Up, close and personal: The new Front National visual strategy under Marine Le Pen

Delia Dumitrescu

Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg

Box 711, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden

delia.dumitrescu@gu.se

Abstract

Extensive analyses of Marine Le Pen's media interventions as leader of the French Front National have revealed mostly rhetorical differences from her father's discourse. In particular, despite Marine Le Pen's professed openness toward women and their policy concerns, and despite her professed intention to transform the FN into party suitable for government, there has been little progress in these directions. However, the FN's *visual* discourse has been all but ignored by the scholarly analysis, despite the fact that campaign visuals encode significant social and political information. This paper finds that the FN candidates' visual presentation has undergone major transformations from the 2007 to the 2012 legislative elections. Specifically FN candidates in 2012 are more likely to visually portray themselves like mainstream party candidates. Compared to the 2007 elections, women candidates, in particular, were more likely to visually promote their personal qualities in 2012, in some respects more than 2012 men candidates.

Key words: Front National, election campaign visuals, visual communication, electoral strategy, women candidates

Introduction

The skyrocketing electoral support for the Front National (FN) in France since 2007 has raised questions about the FN's ability of becoming a mainstream party. Perhaps the most important question is what (if anything) has changed with the transfer of leadership from Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen? This question has been often examined with respect to the new FN discourse. Several systematic analyses have revealed mainly cosmetic differences in the speeches of the two leaders (e.g. Alduy & Wahnich 2015; Fourest & Venner, 2012). For example, Marine Le Pen has professed more openness to various categories of voters previously shunned by the party leadership, such as women, and she has vowed to make the FN a governing party. In-depth discourse and policy analyses, however, have revealed that these promises have been mostly empty to date. The current FN policies toward women have not evolved substantially from the traditional FN line (Crépon, 2012; Alduy & Wahnich, 2015); and the party's policy positions still place it in the niche party category (Ivaldi, 2015).

However, the evolution of the FN's visual discourse has been all but ignored. Visuals are processed automatically, and contain important social information (Grabe & Bucy, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). More importantly for a party's electoral strategy, the visual choices candidates make in their electoral posters send a signal about their party's claimed political status (Dumitrescu, 2010, 2009). Specifically, previous research found that mainstream party candidates draw more attention to themselves and demand a personal vote; while candidates of niche parties put the party in front, and themselves more in the background (Dumitrescu 2010, 2009). These visual strategies correlate with electoral success, suggesting that they are taken as credible signals by voters (Dumitrescu, 2010). In other words, candidates can therefore use their visual campaign

materials to convey valuable information about their party, about their own qualities and about their policy positions.

The goal of this paper is to examine to what extent some of the promises of change professed by Marine Le Pen, while not implemented in the spoken discourse, are reflected in the FN's *visual* campaign strategy. Specifically, we study the evolution of candidates' personal images in the 2007 and 2012 legislative elections (the former being the last election under the helm of Jean-Marie, and the latter being the first legislative election under the leadership of Marine Le Pen). Since Marine Le Pen has professed softening the party's traditionalist image with regard to women's role in society, we focus particularly on the evolution of women candidates. The paper examines some of the campaign documents that are likely to touch all French voters: candidates' *profession de foi* (political programs mailed to all registered voters).

We begin by presenting the evidence on the (lack of) change in the FN positions during Marine Le Pen's leadership, and by laying out the research questions about the corresponding changes in visual strategy. We then introduce the theoretical basis for the analysis of the visuals in candidates' professions de foi, and formulate the study's hypotheses. The analysis and results follow, including sensitivity checks on the results. We conclude with a larger discussion about the implication of these results.

Front National from Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Conflicting signs of change

The Front National is the main party occupying the extreme right of the ideological spectrum in France. The data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015a, 2015b; Hooghe et al., 2010; Steenbergen & Marks, 2007) give a good overview of its ideological position. According

to experts, the FN was percentile 94.5 in 1997, percentile 99 in 2002 and in 2007 and percentile 98.77 in 2012 on the general left-right scale among *all* European parties. The lowest percentile the FN has ever occupied on the Libertarian (Post-materialist) - Traditional (Authoritarian) scale was 93.4 in 2012. The scale where the FN was ranked closer to the center has been the economic dimension of the left-right continuum; on this dimension, the party has been percentile 97.5 in 1997, percentile 67.1 in 2002, percentile 75.9 in 2007, and again percentile 62.96 in 2012. Thus, with some variations, but admittedly small ones, the party has been as far from the French and European ideological center as possible in the past 20 years.

