CEO Icon to GOP Hopeful: A Quantitative Analysis Exploring Politically Motivated Celebrity CEOs

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of celebrity CEOs potentially
transitioning to political candidates. Using Carly Fiorina's campaign for
Senator of California, this study identified how young voters perceive
celebrity CEOs as politicians, their identification of celebrity CEOs, and the
evaluations of CEOs and their companies. Results indicate a more favorable
evaluation of Fiorina resulted in a more favorable reaction to Hewlett-
Packard. Results also confirm the use of media messages to prime young
voters about political candidates. Finally, political party affiliation was
found to significantly influence the findings of this study while gender and
political cynicism did not. Theoretical implications and areas of future
research in celebrity and politics are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"It is safe to say that in many countries around the world celebrity politics has become more than a fringe phenomenon" (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010, p. 337). This phenomenon is apparent in the United States and appears to be revolutionizing not only how voters view politics but also how scholars study politics. Celebrity politics has led to a transformation in how the media cover these celebrities and their political agendas as well as their use of political campaigns to win elections (Duvall, 2007). Needless to say, celebrity politics has resulted in attention from the media and voters alike; however, one type of celebrity may be even more interesting to evaluate, those individuals most noted for their success in the business world, celebrity CEOs.

Celebrity CEOs are running for political office. This phrase appears to be an oxymoron, yet it was a reality in 2010. Celebrity CEOs not only decided to take their status and experience into the political realm, but also seemed to be doing so with flair and style while creating a new type of political candidate. The transfer of power, wealth and influence from the boardroom to public office may be the new trend in American politics and could potentially create a new set of opportunities, problems, and circumstances. Therefore, it is equally important to understand what constitutes celebrity CEOs, how they are regarded by the public, and how their

attempts to parlay their corporate success to the political realm are perceived by the public.

Carly Fiorina, Meg Whitman, Donald Trump, Martha Stewart, Steve Jobs, and Jack Welch are CEOs with something in common. The public knows their names because they are, or were at one time, the "face" of a successful company or brand. Although definitions of celebrity CEOs vary, most definitions center on characteristics such as fame, reputation, and media attention. Also known as "SuperCEOs," celebrity CEOs can be viewed as a "super class of executive heroes" (Gaines-Ross, 2003, p. 100). Hayward, Rindova, and Pollock (2004) ascribe the creation of a celebrity CEO by the circumstance arising "when journalists broadcast the attributions that a firm's positive performance has been caused by its CEO's actions" (p. 639). However, Ketchen, Adams, and Shook (2008) assert "celebrity CEOs include executives that are viewed positively as well as those viewed negatively" (p. 529). Therefore, celebrity CEOs are those who receive recognition for successes and failures within their corporation and can be viewed positively or negatively by their employees (internally) or the public (externally).

Few studies have questioned how individuals view celebrity CEOs, especially those CEOs entering the political arena (Duvall, 2007; Holmes, 2005; Hughes-Freeland, 2007). Most celebrities entering politics, in general, have made

their entrance into the political world based on family history or an affiliation with successful political family units such as the Kennedy and Bush families. For example, President George W. Bush had name recognition, experience with politics, and a large group of supporters even before he ran for political office based on his father being a former U.S. President. Few celebrities have tried to break into politics by parlaying their business successes into political success. Carly Fiorina is an example of a celebrity CEO that attempted to do so during the 2010 election cycle.

Most previous studies addressing celebrities and politics explore the role of endorsements in political elections. They particularly examine how the credibility, trustworthiness, and reputation of the celebrity affect public perceptions of the candidate. Studies also explore a celebrity's company endorsements and question whether the celebrity's affiliation with these companies affects their endorsement of a particular candidate (Ranjbarin, Shekarchizade, & Momeni, 2010; Tripp, Jensen, & Carlson, 1993; Veer, Becirovic, & Marin, 2008). Few studies question whether a celebrity CEO can truly transition to a political candidate and potentially be the political voice of citizens. Questions have been raised as to whether the celebrity CEO is too out-of-touch with the needs of the people they may soon represent or whether decision-making that affects big business will be skewed. Other concerns include the lack of political knowledge regarding endorsements,

debate experience, policy platforms, campaign advertisements, and blogs. Finally, citizens questions if a celebrity CEO has enough credibility to build a political coalition to enact the needs and laws of the nation.

Specifically, this study explores the celebrity CEO Carly Fiorina, who unsuccessfully attempted to transition from a celebrity CEO to a U.S. Senator for the State of California. In 2010, Fiorina ran against three-time incumbent Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), a democratic Senator considered to hold liberal views. Boxer campaigned on two main issues, her success in helping the economy through federal funding and her stance for immigration, a key issue in California since Latinos constitute a significant portion of the of voters (O' Leary, 2010). Fiorina, on the other hand, campaigned on business leadership and values, which closely resembled the values put forth by the Republican Party. She focused mainly on the economy and how she could assist in job creation for the state of California based on her past experience in business (O'Leary, 2010). After ending her tenure as CEO of Hewlett-Packard during one of its most prosperous times (1999-2005), Fiorina continues to engage in business ventures and remains active in the business world, a major element of her Senate campaign. According to Fiorina's U.S. Senate campaign website, "Today, Carly is one of the most recognized business leaders in the world and an opinion leader who chairs the Board of the Technology Policy Institute, served on the Board of Business

Executives for National Security, is a Global Envoy for Lance Armstrong's

LIVESTRONG organization and serves as vice chair of the Initiative for Global

Development" ("About Carly Fiorina", 2010, p. 1) Although Fiorina continues to

be successful in the business world, her political ambitions were unsuccessful. Her

failure to win the Senate sear in California does provide scholars a case study for

how celebrity status may not always translate to positive perceptions as a political

candidate.

This thesis aims to advance the relatively little research on celebrity and

politics. As the literature review demonstrates, a limited number of research studies

identify and examine celebrity CEOs, especially those entering the political scene.

Although there has been research elucidating the influence of celebrities in

political elections, no such research has looked specifically at celebrity CEOs and

politics. Second, by using a celebrity CEO who actually ran for public office and

who experienced success in her position as CEO, this study evaluates whether

Fiorina's good qualities and reputation transferred to her political image. Third,

this study uncovered citizens' perception of celebrities' interest and influence in

politics and the effect of celebrity status on voting behavior.

This study not only examined the perception of celebrity CEOs, but also

identified how they were perceived in political contexts. In particular, Fiorina was

evaluated on two distinct criteria: the perception of her candidacy and the

perception of her affiliation with Hewlett-Packard. In addition, this study aimed to help clarify whom the public deems as celebrity CEOs since few examples are provided in the academic literature. Finally, it examined how political cynicism can affect how voters perceive celebrity CEOs and celebrities' influence on politics.

In order to explore celebrity CEOs and public attitudes toward them, this thesis presents an experimental analysis rooted in priming theory. Priming theory was utilized for three reasons. First, political communication research has been successful in using priming theory as it relates to studies of media messages and perceptions of attitudes. Second, as the literature suggests, priming theory describes how "the news media influences the standards by which governments, presidencies, policies, and candidates for public office are judged" (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). Hence, priming theory would be useful since perception of a political candidate is a variable in this study. Third, the media is credited with the creation and sustainability of celebrity status (Ranft et al., 2006). Therefore, priming theory is useful to identify how different media messages influence the perception of celebrity status. Political cynicism also informs this thesis. Political cynicism was included in the analysis based on prior research showing that young voters, in particular, experience cynicism and discontent with the U.S. political system (Cappela & Jamieson, 1997). Since participants in this study were young

adults, they are likely to be attentive to celebrity culture. Also, how young voters evaluate celebrity CEOs differently based on their level of political cynicism emerged as an important consideration for this study. Hence, by using priming theory and political cynicism, further understanding of how young voters evaluate celebrity CEOs, in general and in relation to the media messages they consume, could be determined.

A pre-test/post-test control group experiment was designed and implemented for this study. Evaluations of Fiorina were gathered before any exposure to media messages and then after exposure to one of three experimental conditions. The importance of the control was to test the manipulations of the media messages. In addition, pre- and post-test questionnaires offered participants an opportunity to identify celebrity CEOs, to identify celebrities they viewed suitable for political office, and to offer reasons why celebrities would, or would not, make good politicians. Overall, this study ventured into a new area, yet if the trend toward celebrities in politics continues, this study could serve as a foundation for future studies in this area.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The idea of candidates using their celebrity status, wealth, and affiliation with corporations as part of their political platform is a new concept that raises a number of questions for voters. Can a CEO relate to the public it will represent? How will these candidates use their extensive media exposure to benefit their constituents? How will these celebrities transition into the role of a public official? Is there a potential conflict of interest between their political role and their corporate role? These are just a few of the questions that were directed toward Carly Fiorina, who attempted to win the California Senate seat in 2010 following her success as CEO of Hewlett-Packard.

The Definition of Celebrity

The term "celebrity" can define a plethora of people that may not have the same morals, talents, or wealth. However, regardless of these attributes, audiences still view them as "celebrities". Hence, what makes a celebrity a celebrity? Previous scholarship has identified a few characteristics that determine what differentiates a celebrity from someone who is famous. The first characteristic is involvement, which is how interested and prevalent information about a person is to a group of people (Chia & Poo, 2009). Celebrities invoke involvement and interest about both their personal and private lives. This information can be

acquired through the media, which is the second characteristics, media attention paid to individuals. Celebrities garner media attention, which leads to narratives, something that resonates with your normal citizens. According to Gabler, "Celebrity is the product of a process. One needs a personal real life, or purportedly, real-life narrative, even if it is only the foundation narrative" (p. 10). A celebrity has a story and one that interests the people, increasing their name recognition. Name recognition, the third characteristic, had been made easier by the use of the Internet, as people can now view, discuss, and disseminate information about celebrities easily (Franck & Nuesch, 2007). In addition, information about these celebrities is not only limited to the mass media, but also by users of the Internet through blogs, discussion boards, forums, and popular websites. Hence, a celebrity is someone who has name recognition, media attention to create narratives, and involvement and interest by audiences.

Celebrity Politics

Whether the idea of celebrities in politics enhances or deters democracy in the United States is a prominent question based on the emerging trend of political celebrities and celebrity politicians. Cowen (2000) argues that the increase of celebrities in politics has mixed results for our government, although he tends to conclude that there are definite positive attributes to including celebrities as major political candidates. "Although it is harder to install bold and innovative

visionaries in political positions than it used to be, the danger of political abuse and very bad outcomes is small as well" (Cowen, 2000, p. 169). Regardless of whether it is beneficial or detrimental for celebrities to be involved in politics, their influence and power has had some type of influence on voters, whether it is through endorsements, advocacy for issues, or campaigns to run for political office.

Celebrity politicians are defined as "celebrities who go beyond one-issue politics and become office-seekers" (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010, p. 324). These celebrities differ in their approach to politics because they attempt to participate in the political system as elected officials. Unlike other celebrities who participate in political campaigns, endorse specific candidates, or advocate for political issues, celebrity politicians are more concerned with actually being elected to office. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ronald Reagan are two famous examples of celebrity politicians in the United States; however, other countries such as India and Indonesia elect celebrity politicians more regularly (Hughes-Freeland, 2007; Mukherjee, 2004).

Attributes that make celebrity politicians unique from other politicians include their wealth, their recognition, and likeability among voters (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010). Celebrity politicians set themselves apart from incumbents because they can offer an exciting perspective to the political process that voters

may find refreshing, especially if the incumbent has been in that position for a long time. This was the case with Fiorina, who tried to bring a new outlook to the State of California by running against incumbent Boxer for Senator.

In addition to celebrity politicians, there are a group of individuals identified as political celebrities defined as "established politicians who enter the sphere of celebrity" (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010, p. 325). The most noted example of a celebrity politician is President Obama who uses his celebrity status and outgoing personality to increase his support from voters as well as other celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Robert DeNiro, and George Clooney (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010).

In addition to celebrity politicians and political celebrities, there are a group of people who are identified by their fame and involvement in politics without running for political office. Examples include Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks, George Clooney, Madonna, and Tom Cruise (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010). These individuals attract media attention especially at political events and tend to influence their fans to vote in accordance with their political views. Overall, there is a distinction between political celebrities, celebrity politicians, and celebrities who have political influence; however, we may begin to see these lines blur in future elections.

