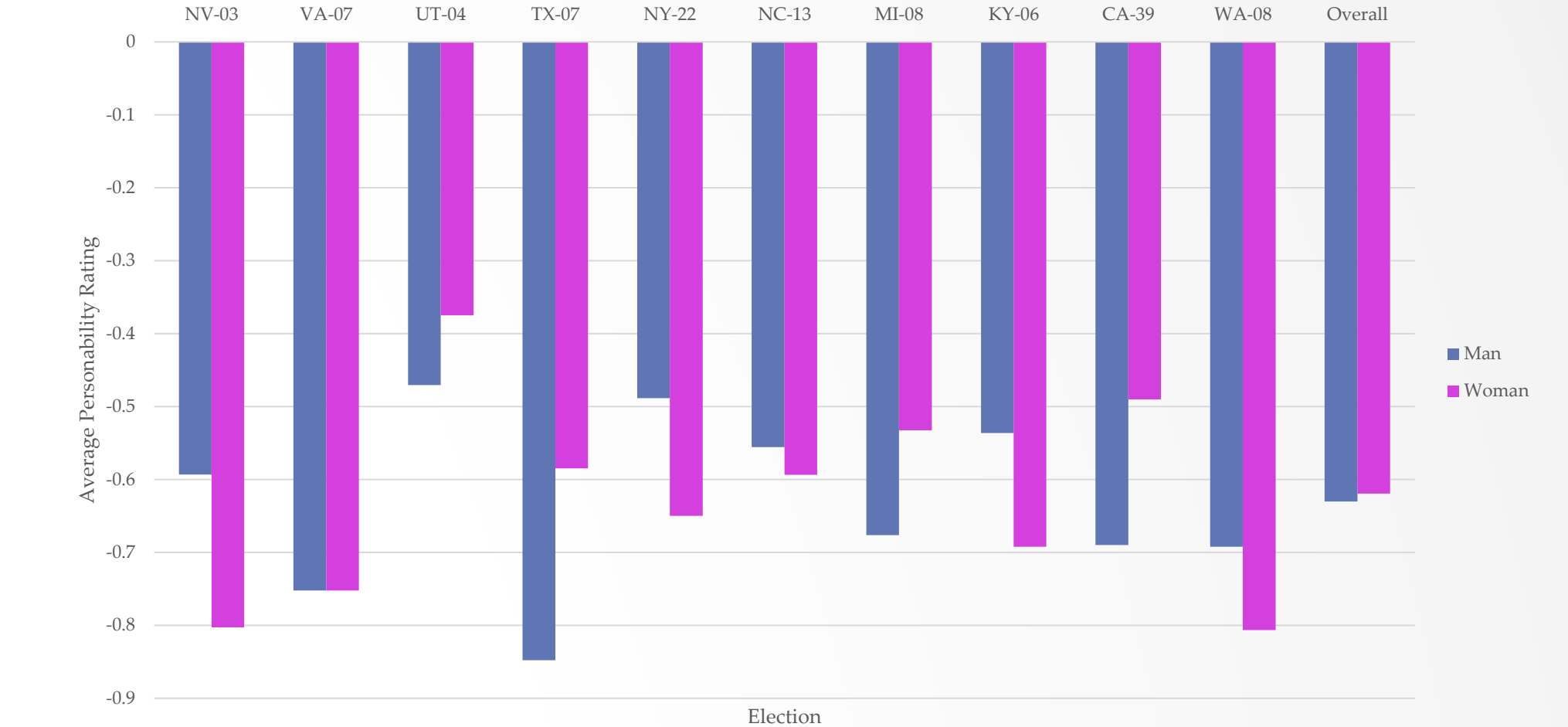
Hypothesis 2:
- Data failed to show there was a relationship between personability of posts and the reaction it received.
- There was an indication that women candidates were rewarded for personal posts.
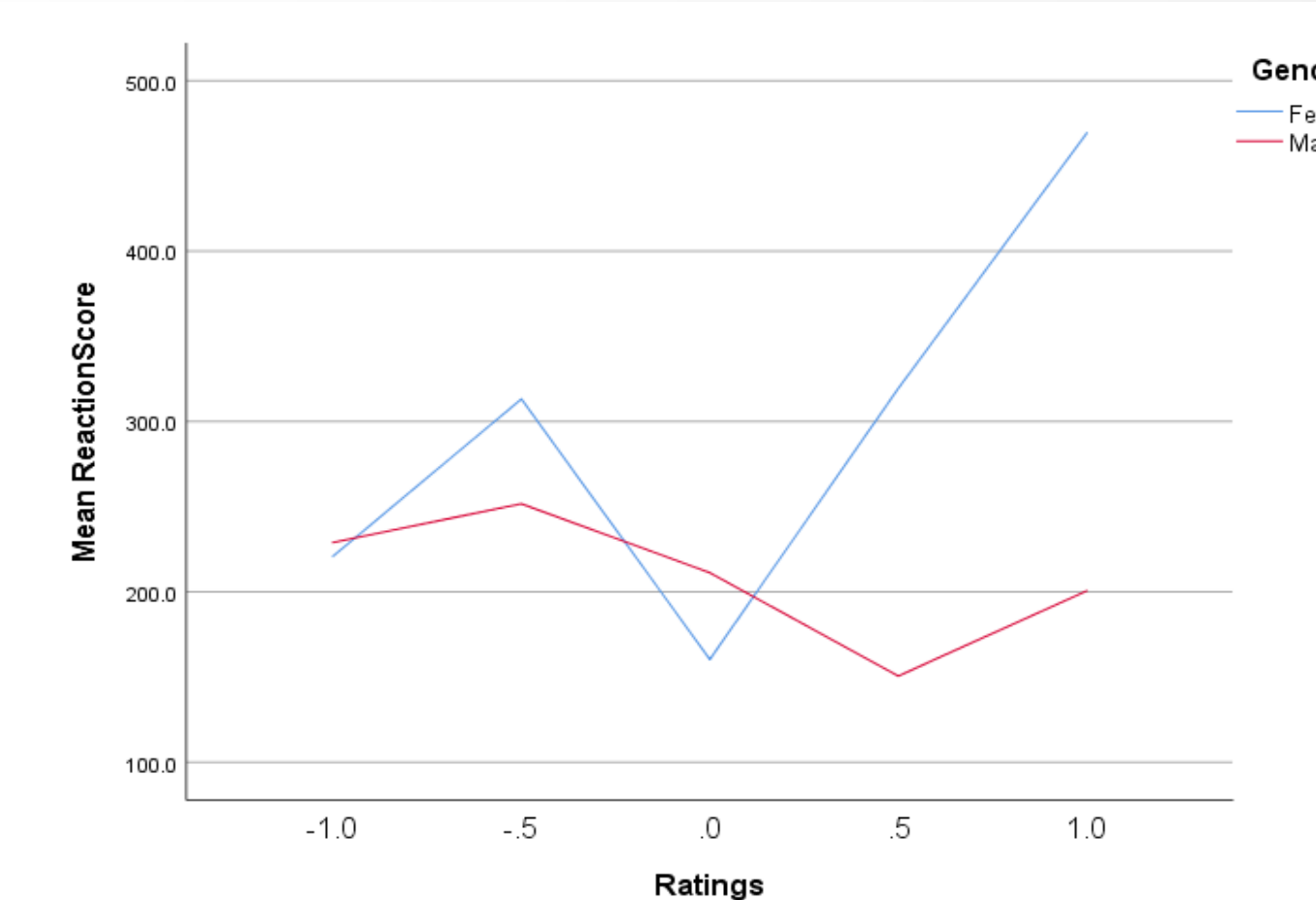
Conclusion

- Women candidates are not currently being any more personal on social media than men candidates
- If women candidates attempted to be more personal on social media, the data indicates they would be rewarded (at least via social media interaction)

Future Direction

- Improve Rating system, make it include more options than merely personal or political
  - Look into empathy posts, political endorsements, and other types of posts
- Explore whether personal posts increase vote share for women candidates
- A case study which includes larger pool of candidates for more significant results

Acknowledgments