Unlike the ideological placement, the party's electoral score has fluctuated considerably. It scored almost 15% at the legislative elections in 1997, a bit above 11% in 2002, failed to go over the 5% mark in 2007 and was again third in the 2012 legislative elections, with almost 14% of the vote. The party also performed well in Presidential elections. As its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen went into the second round in 2002. Following a disappointing performance by her father in 2007, Marine Le Pen went on to score almost 18% of the vote in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections. While failing to qualify for the second round, this percentage was nonetheless larger than in 2002. Moreover, the 2012 elections saw a substantial increase in women's support: for the first time, women were almost as likely as men to vote FN (17.5% compared to 19%, Mayer, 2015, p. 309).

In light of increasing FN support, the consequences of the leadership transition have been widely debated (e.g. Crépon 2012; Crépon, Dézé & Mayer, 2015; Alduy & Wahnich 2015; Fourest & Venner, 2012). Jean-Marie Le Pen was the epitome of the nationalistic, xenophobic, homophobic, authoritarian, traditional right (see Crépon 2015, p.191; Taguieff, 1996 for a thorough discussion of his political and social discourse). Especially with regard to women, his

public interventions left no doubt that he considered their place to be at home raising their many

kids, and not in the public realm (cf. Taguieff, 1996; Alduy & Wahnich 2015, p. 53). There is a

consensus among the experts that his daughter Marine however, has attempted to move the party

away from these controversial positions.

Marine Le Pen signaled a change in discourse in one of the first speeches as the new head

of the party, on May 1st 2011. This speech extended a friendly hand to all the categories that had

previously had a lower or no place at all among the Front National supporters: women, gays and

non-Christians (Jews, Muslims, or non-believers). According to the new party line, being French

was all that mattered, and this superseded any other personal characteristic. At the same time, this

openness failed to generate policy changes (e.g. Dézé, 2012, Fourest & Venner, 2012; Crépon,

2012, 2015). For one, Crépon (2012) notes that the FN 2012 political program contained no

specific provisions protecting or extending women's rights. Under the previous party doctrine,

women were supposed to play mainly a family role, as mothers, and this role was not repudiated

after 2011. Rather, judging from the interviews presented by Crépon (2012, chapter 5) with FN

members, the FN has taken more women-friendly positions, simply because it has ceased to

contest certain women rights that are by now already enshrined in the French public

consciousness, such as the right to having an abortion. Thus, rather than a true move towards

more mainstream politics with respect to the place of women in society, the FN under Marine Le

Pen simply relented on its contestation of some mainstream political values.

The "normalisation" of the party line, meaning the shift toward more mainstream politics,

has been contested not just with regard to its view of women, but also with respect to other areas

of politics. There has clearly been a shift in discourse and policy programs, away from cultural

and nationalistic issues and more focused on economic and social issues (Ivaldi, 2015; Alduy &

Wahnich 2015). However, even with this shift, the data shows that the post-2011 FN gives significantly higher policy weight to cultural issues (e.g. religion, immigration and security) and significantly less weight to economic and social issues than the typical mainstream party. Moreover, looking at particular policies, Dézé (2012, pp.148-155) points out that the 2012 party program deviated little or not at all from the traditional FN positions: the party still rejected other mainstream parties, immigration policies, the European Union, globalization, and advocated a very strong state. As such, the party has maintained its niche party status despite the leadership change (Ivaldi, 2015, p. 167-8).

A systematic analysis of Marine Le Pen's public interventions comes to the same conclusion: the differences between hers and her father's discourse are often rhetorical, to make the same traditional values more palatable for younger generations (Fourest & Venner, 2012). Thus, Alduy and Wahnich (2015, p. 54) note that while Marine le Pen does not talk as frequently as her father about abortion (implicitly acknowledging this right), she has never used expressions such as "equality between men and women" or "women's fight (*cause des femmes*)." Crépon, Dézé and Mayer (2015, p. 529) conclude that "the FN of Marine Le Pen is certainly not the one of Jean-Marie le Pen. But it is not substantially different either."