Celebrity Culture

Popular culture is always changing as trends, products, and people move in and out of the spotlight. Scholars have described popular culture as "frameworks of explanation that help us work through the major public and private concerns of …society" (Ellis, 2000, p. 74). Presently, our popular culture is obsessed with celebrities. This is manifested in politics and celebrity culture becoming more intertwined. Street (2004) provides examples of politicians who partake in celebrity activities such as Britain's Prime Minister playing guitar with a famous band or vice versa with the "Terminator," Arnold Schwarzenegger, becoming Governor. Street also identifies how politics is being introduced into celebrity culture with reality television, "As to confirm the message that politics and popular culture were being ever more intimately linked, elections themselves were being franchised to the makers of reality television game shows" (Street, 2004, p. 435). Hence, the line of celebrity culture and politics is becoming more blurred; hence scholars are attempting to uncover the reasons for this new phenomenon. As stated by Marshall (2004), "the academy has embraced the study of celebrity and fame." Academic research is not just limited to films, but can be seen in various academic areas including politics (Holmes & Redmond, 2005). Researchers from various academic disciplines have recognized this cultural obsession and are researching celebrity from a variety of perspectives (Barker, 2003; Cooper, 2008; Holmes,

2005; Holmes & Redmond, 2005; Marshall, 2004; Meyer & Gamson, 1995). For example, Meyer and Gamson (1995) examine specifically the interaction of celebrities and social movements. These researchers discuss how celebrities "derive any influence they may have from attention" (p. 184). In addition, Meyer and Gamson make an expansive effort in detailing how celebrities have affected social movements, pinpointing the audience's evaluation of celebrities as an important aspect of a movement's success. Overall, Meyer and Gamson confirm the idea that audiences are interested and influenced by these celebrities. Holmes (2005) takes a different approach and questions whether we are witnessing a change in celebrity culture or a reinvention based on technological advancements. Holmes (2005) does not necessarily see a new obsession with celebrities, but more accessibility to gain information and be influenced by celebrities. He discusses how understanding the past and present celebrity culture can alter the methodological/theoretical approaches used in understanding celebrity culture. Studying how prior research has evaluated celebrities may provide insight as to how celebrities are being framed the same or differently and how their influence has changed based on technological advances. As scholars are using different perspectives, it is vital that researchers continue to expand upon prior findings, yet look for innovative and prevalent trends at hand.

The interest in and popularity of celebrities is not a new phenomenon in communication research. However, the type of media attention (e.g. through different media channels) and amount of media attention given to celebrities is magnified by technological advancements. For example, 24 hour, seven days-a-week access to celebrity media coverage via the Internet may lead more citizens to perceive that they actually "know" celebrities (Duits & Vis, 2007). There is a false sense of a relationship between consumers and celebrities, which has been advanced by the constant coverage of celebrities via magazines, television, the Internet, social media sites, and blogs. According to Alpion (2006), "In a media-saturated world where the attainment of celebrity status is seen as an end in itself and where, for better or for worse, celebrities are such influential role models for an ever-growing fandom, there is always the danger of either equating fake prominence with genuine greatness or ignoring some of our real heroes" (p. 542). Scholars have begun to question celebrity influence and its favorable and unfavorable effects. Considering the media's attention to celebrities with their continual coverage of celebrities' outfits, events, and habits on a daily basis, examination of the role of celebrity candidates is warranted.

The idea of a celebrity culture stems from the media's approach to celebrity as "simultaneously natural and magical, emphasizing 'star quality' and 'charisma'" (Duits & Vis, 2007, p. 4). The public is bombarded by stories and images of

celebrities that portray them as special, unique, and something average citizens should strive to be like. However, the actual representation by the media may skew the perception of celebrities. Turner (2004) identifies the difference between the "celebrity not as property of a specific individual, but as the product of media representation" (p. 8). Duits and Vis (2007) echo this idea; "the meaning of celebrity, then, arises from the repetition and amalgamation of these different texts" available through the media. (p. 4). Hence, the idea of celebrities and their glamorous life may be exaggerated in the media, yet the public has accepted these representations as truth.

The political system is not immune to celebrity culture. "It is not surprising that politicians, especially political leaders frequently in the spotlight, have become celebrities, as publics seek news, information and gossip about their private and public lives, turning some politicians into media superstars" (Kellner, 2009, p. 716). Examples include former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Secretary of State and former Senator Hillary Clinton, former Governor Sarah Palin, and President Barack Obama. As media attention continues to highlight their every move, citizens become more interested and dive into the media outlets that provide this information. Just within the past Presidential election cycle in 2008, President Obama offered scholars a "defining moment in contemporary culture and politics" with his "unique celebrity status" (Kellner, 2009, p. 735, 738). In fact,

even political advertisements referred to Obama's celebrity status. In a political advertisement, sponsored by John McCain, Obama was linked to Paris Hilton and Britney Spears in such a way to suggest that he is a part of the celebrity culture and concerned with the same things as Hilton and Spears; scandals, popularity, and fame.

As research has demonstrated, politics is not exempt from celebrity culture. The prevalence of celebrities in get-out-and-vote campaign ads demonstrates there is a trend toward celebrities endorsing and promoting agendas in politics. As trends continue to change, the political system may be forced to deal with an emerging issue, celebrity politicians. The emergence of celebrity politicians leads to the first two research questions of this study.

RQ1: What characteristics do young voters indicate are important to creation of confidence in celebrities as politicians?

RQ2: What celebrities do young voters identify as potential political candidates?

Celebrity CEOs

Ketchen et al. (2008) propose four types of celebrity CEOs that revolve around the notion of fame and reputation. First, an "icon CEO" is someone possessing high levels of fame and a positive reputation. Second, "scoundrels" have a high level of fame, but a negative reputation. "Hidden gems" are CEOs who

have a positive reputation but are not famous, while "silent killers" are those CEOs who do not have either fame or a positive reputation. By acknowledging that fame and reputation play a pivotal role in creating celebrity CEOs, companies can manage their own CEO. Companies should consider which type of CEO is best suited for their company as a potential public relations strategy. For example, a company may only want to have an "icon CEO" because they may increase recognition and popularity to the organization based on the fame of the CEO.

However, there is not one unifying definition of a celebrity CEO. Numerous scholars have attached qualities and used their own examples to better elucidate and support their definitions (Gaines-Ross, 2003; Hayward et al., 2004; Ketchen et al., 2008). Scholars continue to compete to define a celebrity CEO based on how the media portrays them and the public's perception, which may evolve with the changing nature of celebrities and their pervasiveness in media. Incorporating aspects of definitions proposed by scholars, this study defines a celebrity CEO as an executive who has name recognition, receives regular media attention, and involvement and interest in both their personal and private lives from normal citizens.

CEO Reputation

Because the CEO is viewed as the public figure for the company, it is important that the CEO's image is trustworthy and depicts what the company

strives to represent. As stated by Bruijns (2003), "Certainly mismatches between CEO image and reality damage overall reputation" (p. 2). The CEO plays a strategic role within the organization; therefore, any identity that has a negative connotation could potentially hinder the organization's reputation and its success. Thus, having a celebrity CEO adds vulnerability to a company. Bruijns (2003) states "that linking a company's reputation too heavily to a single person is risky in at least two ways" (p. 3). He asserts that one wrong committed by the CEO can demolish the company's reputation. Also, the company's reputation will be impacted when a CEO leaves, regardless of the reason (illness, dismissal, death, etc.). Therefore, Bruijns questions what happens when a CEO's reputation changes in a negative manner and whether having a celebrity CEO is worth the risk for companies.

According to Ranft et al. (2006), "A CEO is an individual at the apex of an organization whose personal reputation can have an immediate and long lasting impact upon the organization" (p. 281). The reputation of the CEO has taken on a newfound power that influences how the public perceives an organization and its leadership. The availability of information to the public has definitely increased the awareness of a CEO's actions, interests, successes and failures.

According to Ranft et al. (2006) the management literature identifies reputation as consisting of three characteristics. First, reputations take time to

build. Second, reputations have a huge and enduring impact on the constituents

they affect. Third, reputation is often controlled, altered, and sustained by the

media and by impression management tactics.

However, the CEO's reputation promoted by the company may not always

resonate as intended to the stakeholders. A stakeholder's history with the

organization as well as his or her interactions with the CEO can influence whether

celebrity status is created and the ensuing reputation of that celebrity CEO.

Celebrity status for a CEO may be fleeting, yet it is essential that the organization's

reputation continue beyond the media attention and celebrity hype.

Importance of Media

Media play a substantial role in the coverage of CEOs and in the creation of

"celebrities." There are two main perspectives when evaluating whether a CEO

attains the "celebrity" status (Ranft, et al., 2006, p. 284). First, certain CEOs may

attain this position because of their talent, quality of work, or achievements.

Examples of this type of celebrity CEO would be Bill Gates from Microsoft, Steve

Jobs from Apple, and Jack Welch from General Electric. Their exceptional work

within their successful organizations aids in their status and therefore, expands

upon their power and influence. The second perspective involves the use of media

to spotlight CEOs and create "celebrities" without as much merit as those

identified by the first perspective. Dave Thomas from Wendy's, Martha Stewart

from *The Martha Stewart Show* and OmniMedia, and Lee Iacocca from Chrysler

are identified within the type of celebrity who gained fame through their attention

in the media, especially in advertising (Treadway et al., 2009, p. 555). According

to Ranft et al. (2006), "the media have a tendency to proliferate the idea that CEOs

should be viewed as celebrities" (p.284). Although companies may not insist upon

their CEO being a celebrity and may discourage it because of the potential burden,

they may not have a choice in the matter.

Hayward et al. (2004) discuss how the media attribute a firm's success based

on the action(s) of its CEO; therefore, evoking a sense of celebrity within the

organization. They assert that "journalists are the principal, even 'omnipresent'

agents for setting the agenda for public discourse and so are the primary actors in

creating celebrity CEOs" (p. 638). Recently, the media have attributed the success

of an organization to its CEO's actions, whether that may be the case or not. Once

this has occurred, the organization itself begins to believe that the CEO is the

reason for success, creating more possible benefits for the CEO by receiving more

recognition and fame. The rise in celebrity status "increases perceptions of the

CEO's responsibility for past firm performance and enhances the CEO's actual

influence on future firm performance" (Hayward et al., 2004, p.645). This, in turn,

translates to the public and is likely to result in the perception that the CEO is the

reason for the success, which results in more fame and a more positive reputation, causing the celebrity status to rise.

The rise of a celebrity CEO not only has an internal effect but also affects how the public views the company. According to Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994), "as the media publicizes information about an organization, public impressions of the organization and of the organization's members become part of the currency through which members' self-concepts and identification are built or are eroded" (p. 241). The public's expectations of the company increases because the celebrity CEO is now held more accountable and should provide more opportunities because of his past successes. Also, stakeholders begin to attribute the success to the CEO because the media have done so, therefore decreasing the possibility of outside resources encouraging success. However, there is unfortunately a different expectation when times become tough for a company. Normally, a celebrity CEO does not take credit for the failure, but attributes it to outside sources. For example, Wade, Porac, Pollock, and Graffin (2006) state "Poor company performance is often blamed on uncontrollable external events while good performance is credited to the foresight and quality of management" (p. 643). However, there have been occasions where the CEO has taken the blame and recognized his or her part in the downfall, yet this rarely happens.

CEO's Effect on their Corporation

In many cases, CEOs bring exposure to a corporation. Whether that exposure deals with the corporation itself is a different question. Kaufman and Wolf (2007) identify six disclosure categories dealing specifically with the CEO and their private issues. These categories include "1) donations, contributions, and philanthropy, 2) real estate and personal possessions, 3) religion, 4) substance abuse, 5) sex scandals, and 6) private family information" (p. 3-4). These six categories stimulate "buzz" because of the public's curiosity and infatuation with celebrities (Marsh, Hart, & Tindall, 2010; Holmes, 2005; Meyer & Gamson, 1995). Also, Kaufman and Wolf (2007) note specifically "the public is interested in what CEOs have done in their personal lives that may help or hurt them in their jobs" (p. 8). Because of this, celebrity CEOs typically cause the organization to have more recognition, interest, and exposure. Furthermore, celebrity CEOs bring about unique benefits to their organizations. First, because of their high profile, celebrity CEOs reinforce the idea of quality work that can trickle down into other areas of the organization. Second, based on their status, celebrity CEOs can influence stakeholders with their power to act in the best interest of the organization. Third, celebrity CEOs attract more press, which allows organizations the opportunity to communicate relevant information. Fourth, Ranft et al. (2006) acknowledge that "CEO celebrity may increase economic opportunities available to the firm because

of the positive perceptions of the CEO, emotional responses to the reputation of the CEO, and a high level of attention to the organization because of the CEO" (p. 284). The diversity, power, and influence of a celebrity CEO can be an intangible asset to an organization when the celebrity CEO accurately represents the organization and its values.

