Are Political Opponents Reliable?: Assessing the effects of the information source on perceptions of political candidates
Jenna Laurin, Dr. Heather Terrell, Shannon Hardy
University of North Dakota

Study Design
  - Extended by including information source: either neutral media or opponent

Sample & Procedure
- 216 undergraduate student participants collected through SONA
- Participants read a paragraph describing the candidate
- Candidate was rated on:
  - Positive & Negative Traits
  - Qualification to serve in elected office
  - Willingness to vote
  - Leadership
  - Effective communication

Results:

Positive Trait Ratings
- Candidates were rated lower on positive traits when described by their opponent ($p = .009$)

Negative Trait Ratings
- Candidates were rated higher on negative traits when described by their opponent ($p = .01$)

Qualification to serve in local elected office (school board & city council)
- Male candidates were rated as less qualified to serve in local elected office when they were described by their opponents
- When described by a neutral source, male candidates were rated as more qualified than female candidates to serve in local elected office
  - $p = .005$

Discussion & Implications
- Participants view candidates less positively when they are described by their opponent
- Male candidates are more negatively affected by their opponent’s message
- Potential voters use message sources to shape their perceptions of candidates
- Information conveyed by political candidates’ opponents are taken seriously by voters