At the same time, political observers agree that unlike her father, Marine has often professed her desire to get the FN in government (Gaultier, 2015; Goldhammer, 2015). Gaultier (2015, p.107) cites a 2014 interview given to the journal *Valeurs Actuelles*, in which she openly declares her "[fight] even before she took the helm of the movement, to make the FN a governing

party."[1] And it is undeniable that the party's broadening electoral base brings it closer to Marine Le Pen's governing ideal.

How the party managed to increase its support in legislative elections, especially among women (Mayer, 2015, p. 309), is therefore an open question. The question is even more puzzling when considering that previous good performances in presidential elections did not have the same effect. In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen was unable to translate his presidential success into substantially better scores for his party. In fact, his party lost votes compared to the 1997 elections. In 2012, the party's legislative success suggests that Marine Le Pen managed very well to persuade voters of change, despite not altering the traditional FN line much. Yet, while many have looked at her words, no study to date has looked at the changing visual strategy of her party. As images convey important social information (Grabe & Bucy, 2009), this paper examines the changes in the visual presentation of FN candidates from one election to the other. In light of the party's increased success and Marine Le Pen's changing rhetoric from her father's with regard to women and their concerns, we need to consider two questions:

RQ 1: Do FN candidates use different visual promotion strategies in 2007 and 2012?

RQ 2: Do men and women candidates use different visual promotion strategies in 2007 and in 2012?

The next section discusses the best party strategies for rallying voters, and how these strategies are reflected in visual campaigns.

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[1] This quote reflects Marine Le Pen's evolving role in the FN after 2000. The leadership change in 2011 was the conclusion of a long gradual political process, rather than a disruptive event, as Marine Le Pen was here father's general campaign director in 2007. However, despite her increasing political involvement, Jean-Marie Le Pen was still the official face of the FN until his retirement as leader, and Marine Le Pen's speeches signaling a change in the traditional party line became more prominent after her accession to the helm of the party.

Mainstream vs. niche parties: Different optimal strategies

Previous studies suggest that mainstream parties and issue-based parties have different optimal electoral strategies (Adams, Clark, Ezrow, & Glasgow, 2006; Ezrow, 2008). According to Adams et al. (2006), niche parties (extreme right parties included) benefit from advocating increased ideological purity, while mainstream parties (such as the Conservatives or Christian Democrats on the right) benefit from broadening their appeal to as many voters as possible. When parties follow an inappropriate strategy (either broadening their appeal, for niche parties; or narrowing it, for a mainstream party), they lose votes (Adams et al., 2006, p.524). Ezrow (2008) presents additional evidence that extreme ideological parties gain more from following a niche policy strategy, in other words, from resisting any temptation of opening up to other voter groups.

One strategy to broaden voter support is to market candidates' personal qualities. At first sight, this strategy could fit any party type, but there are several reasons why mainstream parties are more likely to apply it. Since the optimal niche party strategy is to emphasize the party and its ideology over the candidates, a marketing strategy focused on the person of the *local* candidate is difficult to reconcile with such an emphasis (unless, of course, the candidate is in fact the party leader). Moreover, due to the French single-member-district, two-round-majority electoral system, candidates with a winning chance have a clear incentive to search for a personal vote (Shugard & Carrey, 1995), especially as significant voter volatility leads to sizable numbers of marginal seats (Kreuzer & Stephan, 2003, p. 133). There are several reasons why in practice candidates with a winning chance are seldom niche party candidates or political newcomers. On the one hand, the second round is often an affair contested by the two main mainstream parties on

the left (the Socialists) and right (the Union for a Popular Movement until recently, now renamed as The Republicans); thus, the incentive for seeking a personal vote is generally particularly strong for candidates of these mainstream parties (Kreuzer, 2000). On the other hand, when mainstream candidates are not the only ones contesting the second round, they are often joined by local notables, politicians who are deeply entrenched in politics, as there is a tradition of cumulating local and national offices (Elgie, 2005).