However, there are possible detrimental effects to an organization for having a celebrity CEO. One of the biggest considerations is CEO compensation. Studies have continually supported the notion that power and influence equals an extravagant price for the celebrity CEO. The compensation requested by a celebrity CEO could significantly alter the expectations of the organization. However, Ranft et al. (2006) note "there is as of yet no empirical research suggesting that celebrity CEO firms outperform the firms of their lower paid counterparts in the long run" (p. 287). Celebrity CEOs also face more of a challenge to stay on top because of the media scrutiny and their immense responsibilities and interests. For example, Wade et al., (2008) provide examples of celebrity CEOs that dealt with intense inquiry and judgments because of their fame. Jack Welch, celebrity CEO of General Electric, was questioned repeatedly for his management tactics and whether they were legitimate (p. 204). Another example is the dismissal of Carly Fiorina from Hewlett-Packard after being the most powerful CEO woman in America. "Carly Fiorina was criticized – and

ultimately removed from her position as CEO – for her frequent absences from the company because of her outside speaking commitments" (Wade et al., 2008, p. 205). Finally, Dennis Kozlowski, CEO of Tyco International, "fell rapidly due to the media's aggressive interest in the supposed greed resulting in bankruptcy for Tyco International" (Wade et al., 2008, p. 204). As illustrated with these few incidents, celebrity CEOs can plunge quickly due to various reasons, but in most instances, the media play a substantial role in spotlighting their demise. Based on the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Favorable participant reactions to Fiorina will be associated with favorable participant evaluations of Hewlett-Packard.

2010 Midterm Election

The 2010 midterm election was one of the most anticipated elections of the new century. Following the historical 2008 election of the first African American United States President, Democrat Barack Obama, citizens were intrigued to see the results of the 2010 election. It was a time when the Republican Party could possibly regain control of the Senate after the Democrat majority in 2006. California was one of ten key Senate races in addition to Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Republicans would need their party supporters to vote in large numbers especially on the West Coast. In particular, Washington, Oregon, and California were states

where the success of the state elections would influence whether the Republican Party would regain control of the Senate (Ball, 2010). Specific to this study, the race for Senator of California was extremely important and captured a lot of attention from the media and citizens alike. "There's a lot of national attention on California because Boxer's seat is one that the GOP almost certainly must pick up to gain 10 seats and recapture control of the Senate" (Skelton, 2010, p. 2).

Another unique factor to this election cycle was that fact that two female candidates were running for a very competitive seat in the Senate. This, indeed, increased the media attention since this occurrence was a rarity, especially since Boxer held the seat since 1992. In addition, a Republican had not held a California Senate seat since 1988 (Ball, 2010). These factors definitely added a unique perspective to this election, and therefore, to this study.

Although California normally favors the Democratic Party, it appeared as if this race was competitive until Election Day. Boxer, the incumbent candidate, faced her most challenging opponent since her election to the Senate in 1992 (Skelton, 2010, p. 2). Fiorina campaigned on her experience in business and her record as former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and the "need to send different people to Washington" (Skelton, 2010, p. 2). However, this strategy may not have worked to her advantage. As stated by Martinez (2010), "Their (Fiorina and Whitman) CEO backgrounds clashed with voters' distrust of Big Business during the country's

worst recession in decades" (p. 1). Although Fiorina successfully led an iconic

corporation, this provided ammunition for Boxer based on some of Fiorina's tough

business choices. For example, Boxer was constantly "criticizing the former

executive for laying off scores of employees, shipping American jobs overseas and

securing a cushy severance package before leaving the company" (Martinez, 2010,

p. 4). Utilizing her CEO experience as part of her platform, Fiorina may have

potentially alienated some constituents based on the simultaneous economic

downturn.

With the Democratic Party having a "14-percentage point, 2.2-million-voter

advantage" in California, Fiorina was unable to gain enough votes to upset the

incumbent Boxer (Ball, 2010, p. 1). Although the Republican Party saw overall

success across the ballot, their efforts were shy of overturning the Democratic

majority in the Senate. Within the Senate, Democrats have 53 seats to Republicans

47 seats ("Election Results", 2010). However, for the House of Representatives,

Republicans were able to regain control with 242 seats compared to the Democrats

193 seats ("Election Results", 2010). After seeing the results of the 2010 midterm

election, it is essential to evaluate the differences in gender in voting behaviors.

Gender in Politics

Research has shown that running for public office as a female candidate is a

double-edged sword. According to Mandel (1981), "the female candidate still must

cope with centuries-old-biases, with the perception that her image is wrong, and that someone who looks like her is not made to lead or to decide questions of national well-being or international security" (p. 36). Although women have been influential in the voting process for almost a hundred years, only in the past twenty years have female candidates run for political office in significant numbers.

Research has demonstrated that women are more likely to focus on the issues instead of personal characteristics of their opponents (Kaid & Tedesco, 1999). Women, in addition to men, also utilize "masculine traits such as strength, aggressiveness, performance, and experience balanced with such feminine attributes such as honesty, sensitivity, and understanding" (Bystrom & Kaid, 2002). Fiorina and Boxer were no exception.

Studies examining female advertisements have mixed results with some advocating for an aggressive stance while others suggest combining both feminine and masculine approaches in television advertisements (Benze & DeClercq, 1985; Kaid, Myers, Pipps, & Hunter, 1984; Procter, Schenck-Hamlin, & Hasse, 1991; Wadsworth, Patterson, Cullers, Malcomb, Lamirand, & Kaid, 1987). Women candidates must face the obstacle of gender stereotypes during their campaign. As stated by Wadsworth et al., (1987), "Women, in fact, face a more difficult campaign than their male counterparts because their gender creates unique problems in formulation of a campaign style. Certain challenger campaign styles

may be less effective for women candidates because such styles would violate norms regarding expected behavior" (p. 79). Women candidates must find a balance between aggressiveness (a male trait) and warmth (a female trait) while simultaneously building credibility and trust with voters.

The voting pattern of males and females is important when evaluating male and female candidates. According to Crouse (2008) "Continuing a pattern established in the 2000 elections, married women supported the conservative, pro-life candidates for President (Senator McCain) while unmarried women supported the liberal, pro-abortion candidate (Senator Obama)" (p. 1). However, male voters were about even in their voting patterns between Senator McCain and Senator Obama. However, women appear to be a more targeted voting population recently especially with the introduction of strong, female political candidates. According to Crouse (2008), "Gender played a bigger role in the 2008 presidential campaign than ever before with Senator Hillary Clinton almost beating Senator Barack Obama as the presidential nominee for the Democrats and Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as the Republican vice-presidential candidate" (p. 2). As the literature suggests, gender differences can be important in the perception of candidates and the voting behaviors of citizens. It is also important to note the differences in evaluations of celebrity CEOS as potential political candidates in terms of gender. Therefore, my third research question is as follows:

RQ3: Do men and women participants produce significantly different evaluations of the candidate following exposure to prime?

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In order to explore the hypotheses and research questions guiding this study, it was necessary to consider theories that could help explore the role of media in politics. Since priming theory is identified as one of the most widely used and highly reliable theories in political communication (Bennett & Iyengar, 2010; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Weaver, 2007), it was considered for this study. Since the literature review emphasizes the role of media in helping to shape celebrity CEO status, priming theory fits ideally with the goals of this thesis since priming theory suggests that exposure to a media message influences subsequent evaluations of consumers' attitudes. Priming theory suggests the likelihood that media content may influence attitudes toward the candidate, the campaign, the political process, and political participation. In addition, political cynicism was incorporated as a construct based on previous literature concerning the noted cynicism of young voters, which also influences evaluations of candidate, campaigns, political processes, and voting behavior.

Priming Theory

Grounded in psychological process and utilized more by media effects research, priming is the "process in which the media attends to some issues and not others and thereby alter the standards by which people evaluate election candidates" (Severin & Tankard, 1997, p. 258). It works to bring certain aspects to

the forefront of the consumer's mind. This information may not otherwise have been illuminated if not given specific attention. As stated by Iyengar and Kinder (1987), priming theory looks at "how news media influence the standards by which governments, presidencies, policies, and candidates for public office are judged…by calling attention to some matters while ignoring others" (p. 63). Although previous literature offers variations in definitions of priming theory, this study will utilize the definition provided by Iyengar and Kinder (1987). Not only were they the first to define this theoretical perspective, but it fits well with the purpose of this study by illuminating different attributes of a celebrity candidate.

The reason for the prioritizing of issues stems from the job of the media. As one of the first to define the role of the media, Harold Lasswell (1948) gives three functions: "surveillance of the environment, fostering consensus in society, and transmission of the cultural heritage" (p. 205). These three functions still appear to be applicable in the 21st century. Although the media must make judgment calls on what is important, it is ultimately the responsibility of the citizen to immediately accept or reject these media messages.

Controversy surrounds the differences and similarities between the definitions and functions of agenda setting, framing, and priming by the media. Researchers have continued to debate whether these three functions of the media should be combined based on their many similarities; however, the discipline has

yet to take action in doing so. While more recent research has continued to utilize these theories independently, it is important to understand how they interact with one another. Weaver (2007) states "It seems likely that agenda setting and priming are based on more similar cognitive processes. But framing does seem to include a broader range of cognitive processes – such as moral evaluations, causal reasoning, appeals to principles, and recommendations for treatment of problems – than does second-level agenda setting" (p. 146).

Since framing, priming, and agenda setting are interrelated based on their use by the media, it is important to note their differences. Weaver (2007) states "that agenda setting (and priming) rely on the theory of attitude accessibility by increasing the salience of issues and thus the ease with which they can be retrieved from memory when making political judgments, whereas framing is based on prospect theory that assumes that subtle changes in the description of a situation invoke interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information rather than making certain aspects of the issue more salient" (p. 145). As can be seen in their differences, these three theories demonstrate how the media affect citizens' perceptions. As stated by Krosnick & Kinder (1990), "Media possess the power to influence what the public considers and what it ignores" (p. 510). For example, priming theory has been utilized to study the public opinion of the President (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). This theory explains how the media "may

alter the foundations of public opinion toward the president" based on the attention

to certain issues (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990, p. 500). Most notably, Krosnick &

Kinder (1990) examined the public opinion of President Reagan after the Iran-

Contra disclosure. Using this natural event as a prime, citizens' opinions of Reagan

changed after being primed about his involvement in the situation: their assessment

of issues most related to the Iran-Contra disclosure was affected in a negative

manner.

Additionally, priming has been used substantially in experimental studies,

specifically examining political issues and politicians running for public office

(Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, Kinder, Peter, & Krosnick, 1984; Krosnick &

Kinder, 1990). Abundant literature exists using priming theory to articulate how

the mass media shape perceptions of certain candidates and presidents (Pan &

Kosicki, 1997). According to Alger (1989), "through drawing attention to some

aspects of politics at the expense of others, the media might help to set the terms by

which political judgments are reached, including evaluations of political figures"

(p. 127). Hence, priming theory deals with an important aspect of this evaluation:

the influence of media messages on evaluations of candidates.

The use of priming stimuli in this study was intentional. As described by

Jacobs and Shapiro (1994), intentional priming uses "deliberate strategies that

candidates pursue to influence voters" (p. 528). This is important to the study as a

way to help create realistic scenarios of knowledge about Fiorina's 2010 campaign. As stated by Morgan (2010), "priming can be an effective campaign strategy by a process of carefully calculated uses of public opinion on policy issues to influence voters' standards for accessing candidates' attributes" (p. 4). Therefore, the use of priming theory to analyze how the media actually presented Fiorina works well to gauge how participants will view her background when they are exposed to it via the experimental primes.

Overall, priming theory focuses mainly on heuristic cues that are accessible immediately; therefore, the citizen does not necessarily consider the message on a deep level. "According to the priming theory, when faced with a judgment or choice, people ordinarily do not take all plausible considerations into account, carefully examine and weigh all their implications, and then integrate them all into a summary decision" (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990, p. 499). Instead, priming suggests that the audience will evaluate the candidate based on the information provided by the media message. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Exposure to valenced primes will result in significant differences between participants' evaluations for the candidate with the positive prime condition being significantly higher than the contrast and control prime conditions.

Research has also demonstrated that "some citizens are more susceptible to priming than others" (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990, p. 501). This can differ based on a number of factors and may be heavily influenced by their attention to media messages in general. "The salience of an issue presented by the media to an individual is significantly moderated by that individual's existing state of mind" (McCombs, 2005, p. 551). This, in turn, can influence how effective a priming message is on an individual. Because media messages affect citizens differently, it is important to understand the political experience and political cynicism.

Political Cynicism

By using a sample of undergraduate students, this study can target a demographic that has high cynicism toward politics and the media (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). These young voters are less apt to process information like older voters and lack experience in the political election system (Lau & Redlawsk, 2008). However, college-age students are known for their interest in popular culture (Greenaway, 2001), specifically celebrities (Kahle & Homer, 1985). Hence, by looking at the attitudes and perceptions of this sample with its varied interests, a baseline for further investigation potentially incorporating other sample populations can be established, especially in relation to political cynicism.

According to Elenbaas and De Vreese (2008), "Various scholars have argued that today's young citizens are more cynical and disillusioned with politics,

and, as a result, less likely to engage with or participate in political processes such as elections than older generations of voters are" (p. 552). From 1972, political cynicism seems to be a trend that has not decreased, but rather intensified with the younger generation at least up until the 2000 U.S. Presidential election (Bennett, 2000; Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2000; Putnam, 2000). However, political cynicism is a broad term that is defined by variables such as a "corrosive individualism, a psychological impulse, negative anti-institutionalism sloganeering campaigns, and disjunctures between the promise and performance of leaders" (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 29). In terms of political cynicism, there are two elements, reliability of politicians (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) and competence of politicians (Krouwel & Abts, 2006). Each can be factored into analysis when looking at overall political cynicism.

Political cynicism is defined and referred to differently by researchers in the political communication discipline (Hershey & Hill, 1975; Robinson, 1976). For the purposes of this study, political cynicism will be referred to as "the feeling that government in general and political leaders in particular do not care about the public's opinions and are not acting in the best interest of the people" (Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2000, p. 198). The culprit credited for political cynicism is the media; however, research demonstrates mixed results as to whether this is the only explanation for political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Hart, 1994;

Patterson, 1993). However, a ramification that could be a detriment to political

cynicism is voter participation in the political process, which is why it is a

necessity to study political cynicism as it could be harming democracy (Kaid,

McKinney, & Tedesco, 2000).

As research has also suggested, there are interesting relationships between

personal cynicism and political cynicism. According to Agger, Goldstein, and

Pearl (1961), the more cynical a person is generally, the more cynical they will be

about political issues such as government, elections, and campaigns. In addition,

political cynicism has a relationship with political efficacy. As stated by Pinkleton

and Austin (2001), the increase in political cynicism causes a decrease in political

efficacy. Finally, media exposure plays a significant role in political cynicism as

well as efficacy. Cappella & Jamieson (1997) state "people learn about the motives

of political actors through the media and their representations of political actors"

(p. 147). In light of this research, the following research questions and hypotheses

are proposed.

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in evaluations of Carly Fiorina by

party of participant following exposure to the priming stimulus?

RQ5: Is there a significant difference in political cynicism of participant

following exposure to the priming stimulus?

H3: Participants with higher media exposure will evaluate celebrity

candidates more favorably following exposure to the priming stimulus.

H4: Participants with higher political media exposure will evaluate celebrity

candidates more favorably following exposure to the priming stimulus

By using two political communication theories and focusing on perceptions

of celebrities in politics and celebrity CEOs, this study created a survey that could

be used for studying of other political candidates. As the literature review on

celebrity and politics suggests, research on this topic is scattered and preliminary in

its findings. Therefore, this study engaged in original research, hoping to provide

new, engaging scholarship for the field of political communication.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

IRB and Participants

This project was approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (#11-113) for administration to participants in a human participant research pool administered by the Virginia Tech Department of Communication.   All participants were drawn from the Communication department's research system through a recruiting announcement available to all participants in the research pool. The research pool includes undergraduate students from a wide range of majors and is not limited to communication majors. Each participant was recruited to participate in this study for one hour in exchange for course credit determined by his or her instructor.

In all, 150 participants registered for the study on the Communication SONA System. After signing up for the study, participants were randomly assigned to one of three possible priming conditions and provided the link via email to the appropriate survey depending on the priming article. Since ten participants did not access the survey within the time frame, the sample size for this study was 140 participants ($N = 140$). All participants consented to participation and completed a pre-test questionnaire, read a priming article, completed a post-test questionnaire, and were debriefed.

The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 32; however, the majority of participants were between the age of 18 and 22. This study was comprised of 34.2% ($n = 48$) males and 65.8% ($n = 92$) females. The ethnic breakdown was primarily homogeneous, with 87% of participants identifying themselves as White ($n = 122$). In regard to political party affiliation, this study was comprised of 38.6% ($n = 54$) Republicans, 33.6% ($n = 47$) Independents, 29.2% ($n = 41$) Democrats, and .06% ($n = 8$) identified as affiliated with another party. In regards to the 2010 midterm election, 25.7% ($n = 36$) voted in their respective state.

Design

This between-subjects experiment utilized a secure website for all data collection. When signing up for this study, participants were informed that the survey would be available for completion between Sunday, February 20, 2011 at 5 p.m. and Tuesday, February 22, 2011 at 5 p.m. Prior to Sunday, February 20, 2011, participants were emailed the appropriate survey link and told to devote one uninterrupted hour to complete the survey. Each participant was assigned to one of three priming conditions.

Upon taking the survey, participants were first instructed to read the consent form and sign their name if they consented to the study. This was the only place on the entire survey where participants' names were disclosed and only done so for

allocation of course credit. Participants' names were not linked to any other information they provided throughout the survey.

Stimulus Materials

Three priming articles were created for the purpose of this study. All articles were manipulated to look as if they were from a newspaper titled "The Nation's News" in October 2010. Each participant was randomly assigned to read one of the three articles. The first article was a short biography of Fiorina's education and family background as well as her past experience as CEO of Hewlett-Packard, which was considered the positive prime. The second article contrasts Fiorina and Boxer as they compete for the 2010 Senate seat in California. This article includes information about both of their campaigns and their differing experiences as part of their campaign platform. Information about both candidates was equally provided, providing the participant a fair chance to make a decision about each candidate, so it was considered a contrast prime. Finally, the third article was taken from CNNMoney and used as the control for this study, basically discussing the stock market in general terms.

Measures

Pre-test Questionnaire

This study utilized a pre-test questionnaire to measure the participant's political media exposure, political cynicism, perception of Carly Fiorina, and perception of celebrities and politics.

Political Media Exposure. Two different scales were adopted from Kaid, McKinney, and Tedesco (2000) to measure a participant's media diet in relation to politics and attitude toward political media reporting. Participants were asked how many days a week they consumed the different types of media such as *local television news; national television news; television talk shows; television late night shows; morning talk shows; newspapers; news magazines; Internet; radio news; political radio talk shows; and speaking with others*.

Political Cynicism. In order to measure political cynicism, 5-point Likert-type scales were adopted from Kaid, McKinney, and Tedesco (2000) with an acceptable level of reliability, Cronbach's α = .67. In addition, Rosenstone et al., (1997) also utilized this scale with high reliability, Cronbach's α = .79 Participants were asked their level of agreement on this 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of statements such as *Whether I vote or not has no influence on what politicians do; One never knows what politicians really think; People like me don't have any say about what the government does; Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on; One can be confident that politicians will always do the right thing; Politicians often*

quickly forget their election promises after a political campaign is over; Politicians are more interested in power than in what the people think; One cannot always trust what politicians say. Chronbach's alpha reached .65, which will be discussed in the limitations section.

Perception of Fiorina. In order to evaluate the attitude toward Fiorina, a semantic differential scale was adopted from Kaid & Tedesco (1999) that utilizes 12 adjective pairs. These adjective pairs include *unqualified/qualified; unsophisticated/sophisticated; dishonest/honest; believable/unbelievable; unsuccessful/successful; attractive/unattractive; unfriendly/friendly; insincere/sincere; calm/excitable; aggressive/unaggressive; strong/weak; inactive/active*. In addition to the semantic differential scale, a feeling thermometer scale was adopted from Kaid and Tedesco (1999). Both scales have been utilized by many researchers previously with high reliability, Cronbach's α =.82 to .89. For this study, the pre-test alpha reached .84 and the post-test alpha also reached .84.

Perception of celebrities and politics. Open-ended questions were created to identify what celebrities had run for political office and what celebrities could run for political office in the future. It also assessed whether participants felt confident in celebrities' ability to be a politician. Statements used to assess the perception of celebrities in politics include *Name five (5) celebrities who you think could run for*

public office; In general, would you feel confident in celebrities like the ones you

mentioned and their ability to represent you?; If you answered "Yes" to the above

question, explain why. If you answered "No" to the above question, explain why

you would not feel confident in their ability; and Name five (5) celebrities that

have run for political office in the past.

Post-test Questionnaire

Some of the same measures that were used in the pre-test questionnaire were

also utilized in the post-test questionnaire such as the 12-item bipolar semantic

differential and feeling thermometer assessing the perception of Fiorina. In

addition, the same 12-point semantic differential scale was adopted to assess

participant's perceptions of celebrity CEOs in general. However, other measures

were collected such as attitudes toward Fiorina and Hewlett-Packard, Likert-type

and open-ended questions about celebrity politicians, and demographic information

(See Appendix A). Reliability for the evaluations of Fiorina reached a Cronbach's

alpha of .90, while reliability for HP reached .87

Trust of Fiorina and Hewlett-Packard. To measure attitude toward Hewlett-

Packard and Fiorina, 5-point Likert-type scales were adopted from Payne (2003).

These scales were utilized in the post-test questionnaire, specifically to assess the

similarities and differences between the trust factor of Hewlett-Packard and its

former CEO, Fiorina. The following scales were utilized by the Institute for Public

Relations and its 50,000 members as a way to measure trust for over seven years (Payne, 2003). The level of agreement with the following statements was collected using a 5-point measure scale assessing both Hewlett-Packard and then Fiorina separately. The scale includes statements such as *This organization treats people like me fairly and justly; Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me; This organization can be relied on to keep its promises; I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions; I feel confident about this organization's skills; This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do; and Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior*. Chronbach's alpha reached .92 for this scale.

Perceptions of celebrity politicians. To measure the perception of real-world celebrities who are politicians, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the following statements: *Arnold Schwarzenegger's celebrity status assisted him in his role as governor; Arnold Schwarzenegger's celebrity status was a detriment in his role as governor; Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected only because of his celebrity status; Meg Whitman used her celebrity status to enter politics; Meg Whitman uses her celebrity status to gain recognition; Al Franken used his celebrity status to get elected; Al Franken's celebrity status assisted him in his role as senator; and Al Franken's celebrity*

status was a detriment to his role as senator. These particular celebrities were chosen based on their relevance in the media as celebrity politicians and their either success or failure at being elected to political office.

Questions were also created to assess how participants felt about celebrities and politics in general. Participants were asked their level of agreement with the following statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale: *Celebrities overstep their boundaries when they use their celebrity status to influence politics; I value when a celebrity I trust speaks out in support of political candidates; Celebrities are too influential in the political process; I appreciate when celebrities encourage people to vote.* (*e.g., P Diddy's Vote or Die, Madonna's Rock the Vote); I value when a celebrity endorses a political candidate financially; Celebrities should not be endorsing political candidates; and Politicians should not accept financial donations from celebrities*. Finally, additional open-ended questions were posed to participants such as *Besides Carly Fiorina, name five CEOs you deem to have celebrity status and list a few reasons why some CEOs reach celebrity status and others do not*.

Demographic Information. Finally, demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, political party affiliation, age, and voting behavior was collected in the final section of the pos-test questionnaire.

Debriefing

Following the completion of the post-test questionnaire, participants read a debriefing statement which thanked them for their participation in this study, explained the reason for the study, and identified who to contact if interested in results (See Appendix C). Finally, participants exited the survey and were assigned credit on the SONA System by the researcher.