In short, there are both theoretical and empirical reasons (grounded in the specific features of the French electoral system) as to why a strategy focused on promoting the personal qualities of the local candidates should be followed by mainstream and not by niche parties (assuming, of course, that parties want to follow the optimal strategies maximizing their electoral support).

The grammar of visual election messages

Previous research has shown that visual communication is a rich source of political information, especially with regard to politicians (Grabe & Bucy, 2009; see Dumitrescu, 2016, for a review). For example, individuals take cues about politicians' policy positions from the groups they observe in their election ads (Swigger, 2012). Viewers have been repeatedly shown to respond to politicians' expressions of affect, even to fleeting facial muscles movements (e.g. Stewart, Waller, & Schubert, 2009). Moreover, voters have been shown to make automatic judgements about a politician's character based on their looks and facial features (e.g., Rosenberg Bohan, McCafferty, & Harris, 1986; Rosenberg, Kahn, & Tran, 1991; Hall, Goren, Chaiken, & Todorov, 2009). Thus, because of their richness in information, visuals are an important communication channel to consider when considering electoral strategies.

When viewers observe a picture, they make up a story and interpret the elements of the picture using certain simple rules. While these rules have been discussed at length elsewhere (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Dumitrescu, 2010, 2009) we note here only the most important ones:

- First, how big an element is in the picture suggests how important it is in general. For example, if the candidate image takes only little space in an electoral material, less than the space taken by the party name and/or their slogan, then the electoral material signals that the person of the candidate is of secondary importance (as compared to their party affiliation and program). The relationship between display size and politician importance has been found in at least two political communication contexts: newspapers (Barrett & Barrington, 2005) and election posters (Dumitrescu, 2010).

- Second, the close-up of a person in a picture indicates social closeness (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The closer the picture is, the closer the person appears to the viewer. Since we keep strangers at (least at) arm's length, we feel a more personal connection with those pictured in a close-up, than with those who are pictured from more far away (provided of course, that the context of the picture is positive).

- Third, an element's importance is judged also by its placement in the image (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Elements placed more to the center and more to the top are given priority compared to those placed closer to the margins or lower.

Previous evidence suggests that the personal vote seeking strategy in France translates in specific visual communication choices that can be decoded with the rules described earlier. Dumitrescu (2010) analyzed election posters from French party candidates in the 2007 legislative elections, and found that mainstream party candidates consistently featured themselves larger on

their posters than niche party candidates, as well as more to the top and more to the center. Conversely, candidates of niche parties, whose best strategy was to express ideological purity, placed the visual emphasis on their party's program. Moreover, these visual choices were correlated with candidate poll success in the direction dictated by their party's status.

Marine Le Pen has claimed wanting to bring the FN in position to take the reins of government, but according to all evidence, she has made limited ideological changes to the program. As a result, the party is, by all accounts, still in the niche category, while, at the same time, being significantly more popular. Given the previous research on mainstream and niche parties' strategies, and on visual grammar, we are now able to develop our hypotheses with respect to our two research questions.

Hypotheses

RQ 1: Do FN candidates use different visual promotion strategies in 2007 and 2012?

The main expectation is that FN candidates in 2012 present themselves more as candidates of a mainstream party. That is, we expect them to try to attract more personal votes, using a more candidate-focused visual style. More precisely:

H1a: Candidates in 2012 picture themselves larger on their campaign materials than 2007 candidates.

H1b: Candidates in 2012 appear closer to voters than 2007 candidates.

H1c: Candidates in 2012 picture themselves more to the center on their campaign materials than 2007 candidates.

H1d: Candidates in 2012 picture themselves more to the top on their campaign materials than 2007 candidates.

RQ 2: Do men and women candidates use different visual promotion strategies in 2007 and in 2012?

We expect to observe significant changes in the comparative presentation of men and women candidates from the 2007 to the 2012 elections. Specifically, because of Jean Marie Le Pen's traditionalist views, and because of Marine Le Pen's professed openness to women voters, we expect FN women candidates in 2012 to visually promote themselves more than women candidates in 2007. To counteract the masculine FN image cultivated by Jean Marie Le Pen, we also expect women candidates in 2012 to visually promote themselves more than men running in the same election.

H2a: Compared to 2007, women candidates in 2012 picture themselves larger on their campaign materials.