Coding Protocol

In regards to the open-ended questions concerning the reasons for confidence or lack of confidence in celebrities running for political office, each response was read for identification of themes. Once themes were identified, each response was coded dependent on the themes. Celebrity CEOs and celebrities as potential political candidates were coded based on the number of times they were mentioned by participants. The top ten celebrity CEOs and celebrities as potential political candidates were reported in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 predicted that a positive reaction to Fiorina in the post-test would result in a positive reaction to Hewlett-Packard in the post-test, which basically indicates that positive evaluations of a celebrity CEO would translate to positive evaluations of the company she was affiliated. In order to test H1, a Pearson product moment correlation test was performed using a combined 7-item Likert scale for attitudes toward Fiorina and a 7-item Likert scale for attitudes toward Hewlett Packard. Results indicate a high significant correlation between attitudes toward Hewlett-Packard ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .59$) across all groups, $r = .73$, $p = .001$. Interestingly, when this analysis is performed by condition, results of each condition produce significance (see Table 1). As Table 1 shows, the correlations for each group were significant at the $p \leq .01$ level, indicating that attitudes toward the celebrity CEO and the organization in which they are most associated with are strongly related. The evaluation for Fiorina is highest within the positive prime, which will be discussed in a later hypothesis. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

In order to test Hypothesis 2, mean scores on the pre- and post-test 12-item, bi-polar semantic differential scales were used to evaluate differences in attitudes toward Fiorina. As Table 2 shows, there was no significant difference, $F_{(2)} = 1.57$, $p = .212$, in evaluation of Fiorina between the positive ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .44$),

contrast (*M* = 3.6, *SD* = .55), or control (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = .61) groups in the pre-test.

As predicted, evaluations of Fiorina were significantly different between groups in

the post-test, *F* (2) = 5.27, *p* = .006, with the positive prime condition producing

the highest evaluation of Fiorina *(M* = 4.24, *SD* = .57), followed by the contrast (*M*

= 4.04, *SD* = .67), and the control (*M* = 3.9, *SD* = .74). As Table 2 demonstrates,

Hypothesis 2 is confirmed since the positive prime condition results in

significantly higher evaluations of Fiorina than in the contrast or control

conditions.

To further support Hypothesis 2, mean scores on the pre- and post-test

feeling thermometer scale were used to evaluate differences in attitudes toward

Fiorina. As Table 3 shows, there was no significant difference *F* (2), *p* = .202, in

the evaluation of Fiorina between the positive (*M* = 49.09, *SD* =7.00), contrast (*M*

= 50.58, *SD* = 12.25), or control (*M* = 49.87, *SD* = 13.52) groups in the pre-test. As

predicted and verified by the above analysis, the positive prime condition produced

the highest evaluation of Fiorina (*M* = 65.67, *SD* = 13.14) followed by the contrast

prime (*M* = 58.46, *SD* = 17.87) and the control (*M* = 52.14, *SD* = 16.84). Results

from the post-test indicate a significant difference between groups, with the

positive prime condition producing the highest evaluation of Fiorina, *F*(2) = 7.98, *p*

=.001. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported using both the feeling thermometer scale

and semantic differential scale for attitudes toward Fiorina.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that participants with higher media exposure will evaluate celebrity candidates more favorably. In order to test Hypothesis 3, Pearson correlation on mean scores was performed to assess the relationship between the summed media diet questions with the semantic differential scale measuring attitudes toward celebrity CEOs. The correlation between media diet and celebrity attitude was $r = .09, p = .310$. Thus, media exposure is not directly linked to more favorable attitudes toward celebrities running for political office. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicts that participants with higher political media exposure will evaluate celebrity candidates more favorably following exposure to the priming stimulus. In order to test Hypothesis 4, Pearson correlation on mean scores was performed to assess the relationship between the summed political media diet questions with the semantic differential scale measuring attitudes toward celebrity CEOs. The correlation between political media diet and celebrity attitude was $r = .004, p = .96$. Thus, political media exposure is not directly linked to more favorable attitudes toward celebrities running for office. Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Research Questions

In order to answer RQ1, participants were presented with the open-ended question, *In general, would you feel confident in celebrities like the ones you*

mentioned and their ability to represent you?; If you answered "Yes" to the above

question, explain why. If you answered "No" to the above question, explain why

you would not feel confident in their ability. Each group (confident or not

confident) provided general reasons for their perspective. Those who felt confident

in celebrities as potential political candidates (35.7%) credited it to the following

themes: their level of integrity ($n = 4$), their care and concern regarding the welfare

of the country ($n = 21$), celebrities' prior political involvement ($n = 11$), business

experience ($n = 7$), and community contributions ($n = 7$). On the contrary, those

who did not feel confident in celebrities as potential political candidates (64.3%)

identified celebrities' lack of experience in political realm ($n = 30$), lack of

political knowledge ($n = 15$), and disconnect with the American people ($n = 14$).

Several participants ascertained that celebrities would be too involved in the

"celebrity scene" to devote the required time needed in office ($n = 23$). They also

questioned the celebrities' motives for seeking a political office ($n = 8$).

Throughout this study, it was important to know whom young voters would

identify as celebrity CEOs. Participants were asked to identify five celebrity CEOs

besides Carly Fiorina. As the results suggest, numerous individuals were

mentioned repeatedly (See Figure 1). Examples include Steve Jobs ($n = 58$),

Donald Trump ($n = 51$), Bill Gates ($n = 50$), Mark Zuckerburg ($n = 36$), Jay Z ($n = 27$), Oprah Winfrey ($n = 23$), David Letterman ($n = 14$), Clint Eastwood ($n = 13$),

and Magic Johnson ($n = 10$). Participants identified this group of individuals most often when prompted for examples of celebrity CEOs in general.

Participants were also asked to identify celebrities they thought could potentially run for political office in order to answer RQ2. Participants identified the following top ten celebrities (See Figure 2); Oprah Winfrey ($n = 66$), Angelina Jolie ($n = 47$), Jon Stewart ($n = 36$), Stephen Colbert ($n = 32$), George Clooney ($n = 30$); Arnold Schwarzenegger ($n = 23$), Donald Trump ($n = 21$), Brad Pitt ($n = 15$), Will Smith ($n = 12$), and Clint Eastwood ($n = 8$).

RQ3 dealt specifically with gender and whether it produces significantly different evaluations of the candidate following exposure to the prime. Using the post-test feeling thermometer scale, there was no significant difference, $t(136) = (-1.03)$, $p = .303$, in evaluation of Fiorina between males ($M = 56.81$, $SD = 19.12$) and females ($M = 59.93$, $SD = 15.58$). In addition, in using the 12-item bi-polar semantic differential scale, there was no significant difference, $t(136) = .52$, $p = .603$, following exposure to prime between males ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .65$) and females ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .70$). Therefore, gender is not directly linked to a different evaluation of Fiorina.

RQ4 inquired as to whether candidate evaluations would be significantly different between participants with opposing political affiliations. First, a t-test analyzed those participants who identified themselves as either Republicans or

Democrats and their attitude toward Fiorina using the post-test feeling

thermometer scale. Evaluations of Fiorina were significantly different between

groups t (91) = 2.90, p = .005, with Republicans producing a higher evaluation of

Fiorina (M = 63.81, SD = 14.55) than Democrats (M = 54.02, SD = 17.99).

However, this could be expected since Fiorina ran as the Republican candidate for

the Senate seat in California. In addition to just looking at the two major parties in

the United States, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed combining

political party affiliation and the post-test feeling thermometer scale for attitudes

toward Fiorina. These results echo the above findings, F (2) = 4.09, p = .019.

Interestingly, the evaluation of Fiorina is highest with those affiliated with the

Republican Party (M =63.81, SD = 14.55) followed by those affiliated with

Independents (M = 57.24, SD = 18.69) and Democrats (M = 54.03, SD = 17.99).

Hence, political party affiliation does produce significantly different attitudes

toward Fiorina.

RQ5 inquired as to whether participant political cynicism is related to

evaluations of the candidate following exposure to the prime. Pearson correlation

on mean scores was performed to assess the participants' scores on the 8-item

political cynicism scale and the 12-item semantic differential scale evaluating

Fiorina. The correlation between political cynicism and attitude toward Fiorina was

r = -017, p = .85. Thus, political cynicism is not directly linked with evaluations of

the candidate. To further validate this finding, Pearson correlation on mean scores was performed again using the feeling thermometer scale with the political cynicism scale. The correlation yielded $r = -.025$, $p = .77$. Therefore, the above finding is confirmed and political cynicism did not produce a significant relationship with the evaluation of the candidate.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

This study attempted to explore in detail the perception of celebrity CEOs, which constitutes a relatively new phenomenon and a new area of academic inquiry with little previous attention. In addition to the need for further scholarship in this area, there appears to be an emerging trend of celebrity CEOs attempting to transition to U.S. politics. Based on the results of this experiment, some previous research findings can be supported while other findings may be questioned and explored further for more clarification. However, the qualitative and quantitative findings from this study produced mixed evaluations of celebrity CEOs. The findings will be explored in relation to prior research, the implications of the findings for priming theory and political cynicism will be presented, and the opportunities for future research will be discussed.

Validation of Priming Theory

Priming theory was utilized as the main theoretical perspective in this study based on its applicability and success in other political communication research. In addition, priming theory focuses on the role of media as they help shape the perceptions and attitudes of young voters. By exposing participants to a message about Fiorina as a celebrity CEO as well as her quest for political office, priming was deemed the most appropriate theory to utilize for further understanding of how young voters would perceive a celebrity CEO. Also, the media are credited for

altering people's opinions and evaluations of political candidates (Severin &

Tankard, 1997); hence, this theory seemed most appropriate and useful to

accomplish the goals of this study.

As the results demonstrate, there was no significant difference between

participants across all condition at the time of the pre-test. That allows for an

adequate measure of whether the priming conditions were effective in changing the

perceptions of Fiorina after exposure to the priming stimulus. Following exposure

to the positive prime, participants were more favorable of Fiorina, which validates

the effectiveness of the prime, but also allows for discussion concerning the role of

positive reinforcement about a candidate from the media. Since the positive prime

contained information about Fiorina that highlighted her success as a celebrity

CEO and offered her unique perspective on politics, participants evaluated her

more favorably after exposure. Hence, a celebrity's portrayal in media appears to

significantly shape evaluations, and celebrities have experience with media

relations. A positive media relationship could magnify the celebrity in both amount

and tone of coverage.

In regard to the contrast prime, voters still viewed Fiorina more favorably

than before exposure, but not as favorably as those who were exposed to the

positive prime. Since the contrast prime contained information about Fiorina and

her opponent, incumbent Boxer, participants were not as persuaded by Fiorina's

ability to transition from a CEO to a politician. A few reasons can be explored in relation to the less favorable evaluation of Fiorina. First, participants may have evaluated her in comparison with her opponent and not individually as those in the positive prime condition, which focuses on Fiorina's favorable past performances in business. Second, Fiorina's lesser political experience in relation to Boxer could have interfered with their perception of Fiorina's qualifications to hold a political office. However, the contrast prime was still effective in increasing the evaluation, hence, validating the effect of media priming on young voters.

Those participants who read the control prime saw a very small increase in their evaluation of Fiorina, but not enough to question validity. The control allowed for a basis for all other evaluations, providing comparative groups.

A negative prime condition was not utilized in this study as a goal was to use manipulations most representative of the campaign. While there was clearly negative content, it was rarely used without contrast, hence the decision to use a positive and contrast prime. In the future, research on celebrity and politics should include a negative prime to analyze the effect it has in the perceptions of both celebrity CEO candidates and their opponents.

This study reinforces the central premise of priming theory, which addresses "how news media influence the standards by which governments, presidencies, policies, and candidates for public office are judged…by calling attention to some

matters while ignoring others" (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). The priming

articles used in this study were intentionally similar to those used in actual election

campaigns and described as "deliberate strategies that candidates pursue to

influence voters" (Jacobs & Shapiro, 1994, p. 528). By actually utilizing

information from both Fiorina's and Boxer's political campaigns, these messages

were quite similar to something an actual voter would be exposed to in the media.

Hence, these results demonstrate the power and influence of the media in shaping

the perception of candidates in voters' minds.

The significant findings of this study illustrate the importance of priming

theory to political communication research as well as validate the need for more

studies specifically in the area of celebrity politics and celebrity CEOs. Through

the use of media messages that are similar to those viewed by young voters during

an election cycle, scholars can be more aware of how effective these messages are

in changing the evaluation of candidates based on the qualifications that are most

highlighted or ignored.

Political Cynicism in Young Voters

Research has demonstrated that young voters are discontent with the

political process, which has diminished their political participation in recent

decades (Bennett, 2000; Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2000; Putnam, 2000). In

2008, young voters reversed the decreased political engagement trend to become

engaged in Presidential elections, perhaps due to their frustration with the economy, interest and fear of the ongoing war in Iraq, the celebrity status of potential presidential or vice-presidential candidates, or due to the historical significance of the election of the first African American President in 2008.

The participants used in this study were ideal for testing for political cynicism based on the stigma that young voters are high on political cynicism indices. However, an interesting component of this demographic is their interest in celebrity culture. Young voters are likely more aware of what is current in celebrity culture. They especially recognize talented actors and musicians as well as those celebrities who participate in philanthropic activities. However, as the results indicated, political cynicism did not have an effect on participants' evaluations of Fiorina.

Based on the literature on political cynicism, it is somewhat surprising that there was no significant relationship between celebrity CEO evaluations and political cynicism. However, a few reasons can be proposed for the surprising result. First, it is possible that the young voter cynicism trend is reversing as changes in government leadership, specifically the election of the first African American president had produced reduced cynicism in recent studies. Second, since this study focused on a California election, it was unlikely any participants were evaluating Fiorina with the same scrutiny as someone electing a Senator to

represent their own state. Therefore, the favorable evaluations may reflect the limited exposure and the possibility that the stakes were not high for participants. Although political cynicism seems to be dubbed a characteristic of young voters, it may be beneficial for scholars to further investigate the current trend of political cynicism and evaluate the specific reasons for the decrease in political cynicism among young voters. In addition, variables such as interest in the election, the election's perceived importance, and variations in candidate traits could be studied in relation to political cynicism.

Importance of Affiliation between CEO and Organization

Hypothesis 1 predicted that positive evaluations of a celebrity CEO would translate to positive evaluations of the company most associated with the celebrity CEO. Support for this hypothesis was clear. The more positive evaluations of Fiorina resulted in a more positive evaluation of Hewlett-Packard, the organization she is most affiliated with as CEO. This idea of close affiliation between evaluations of a CEO and the organization they represent confirms previous literature concerning the relationship between a CEO's reputation and organization evaluation (Bruijns, 2003; Ranft et al., 2006). Basically, the reputation and perception of a company's celebrity CEO can either positively or negatively affect the perception of the organization.

The findings of this study produced a significant relationship between attitudes toward celebrity CEOs and their organizations. What remains for scholars to explore is the relationship between a negative candidate prime and evaluations of corporations the CEOs represent. It is possible that the celebrity status inoculates against negative media coverage. However, a pattern is observable with the evaluation of a celebrity CEO affecting the evaluation of the organization; hence, negative evaluations may not be immune.

Important factors that are continually mentioned in literature about CEOs include their reputation and media exposure (Ranft, et al., 2006). Depending on their celebrity status, mainly designated by media attention, celebrity CEOs are normally dubbed with a reputation that could potentially linger with the organization after their exit from the position. For example, Fiorina is no longer employed by Hewlett-Packard as their CEO, yet her reputation remains linked and still affects, at least positively, the evaluation of the organization. Therefore, scholars may want to identify exactly what elements of Fiorina's reputation influence the evaluation of Hewlett-Packard. In addition, an organization with a current celebrity CEO or the potential to have one due to increased media exposure and celebrity status may want to decipher whether they are willing to hinge much of their organization's reputation on one individual.

Viewed from a political context, the idea of a celebrity CEO venturing into politics could present obstacles for CEOs since their performance at the organization is documented and is sure to be addressed during their political campaign, as was Fiorina's. Interestingly, there seems to be a direct link between the success of a celebrity CEO and the success of their organization, which will be explained in further detail when discussing whom young voters identified as celebrity CEOs. Overall, the close proximity of reputation between celebrity CEOs and large organizations may present both obstacles and opportunities for political candidates and organizations deciding whether or not they are confident in the ability of their celebrity CEO to positively influence and enhance the reputation and revenue of their organization. The celebrity CEO trend toward politics may also result in "no-compete" style clauses that prohibit CEOs from running for political office while CEO and possibly for a designated number of years following their end as CEO.

Media Exposure

Interestingly, media exposure is highly credited with the creation of a celebrity (Ranft, et al., 2006; Treadway, et al., 2004). To further validate the importance of media exposure from the young voters' perspective, two hypotheses tested whether media exposure and in particular, political media exposure, affected the perception of celebrities running for political office. Surprisingly, the results

demonstrate that there is no direct link to a young voter's general media exposure and their political media exposure and evaluation of celebrities running for political office. It would seem that those who are exposed to media are more likely to be informed about celebrities in general and possibly the emerging trend of celebrity politics. However, as the results demonstrate, there was no direct link between the media exposure, general or political, and evaluation of celebrity politicians. Perhaps the single stimulus was not sufficient to produce evaluations powerful enough to show significant differences.

Although the media may aid in the creation of celebrity CEOs through increased exposure for viewers, they may not actually be fostering support for them as politicians. Exposure does not necessarily mean support of their actions or causes. Although media exposure may provide young voters with information about potential political candidates who were once CEOs, it does not have an effect on their evaluation as to whether or not these CEOs should seek political office.

The public relations principle of "any exposure is good exposure" reinforces the notion that the political candidate may increase his or her name recognition through the media. However, when the celebrity CEOs are tied to major U.S.-based or international corporations, the possibility of negative media becomes significantly more concerning as corporate publics will not want the evaluations of

their company to be lowered by actions on the campaign trail. Based on these findings, it may be necessary for future celebrity political candidates to rely less on media and more on their controlled, crafted campaign messages (e.g. advertisements, blogs, websites).

Although exposure to media did not affect young voters' perceptions of celebrities running for political office, it could assist the candidate in the sustainability of their celebrity status. As previous literature has suggested, many celebrities gain their status as celebrities from the overwhelming coverage by the media, whether it be positive or negative (Ranft et al., 2006). With the addition of running for public office, even more media attention could be paid to these individuals who are attempting to represent their respective constituents.

Numerous reasons can be surmised as to why there was not support for the hypothesis predicting a relationship between prior political media exposure and favorable attitudes toward Fiorina. First, those who are more politically aware may question the motives and qualifications of celebrities. They may be skeptical of wealthy individuals entering the political world, potentially using their fortune and fame to contaminate the democratic system. Previous literature suggest that "unless citizens receive information and candidates provide meaningful choices, it short-circuits the democratic procedures that all Americans value. We all deserve better choices than that currently provided in our regime based on celebrity politics"

(West & Orman, 2002, p. 119). Second, as stated earlier, media exposure may not be enough to actually change evaluations of candidates. Third, the context in which the media frames these political candidates may not enhance the credibility of celebrities or their seriousness in running for a political office.

Gender Differences in Evaluation of Female Celebrity Politicians

The 2010 midterm election for Senator in California offered a unique political election to utilize in this study. Fiorina and Boxer, both female political candidates, were vying for a contested Senate seat in California. To add to this uniqueness, the election in California had the possibility of helping to decide whether Republicans or Democrats would control the Senate. Finally, scholars have repeatedly identified the struggle women face when running for political office against a male opponent (Dinzes et al., 1994; Trent & Sabourin, 1993; Wadsworth et al., 1987). However, in this election, both candidates were female; hence, voters' gender could have mediated a possible difference in the perception of Fiorina. However, as the results indicated, there was no significant difference between males and females in their evaluation of Fiorina.

These findings present numerous opportunities in the study of female political candidates. Since women have entered the political realm in large numbers in the last twenty years, it is interesting to see how young voters perceive women candidates, especially when they run against each other. Previous literature

has demonstrated that there are different evaluations of male and female candidates' political advertisements and demeanor during political debates (Dinzes, Cozzens, & Manross, 1994; Trent & Sabourin, 1993; Wadsworth et al., 1987). However, research has not examined the evaluations when two female candidates oppose one another for public office. In the case of Fiorina and Boxer, voters' gender did not mediate different evaluations of Fiorina, a female celebrity CEO politician. However, that may not always be the case with other female political candidates, depending on the qualities they present in public debate as well as the type of political advertisements they utilize in their campaigns. As research suggests, few studies have examined male versus female candidates' campaigns with even less research studying two female candidates opposing one another; hence, there is potential for future research (Kaid et al., 1984; Wadsworth et al., 1987).

An emerging idea based on the lack of gender differences in the evaluation of celebrity politicians could be the experience and background of female celebrities, especially celebrity CEOs. Since these women are familiar with and have been successful in dealing with the glass-ceiling paradigm, young voters could potentially see their characteristics resembling that of a male political candidate. As Wadsworth et al., (1987) state "men are taught to be dominant, competitive, and aggressive while women are socialized to be submissive,

cooperative, warm, and sensitive" (p. 81). However, in politics, these feminine characteristics may not transfer to voters as leadership qualities; hence, women candidates take on some masculine qualities to build their credibility and assert their rightful position in politics.

In addition, voters may be more confident in their ability to represent their interests and fight for them since they have experience leading and representing their company in big business. Male voters may view the candidate as qualified in handling tough situations in a male-dominated environment or could respect the feminine attributes the female candidate offers in addition to her strong leadership skills and success in business. Future studies should assess whether women celebrity CEOs gain more or benefit less than male CEOs when transitioning to politics.

Female celebrity candidates may be an anomaly in which gender differences do not mediate different evaluations of celebrity politicians. However, if this is the case, scholars need to identify what makes celebrity CEOs as female political candidates different. It could be possible females are becoming more acceptable as political candidates for major political office. In elections with two female candidates, it may be that voters focus on different aspects of the candidate, not recognizing their gender as an important factor in their decision-making process. Overall, more research attention needs to be paid to the effects of voters' gender in

evaluating candidates, especially with the increase of female candidates and particularly, female celebrity CEOs running for political office.

Political Party Affiliation

As was expected, Republicans were more positive in their evaluation of Fiorina than Democrats and Independents. Voters who classified themselves as Independents, also viewed Fiorina more favorably following exposure to all prime conditions than Democrats. This finding is unique for a few reasons. First, this confirms that voters view the respected candidate from their political party affiliation more favorably than the opposing candidate. Therefore, political candidates may want to foster and continue relationships with supporters of their respected political party. Second, those participants who were exposed to the contrast prime read the same amount of information about Fiorina and Boxer. Independents in this condition viewed Fiorina more favorably based on the provided largely positive information about both candidates. Therefore, it is inferred that Fiorina's celebrity status or prior work experience may have yielded a more positive evaluation of Fiorina as Senator over Boxer's more than twenty years experience in the actual position as Senator. In future elections, it may be more beneficial for Republican or Democratic candidates to target the issues most relevant to Independents rather than trying to convert the opposing party or combating misconceptions that deal specifically with party ideals. In summation,

political party loyalty still exists while Independents may be more easily targeted and persuaded than trying to crack the "with us or against us" mentality that still lingers in the U.S. political system.

Celebrity CEOs

Previous literature only identified a few celebrity CEOs (Ketchen, et al., 2008; Gaines-Ross, 2003; Hayward, et al., 2004). Therefore, an important aspect of this study was to determine who young voters identified as celebrity CEOs and possibly identify some commonalities between these individuals. Examples of celebrity CEOs provided by participants include Donald Trump, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Oprah Winfrey, Jay Z, Mark Zuckerburg, Clint Eastwood, David Letterman, and Magic Johnson. Interestingly, some of these individuals who were identified as celebrity CEOs were also identified as celebrities that could potentially run for political office. Examples in this category include Arnold Schwarzenegger, Oprah Winfrey, John Stewart, George Clooney, Donald Trump, Clint Eastwood, Will Smith, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, and Stephen Colbert. Identification of these celebrity CEOs in general can lead to a more comprehensive list for future scholarship. There are several commonalities that these celebrity CEOs shared. First, to no surprise, the celebrities are all wealthy, which could be a reason why young voters identified them as potential political candidates since they could support their own political campaign. Second, the identified celebrity CEOs are

recognized by their names and also by the organizations with which they are associated. For example, Mark Zuckerburg is most known for creating Facebook, "a directory of the world's people and a place for private citizens to create public identities" (Vargas, 2010). With more than 500 hundred million users, Facebook has revolutionized how people stay connected and how organizations reach their constituents (Vargas, 2010). Zuckerburg's success was even documented in the movie, "The Social Network". Hence, these celebrities may gain name recognition from their organization's recognition. In addition holding the healm at a major media organization would only magnify celebrity power and influence such as Oprah Winfrey's potential power as owner of OWN – the Oprah Winfrey Network.