H2b: Compared to 2007, women candidates in 2012 appear closer to voters.

H2c: Compared to 2007, women candidates in 2012 feature more to the center on their campaign materials.

H2d: Compared to 2007, women candidates in 2012 feature more to the top on their campaign materials.

H2e: Women candidates in 2012 feature larger on their campaign materials than men candidates.

H2f: Women candidates in 2012 appear closer to voters than men candidates.

H2g: Women candidates in 2012 feature more to the center on their campaign materials than men candidates.

H2h: Women candidates in 2012 feature more to the top on their campaign materials than men candidates.

Data

a. Candidate campaign materials

The French electoral law requires all candidates to produce a document reflecting their election pledges (called "*profession de foi*," hereafter referred to as PF). These documents are sent to a central office that has them distributed them to all registered voters at the expense of state. This arrangement ensures that voters get a minimum of information about all the candidates, and that all the candidates can reach all the voters in the district by means of these particular documents.

This paper analyzes the *covers of the PFs* of Front National candidates in the first rounds of the 2007 and 2012 legislative elections. This focus on the cover is justified by the fact that this aspect of the PF is the most likely to touch every voter, irrespective of their party preference, as no browsing is necessary.

In both years, FN candidates' PFs consisted in a two-page document (one double-sided sheet). The general format was similar across years: the top cover was taken by the candidates' picture, and it was the only part of the PF that candidates could personalize. The reverse side was reserved for the party's ideological positions, and was identical for all the candidates.

In addition to displaying the candidate's picture, the cover contained additional information that was identical for all the candidates in a year. There are some interesting

differences between the information included in 2007 and 2012.[2] In 2007, there was a slogan

"France and the French first" ("La France et les français d'abord!") followed by the candidate's

name, his or her occupation and/or family status, and then one or several paragraphs reflecting

the party's ideology and program. The bottom of the first page contained the party and leader

endorsement, in the form "With Le Pen, Front National", printed in the largest fonts on the page.

The Party logo, the tricolor flame was featured next to Front National. Thus, the cover format in

2007 was consistent with a niche party's visual strategy, as it contained both the party, and the

leader's name, and a significant part of the visual space dedicated to the party's ideological

program. In 2012, in addition to the candidate's picture, the PF cover contained: a slogan ("Pour

une Assemblee vraiment Nationale!," i.e., "For a truly National Assembly"), the candidate's

name, the party – "Rassemblement Bleu Marine, Front National" – and the party logo. Contrary

to a niche party's visual strategy, there was no mention of ideological positions, and there was

little space given to the party's leader, whose name was referred to indirectly through

Rassemblement Bleu Marine.[3]

The data was provided by the CEVIPOF library, an organization that collects campaign

documents from elections at all levels. Table 1 summarizes the sample of available PFs with

respect to the entire population of FN candidates in the two elections.

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[2] Examples of the covers in each year are pictured in Figure 1.

[3] There were further differences between the back sides of the PFs in the two years. In 2007, the reverse-side text had three headlines. One headline, at the top, listed the key problems faced by France and the French. A second headline, immediately below it, was about the main parties on the left and right and their inability to fix these problems. A third headline, positioned centrally on the vertical axis, was about the party's main proposed measures to fix these problems. In 2012, the reverse side contained a picture of Marine Le Pen on the top left of the page. Next to the picture, there was a message from her headlined by the title "To take care of you, I need you!" On the bottom half side of the page, headlined by the title "We will do it!" and by Marine Le Pen's personal signature, there was a list of 12 proposals. The bottom of the document called "for the support for candidates of Rassemblement Bleu Marine, Front National on June 10." Front National had the largest font on the page, followed by Rassemblement Bleu Marine. The FN party sign, the tricolor flame, was featured on the bottom right corner. In short, the backside contained significantly stronger personal appeals in 2012 than in 2007.