A third commonality between these celebrity CEOs is their media exposure. There are varying degrees of media exposure based on the profession of these CEOs. For example, Oprah Winfrey is best known for her daily television talk show in which millions of viewers watched her interview interesting people and act as a wellness coach for millions of fans. Other celebrities similar to Oprah would be Jon Stewart, David Letterman, and Stephen Colbert. Similar to these celebrities, yet not as constant in the media, would be George Clooney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Brad Pitt, Clint Eastwood, and Angelina Jolie. These celebrities have created a name for themselves as successful and talented actors. In fact, Schwarzenegger is an example of a celebrity that transitioned successfully to

politics. Now, as he leaves office, it will be interesting to see whether he is accepted back in Hollywood as an A-list celebrity. Finally, some celebrities gain media attention because of their success as CEOs of successful organizations. Examples include Donald Trump, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Carly Fiorina. These individuals, and the organizations they represent, are prone to be in the spotlight due to their innovations and success in being a part of the best and most profitable companies in the world. As can be seen, these celebrities differ in their careers, name recognition, wealth, and amount of media exposure. These factors aid in creating their celebrity status and being identified by young voters as celebrity CEOs.

Confidence in Celebrities as Politicians

Young voters have mixed levels of confidence in the ability of celebrities to represent them politically. However, 64.3% of participants in this study were not confident in the ability of celebrities to represent them politically. Basically, two-thirds of the population of young voters in this study were not confident in celebrities becoming politicians. This is an interesting finding since participants were able to identify their own celebrities who could run for office, but were not confident in their ability to do so. Hence, reasons for either confidence or lack thereof is essential to evaluate what makes celebrities ready and eligible to potentially win a political election.

As mentioned in the results section, those who were confident in a celebrity's ability as a politician credited it to the celebrity's hard work in their industry, concern for others through their philanthropic efforts and overall interest in the wellbeing for the country. One participant stated, "They (celebrities) have all had to work hard to get where they are and they know how 'real people' feel about things." Another stated, "These people are very active in their communities and use their celebrity to help others." Overall, in order for celebrities to gain voters' confidence, they must demonstrate qualities such as selflessness, concern for others, perseverance and dedication.

On the other hand, some young voters were not confident in celebrities pursuing a political office due to a lack of education, lack of political experience, or disconnect with the needs and experiences of the American people. Young voters may also question the intentions of celebrities who attempt to be politicians. According to participants in this study, "I don't think that any celebrities are fully qualified to represent anyone in an adequate way. They have way too much on their plates already and wouldn't have enough time." Additional comments reveal that "Most (celebrities) cannot personally relate to the present day problems the average, middle-class American faces on a day to day basis." Finally, many young voters acknowledged the lack of education and background in politics with statements such as, "Celebrities have the wealth to run and win the position but I

don't know about their knowledge of running a country or governing a state." and

"I think that most celebrities have little educational background in politics or

government." Therefore, the support for celebrities as politicians is quite mixed.

However, one participant summed up the conflict with this statement, "It's not that

I wouldn't necessarily be confident in them (celebrities). However, I think that

when a celebrity runs for office they may get elected because they are popular, and

not because they are thought to be a good candidate for the job. I think it is a tricky

situation mixing celebrities with politics, but at the same time, a lot of celebrities

are involved in nonprofits and organizations to better the country. So, this is a hard

question." While there are generalizeable statements to demonstrate attitudes

toward celebrity CEOs entering politics, it also appears that much of the evaluation

depends on the particular CEO and the level of political office. Overall, celebrities

who attempt to be politicians need to address these issues if they plan to gain

support from young voters, especially if they lack background and experience in

politics.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Summary of Significant Findings

Overall, this study provided significant findings in validating the effectiveness of priming theory as it relates to the evaluation of political candidates. Gender differences did not result in different evaluations of Fiorina. In addition, political cynicism, media exposure, and political media exposure did not affect the evaluation of celebrity politicians. Findings concerning political party affiliation provided scholars with a basis for further inquiry into messages and policies targeting Independents. Finally, qualitative analysis provided a more comprehensive list of celebrity CEOs and those celebrities who could potentially run for political office. Also, justification was provided for why young voters feel and do not feel confident in the ability of celebrities in general to transition into politicians. Although some findings did not produce significant results as was hypothesized, null findings rebuke previous literature and bring to question certain aspects of findings that may need to be re-examined in political communication research.

Limitations

Although there were significant findings with this study, there are a few limitations and areas that could be improved. First, this study only utilized one celebrity CEO, Carly Fiorina, in the priming conditions. Due to the lack of

literature on celebrity CEOs, this study only focused on Fiorina based on her prevalence in the literature. In addition, Fiorina was a political candidate running for a California Senate seat, which may not have made her as applicable to participants, hence lessening their motivation and attention paid to the prime. Also, the 2010 midterm election had already taken place when the experiment was conducted; therefore, participants could have already known the outcome of the election in which Fiorina failed to be elected.

Second, although the media are credited for helping create celebrities and possibly sustain them, it was hypothesized that media exposure would have an effect on how young voters evaluate candidates. It may be beneficial to have more specific questions about media consumption and percentage of time exposed to the Internet or television that might better predict whether those who are exposed more to the media have a different evaluation of celebrity candidates.

Third, since the literature is so vague on defining and identifying celebrity CEOs as well as celebrities that could potentially run for political office, studies in the future could utilize those celebrity CEOs identified in this study. Fourth, it would be essential to see the identification of celebrity CEOs from different demographics, particularly those classified as older voters, who are viewed as less politically cynical and more politically engaged. Although young voters were an ideal demographic due to their noted political cynicism in the literature, future

studies should incorporate other demographics for a different perspective on celebrities and celebrity CEOs. Finally, since the Chronbach's alpha for political cynicism was approaching acceptable reliability, it may be essential to include more measures to assess participants' political cynicism. Although the scale has been utilized in previous research with high reliability, it was approaching reliability in this study and should be revised to use for another study.

Future Research Directions

This study incorporated as much of the literature available on celebrity CEOs and the concept of celebrity politicians to investigate the evaluation of celebrities as potential candidates. Since this study is basically one of the first looking specifically at celebrity CEOs, there are different avenues for future research in light of these findings. First, further exploration using other celebrity CEOs can be conducted noting similarities and differences to the findings of this study as well as adding a negative prime condition to see whether negative media messages alter the perceptions of celebrity CEOs as political candidates.

Second, scholars could investigate the relationship between celebrity CEOs and the organization they are most affiliated with based on public relations theories such as relationship management theory, reputation management theory, or excellence theory. A better understanding of how a celebrity affects the perception of their organization could determine whether or not an organization would want a

celebrity in their organization at all. This could also lead to more scholarship on the benefits and detriments of celebrity status in the business world as well as in the political world.

Third, future studies could not only focus on celebrity CEOs, but also celebrity politicians and political celebrities, terms dubbed most recently by the increased media exposure and celebrity status of certain individuals in politics. In addition, studies could include politicians who are currently seen as celebrities such as President Obama and Sarah Palin and see how voters evaluate whether their celebrity status is a detriment to the responsibilities they have as public servants.

Fourth, gender of political candidates is a topic that has been researched thoroughly, especially with political advertisements. However, few scholars have examined when two female candidates run against each other for political office as the incidents are rare. Although it has not happened often, there are still instances such as the Fiorina vs. Boxer 2010 Senate race in California. There are several potential questions that need to be addressed. How do strategies differ with two female political candidates? What characteristics do voters like or dislike in female political candidates? Does gender of the voter induce different evaluations of the female political candidate? As noted, there are only a few instances comparatively

when two females have opposed each other, but this could be beneficial in future elections as we see more females entering politics.

Finally, this idea of celebrity culture and its infiltration in American society, especially with young voters, raises numerous questions. How influential are celebrities? Will we see more celebrities get involved in politics and what will the ramifications be, if any? In the future, can celebrity CEOs successfully win political offices? These questions are just a few that need to be answered as we continue to see the interest and popularity of celebrities in American culture rise.

This study has identified celebrity CEOs and celebrities that could potentially run for political office. It has provided young voters' evaluations of celebrity CEOs and in particular, Carly Fiorina. Although we have yet to see a celebrity CEO successfully transition to a political office, this study confirms that it is definitely possible based on the evaluations provided by young voters. Nevertheless, it may not be long before Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump, or Jay Z are considering themselves politicians and running campaigns for the next Senate seat in their respective states. Donald Trump has already announced his plan to potentially run for President, stating that he could beat President Obama as the Republican candidate. Will our next President of the United States in 2012 be a celebrity CEO turned politician?

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Table 1.

Post-test Attitudes toward Fiorina and Hewlett-Packard

Primes	Attitudes toward Fiorina	Attitudes toward Hewlett Packard
Contrast Prime	3.12 (*SD* = .77)	3.15 (*SD* = .66)**
Positive Prime	3.29 (*SD* = .53)	3.20 (*SD* = .58)**
Control	3.07 (*SD* = .59)	3.27 (*SD* = .51)**
Overall (*N* = 140)	3.16 (*SD* = .64)	3.21 (*SD* = .59)**

Note. r = .73; statistically significant at the level of p ≤ .01. Hypothesis 1 is supported since a positive evaluation of Fiorina resulted in a positive reaction to Hewlett-Packard.

Table 2.

Mean score attitudes toward Fiorina in the pre- and post-test

Primes	Pre-test	Post-test
Contrast Prime	3.60 (*SD* =. 55)	4.04 (*SD* = .67)
Positive Prime	3.52 (*SD* = .44)	4.24 (*SD* = .57)
Control	3.72 (*SD* = .61)	3.90 (*SD* = .74)
Overall	3.61*	4.10**

Note. Results from the pre-test indicate no significant difference among participants in their attitudes toward Fiorina, F (2) = 1.57, p = .212. Results from the post-test indicate a significant difference between groups, with the positive prime condition producing the highest evaluation of Fiorina, F (2) = 5.27, p = .006.

Table 3.

Mean score attitudes using feeling thermometer scale toward Fiorina in the pre-

and post-test

Primes	Pre-test	Post-test
Contrast Prime	50.58 (*SD* = .12.25)	58.46 (*SD* = 17.87)
Positive Prime	49.09 (*SD* = 7.00)	65.67 (*SD* = 13.14)
Control Prime	49.87 (*SD* = .13.52)	52.14 (*SD* = 16.84)
Overall	49.86	58.85

Figure 1.

Top Celebrity CEOs mentioned by participants
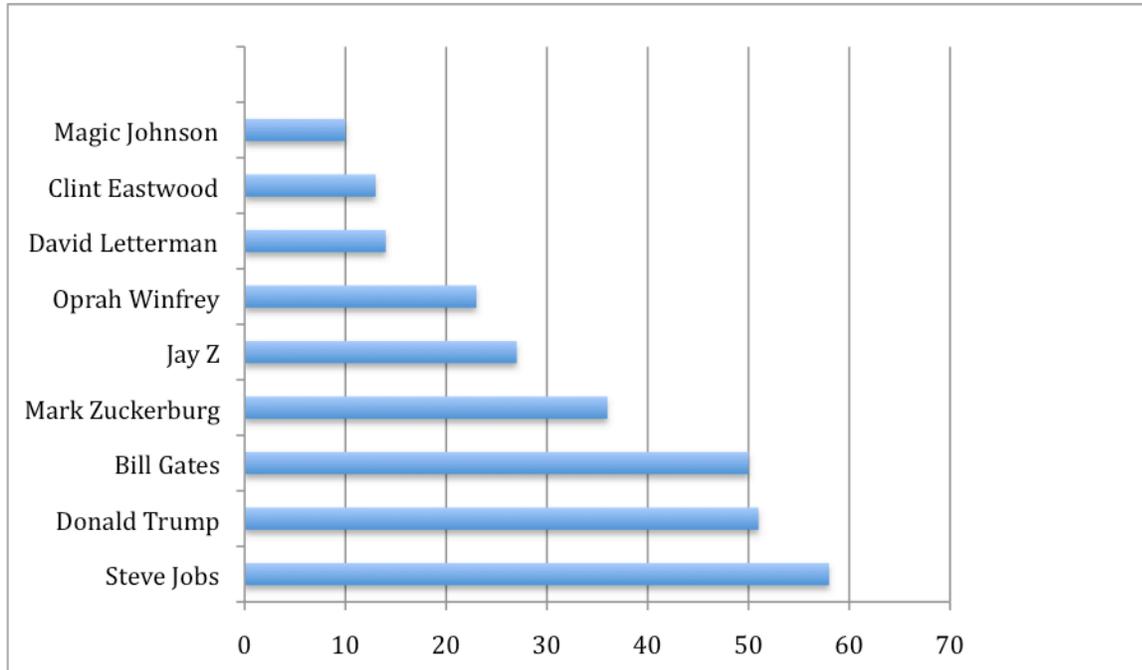
Figure 2.