[Table 1 here]

The data availability is influenced by its collection mode by the CEVIPOF. In fact, the PFs arrived to the center from private citizens who decided to donate the documents sent to their home address. Thus, any gaps in the data are due to the lack of individual volunteers. These gaps were more pronounced in 2007 than in 2012. In 2007, only 22 legislative PFs were sent to the CEVIPOF; in 2012, there were 94. As can be seen, in both years, candidates whose PF was available at the CEVIPOF performed slightly poorer than those whose PF was not available.[4] The difference in mean electoral scores between those included and those not included is of about half a standard deviation of the total population of candidates. There is, however, no overall difference in terms of the gender distribution.

b. **Visual analysis software and measures**

The PF covers were analyzed using the open-source visual analysis software first used by Dumitrescu (2009, 2010).[5] The analysis focused on the visual presentation of the candidate, as illustrated in Figure 1 for both years and both men and women.

[Figure 1 here]

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[4] For both years the PFs come from several administrative departments, with most candidates in each year running in departments in Ile de France. In 2007, the sample covers 10 different departments in metropolitan France (out of 96). Nine candidates come from the Paris department (41% of the sample), and seventeen candidates (77% of the sample) ran their campaigns in the Ile-de-France region. In 2012, the sample covers 36 departments. The department with the most candidates in the sample is Paris (with 14 candidates, or about 15% of the sample). 48% of the sample of candidates (N=45) comes from the Ile-de-France region. This geographic distribution may explain why the electoral support for the candidates in the sample is below the national average. In 2012, FN candidates in Ile de France scored on average about 2 percent lower than the national average. However, there is no reason to suspect that this geographic distribution in the data base is determined by anything else than the simple distribution of volunteers who wanted (or knew) to send these materials to CEVIFOP, which is itself located in Paris.
[5] The software is available for free by request.

The software determines with pixel level accuracy the location and the size of various elements in a picture. The colored areas on each PF in Figure 1 represent the three elements analyzed with the software: the entire area taken by the candidate on the cover (in red), the area of their head (face and visible hair, in green) and the area of their face (in blue). Each of these elements is compared to the entire PF picture (delimited in Figure 1 by a pink line)

First and foremost, the software computes the areas of these elements in pixels squared. To generate comparable measurements across PFs, these areas were transformed so that they all represent percentages. For example, a value of 0.4 on the **"Entire Candidate Area"** indicates that the candidate takes 40% of the cover. We also compute two ratio variables: the ratio of the candidate's face to the visible body **("Face over Body Area")**, and the ratio of candidate's head to the body **("Head over Body Area")**. A value of 0.2 on the "Face over Body Area" variable indicates that the face takes 20% of the entire candidate image. These ratio variables indicate how close the picture is, with larger ratios indicating greater closeness.

In addition to the two ratios described above, the variable **"Close-Up"** also measures how close the picture is. It captures the distance between the lowest point of the candidate's chin and the bottom of their entire image. This distance is divided by the height of the cover to produce comparable measures, and then it is subtracted from 1. The larger the value, the closer the candidate appears. A value of 1 indicates that the candidate's chin is the lowest body part visible on the cover.

The central position of the candidate on the cover is computed based on the position of their face. More specifically, the variable captures the distance between the center of gravity of the area taken by their face and the horizontal center of the cover. This distance is divided by the

width of the PF cover to produce comparable measures, and then it is subtracted from 1. This variable runs theoretically from 0 (indicating that the face is situated precisely on the margin of the cover) to 1 (indicating that the face is precisely in the middle). Larger values on the **"Center Face Position"** variable indicate more closeness to the center.

The position of the candidate on the vertical axis of the cover is computed based on the distance in pixels between the bottom of the PF cover and the top coordinate of the candidate's face. The distance is divided by the height of the PF cover to obtain comparable data. The closer to 1 the **"Top Face Position"** variable is, the more to the top candidates are placed.

Results

RQ1. We begin by examining the differences in candidates' visual presentation from 2007 to 2012. Figure 2 presents the mean measurements of the various presentation features in the two samples (with 95% confidence intervals). For each visual feature, it also presents the t-statistic for the difference between the two years.[6] The immediate conclusion of Figure 2 is that, based on the observed samples, there has been a complete shift in presentation style, as all the t-statistics of the difference between the mean values are significant and support hypotheses H1a through H1d.[7]

[Figure 2 here]

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[6] The equality of sample variances assumption was tested for using the sdtest command in Stata 13. The results showed it to be violated for two variables: "Entire Candidate Area" and "Top Face Position." For these variables the t-tests account for unequal variances. To increase the confidence in these findings, we also ran a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney (WMW) test for each variable, to account for the potential non-normality of the data. All the tests pointed to a significant difference between the two year samples for all the variables and in the same direction as the t-tests. For space considerations, the results from the WMW tests are not reported, but are available by request.
[7] For all the figures, the tables with the complete means, standard deviations, N and degrees of freedom for the t-statistics are included in Appendix A.