Top ten celebrities identified by participants as potential politicians
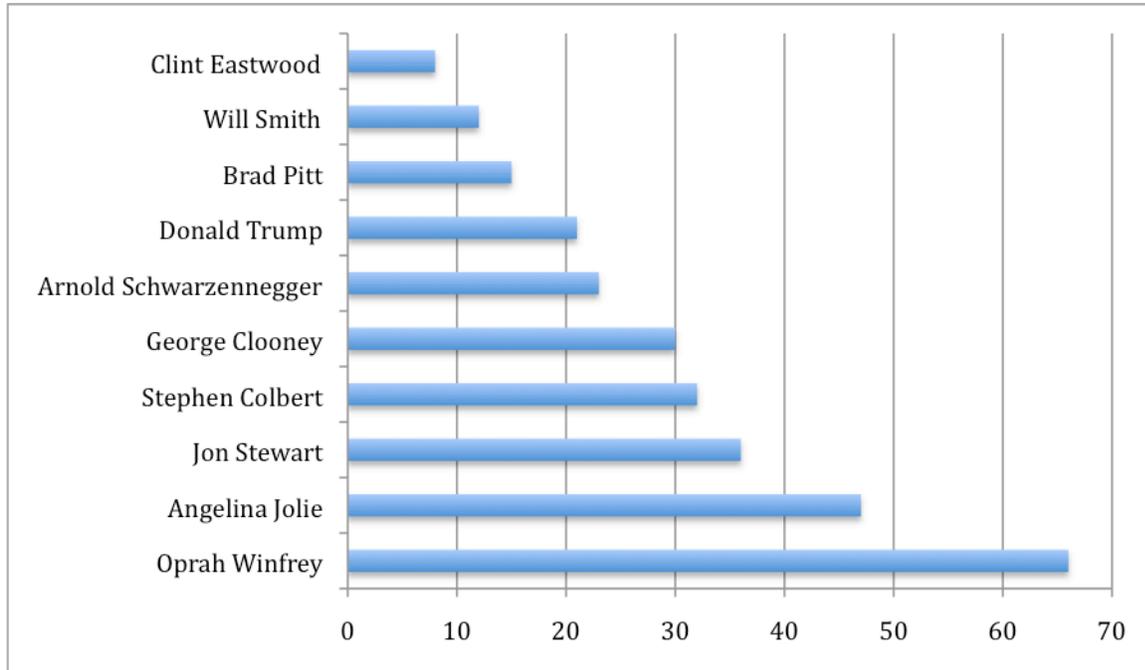
Appendix A

Measures

Pre – Test Measures.

Different people use different sources to get information about politics. Listed below are several sources from which people may gather political information. Please indicate how many days a week you use each of the sources below to obtain information about politics.

	Days of the Week							
1. local television news	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. national television news (e.g., Nightly News with Tom Brockaw, CNN Headline News)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. television talk shows (e.g., Meet the Press, Face the Nation, Crossfire, The Mitchell Report, Equal Time)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. television late night shows (e.g., Jay Leno, David Letterman, Conan O'Brien, Daily Show, Crenshaw Report)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. morning television shows (e.g., Good Morning America, Today, This Morning, Fox and Friends)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. newspapers (e.g., local newspaper, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. news magazines (e.g., Time, Newsweek, US News and World Report)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. internet (e.g., social media sites, candidate Websites, political Websites, news Websites)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. radio news (e.g., local news on the radio, national news briefs given on the hour or half hour)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. political radio talk shows (e.g., Rush Limbaugh, G. Gordon Liddy, Jim Hightower, NPR)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. speaking with others (e.g., family, friends, co-workers)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Open – Ended Questions

1. Name five (5) celebrities who could run for public office.

2. Would you feel confident in their ability to represent you? If yes, explain why. If not, explain why you would not feel confident in their ability.

3. Which news outlet would you be most likely to watch?

____ MSNBC

____ FOX

____ ABC

____ CBS

____ NBC

____ CNN

____ Other

3a. Why do you watch the above news outlet you selected?

_____

4. Should CEOs try to run for public office?

5. Name five (5) celebrities that have run for political office in the past.

6. President Obama is portrayed as a celebrity by the media. True   False

7. John McCain is portrayed as a celebrity by the media. True   False.

Please answer each question based on a normal week of your life. Please indicate how many days a week you perform the following questions. Please read each question carefully.

	Days of the Week							
1. How many days a week do you read a newspaper?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How many days a week do you watch the NATIONAL network news on television?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How many days a week do you watch the LOCAL news on television?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. How many days a week do you watch television?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. How many days a week do you log onto the Internet?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. How many days do you surf the World Wide Web?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. How many days do you listen to radio for news coverage?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please give us your feelings toward media political reporting on the following scale.

For example, if you think media political reporting is very sincere, you would circle the sincere-insincere scale as follows:

INSINCERE	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**	SINCERE

On the other hand, if you think media political reporting is very insincere, you would circle the sincere-insincere scale as follows:

INSINCERE	**0** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	SINCERE

Please rate media political reporting:

ACCURATE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	INACCURATE
OBJECTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	BIASED
NEGATIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	POSITIVE
HONEST	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DISHONEST
BELIEVABLE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNBELIEVABLE
UNIFORMED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	INFORMED
AGGRESSIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	PASSIVE
LIBERAL	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	CONSERVATIVE

Following are some feelings about politics and politicians. For each one, please say whether you strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), have no opinion (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
Whether I vote or not has no influence on what politicians do.	1	2	3	4	5
One never knows what politicians really think.	1	2	3	4	5
People like me don't have any say about what the government does.	1	2	3	4	5
Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.	1	2	3	4	5
One can be confident that politicians will always do the right thing.	1	2	3	4	5
Politicians often quickly forget their	1	2	3	4	5

election promises after a political campaign is over.					
Politicians are more interested in power than in what the people think.	1	2	3	4	5
One cannot always trust what politicians say.	1	2	3	4	5

Please give us your feelings toward Carly Fiorina on this feeling thermometer. Ratings between 51 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward Fiorina. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward her and that you don't care too much for her. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold, you would rate Fiorina at the 50 degree mark.

0--50--100

 Please indicate your degrees:_____

Please give us your feelings toward Carly Fiorina on the following scale.

Please rate CARLY FIORINA as follows:

UNQUALIFIED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	QUALIFIED
UNSOPHISTICATED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SOPHISTICATED
DISHONEST	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	HONEST
BELIEVABLE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNBELIEVABLE
UNSUCCESSFUL	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SUCCESSFUL
ATTRACTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNATTRACTIVE
UNFRIENDLY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	FRIENDLY
INSINCERE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SINCERE
CALM	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	EXCITABLE
AGGRESSIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNAGGRESSIVE
STRONG	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	WEAK
INACTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	ACTIVE

Post – Test Measures.

Open – Ended Questions

1. What company did Fiorina work for before she entered the political realm?

2. In what state did Fiorina run for U.S. Senate?

3. Was Fiorina elected to the U.S. Senate in 2010?

4. Who ran against Fiorina?

5. If given the opportunity, would you have voted for Fiorina?

Please give us your feelings toward CARLY FIORINA on the following scale.

UNQUALIFIED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	QUALIFIED
UNSOPHISTICATED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SOPHISTICATED
DISHONEST	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	HONEST
BELIEVABLE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNBELIEVABLE
UNSUCCESSFUL	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SUCCESSFUL
ATTRACTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNATTRACTIVE
UNFRIENDLY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	FRIENDLY
INSINCERE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SINCERE
CALM	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	EXCITABLE
AGGRESSIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNAGGRESSIVE
STRONG	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	WEAK
INACTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	ACTIVE

Please give us your feelings toward Carly Fiorina on this feeling thermometer. Ratings between 51 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward Fiorina. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward her and that you don't care too much for her. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold, you would rate Fiorina at the 50 degree mark.

0---50---100

 Please indicate your degrees:_____

Please give us your feelings toward CELEBRITY CEOs on the following scale.

Please rate Celebrity CEOS in general as follows:

UNQUALIFIED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	QUALIFIED
UNSOPHISTICATED	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SOPHISTICATED
DISHONEST	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	HONEST
BELIEVABLE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNBELIEVABLE
UNSUCCESSFUL	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SUCCESSFUL
ATTRACTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNATTRACTIVE
UNFRIENDLY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	FRIENDLY
INSINCERE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	SINCERE
CALM	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	EXCITABLE
AGGRESSIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	UNAGGRESSIVE
STRONG	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	WEAK
INACTIVE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	ACTIVE

Please give us your feelings toward celebrity CEOs as politicians on this feeling thermometer. Ratings between 51 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward celebrity CEOs becoming politicians.. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward celebrity CEOs becoming politicians. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold, you would rate celebrity CEOs as politicians at the 50 degrees mark.

0---50--100

 Please indicate your degree:_____

Following are some statements about the organization, Hewlett-Packard. For each one, please say whether you strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), have no opinion (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.	1	2	3	4	5
Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	1	2	3	4	5
This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.	1	2	3	4	5

I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel confident about this organization's skills.	1	2	3	4	5
This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	1	2	3	4	5
Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior.	1	2	3	4	5

Following are some statements about the previous celebrity CEO of Hewlett-Packard, Carly Fiorina. For each one, please say whether you strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), have no opinion (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

	Strongly disagree				Strongly Agree
Carly Fiorina, as CEO of Hewlett Packard, treats people like me fairly and justly.	1	2	3	4	5
Whenever Carly Fiorina makes an important decision for Hewlett Packard, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	1	2	3	4	5
Carly Fiorina can be relied on to keep its promises.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that Carly Fiorina takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel confident about Carly Fiorina's skills as CEO.	1	2	3	4	5
Carly Fiorina has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	1	2	3	4	5
Sound principles seem to guide this Carly Fiorina's behavior as CEO.	1	2	3	4	5

Following are some statements about celebrities. For each one, please say whether you strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), have no opinion (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

	Strongly disagree				Strongly Agree
Arnold Schwarzenegger's celebrity status assisted him in his role as governor.	1	2	3	4	5
Arnold Schwarzenegger's celebrity status was a detriment to his role as governor.	1	2	3	4	5

Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected only because of his celebrity status.	1	2	3	4	5
Meg Whitman used her celebrity status to enter politics.	1	2	3	4	5
Meg Whitman uses her celebrity status to gain recognition.	1	2	3	4	5
Al Franken used his celebrity status to get elected.	1	2	3	4	5
Al Franken's celebrity status assisted him in his role as senator.	1	2	3	4	5
Al Franken's celebrity status is a detriment to his role as senator.	1	2	3	4	5

Following are some statements about the celebrities and politics. For each one, please say whether you strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), have no opinion (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

	Strongly disagree			Strongly Agree	
Celebrities overstep their boundaries when they use their celebrity status.	1	2	3	4	5
I value when a celebrity I trust speaks out in support of political candidates.	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrities are too influential in the political process.	1	2	3	4	5
I appreciate when celebrities encourage people to vote. (e.g., P Diddy's Vote or Die, Madonna's Rock the Vote)	1	2	3	4	5
I value when a celebrity endorses a political candidate financially.	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrities should not be endorsing political candidates.	1	2	3	4	5
Politicians should not accept financial donations from celebrities.	1	2	3	4	5

Open – Ended Questions:

1. Does a CEO's name recognition provide justification for them running for public office?

2. Does a CEO's wealth provide justification for them running for public office?

3. Does a CEO's experience provide justification for them running for public office?

4. Besides Carly Fiorina, name five (5) CEOs that you deem to have celebrity status.

5. List a few reasons why some CEOs reach celebrity status and others do not?

6. Please indicate your gender.

    Female:_____
    Male:_____

7. With which racial group do you most closely identify?
    ___: African American or Black
    ___: Asian-American or Asian
    ___: Latino or Hispanic
    ___: Native American
    ___: White, non-Hispanic
    ___: Multi-racial: _____
    ___: Other:_____

8. What is your age? _____years old.

9. What is your political affiliation?
    ___: Republican
    ___:Democrat
    ___: Independent
    ___: Other:_____

10. Did you vote in the 2010 midterm election?
    ____: Yes
    ____: No