Candidates who wish to attract a personal vote feature themselves larger on their promotion materials, closer to the voters, more to the center and more to the top of the picture. This is what FN candidates do on average in 2012 compared to 2007. For example, whereas in 2007 the average observed candidate took about 22% of the entire cover, in 2012, the average candidate takes 36%, thereby supporting H1a. Judging by the position of the chin with respect to the visible body (expressed in the close-up variable), the closeness of the picture has increased by about 42%, thereby supporting H1b. Two more indicators support H1b: the candidate's face in 2012 takes about 29% more of the entire image than in 2007, and the candidate's head takes on average 31% more of the image in 2012. Candidates also occupy a more central position on the cover, as determined the position of their face. In support of H1c, in 2012, the deviation from the center is about 10 times smaller than in 2007 (the mean shift from the center is of a mere 0.03 in 2012 and of 0.25 in 2007). Finally, candidates also place themselves closer to the top of the cover in 2012, by about 18%.

RQ2. We next look at how men and women candidates presented themselves in 2007 and 2012. We particularly expect that women candidates in 2012 visually promote their personal qualities more. We first consider the differences between the men and women candidates in 2007, then the same differences in 2012, and finally, we combine the two samples to simultaneously test for both gender and time variations.

[Figure 3 here]

Let us first look at Figure 3 which presents the comparison of the variables of interest by gender in 2007. As we can see from graphs and the t-statistics noted below each of them, we

observe relatively little difference in the self-presentation of women and men candidates on this occasion. Only two differences stand out, and they both indicate that men portray themselves closer to voters. For men, the face takes about 34% of the visible body; for women, the corresponding percentage is about 24%. Another indicator of closeness, the "Close-Up" variable measuring the position of the chin with respect to the bottom of the candidate picture, points in the same direction. The value for men is about 22% less than the value for women, indicating that men candidates use closer pictures. Thus, men were nonetheless, on average, more likely to visually encourage a personal vote in 2007.

[Figure 4 here]

The same variable comparisons in 2012 are presented in Figure 4. This time we observe significant differences in candidates' presentation by gender. The visual behavior patterns are somewhat reversed when compared to 2007. Women are more likely than men to invite a personal vote according to three indicators. First, there is the size of their picture on the cover, which is about 8% larger than that of male candidates. Second, their average "Close-Up" value is about 15% lower than for male candidates, making them, therefore, appear closer to the viewer. And third, the Head over Body Area is also about 24% larger than for male candidates. Two other indicators however, suggest that male candidates are more likely to focus the viewer's attention to themselves. The Face over Body Area is on average 10% larger for men; and men are on average more likely to picture themselves closer to the top than women (albeit by a very small margin). Thus, in 2012 both women and men invited a personal vote, albeit through the use of different visual strategies.

[Table 2 here]

To see to what extent the shift in image is robust when comparing both genders and both years at the same time, we look at the multivariate regressions in Table 2. At the bottom of each model we note which hypotheses were tested, and which were supported.

Let us first consider how FN women candidates in 2012 differ from FN women candidates in 2007 in their visual strategies. As expected from the Figures above, we find full support for hypotheses H2a through H2d. FN women candidates' self-presentation strategy has changed dramatically from one election to the next. Women in 2012 are more likely to use *all* the visual presentation features associated with a personal vote: they feature larger on the cover, they appear closer to the viewers, more to the center and more to the top of the cover. Men have also undergone a similar transformation; but because they were more likely to play on their personal image in 2007 (as we have already seen in Figure 3), their visual evolution has been less dramatic. The interaction terms in Table 2 express the magnitude of the shift in men vs. women self-presentation strategy from 2007 to 2012. These interactions are significant and in the expected direction in four of six models, indicating that on these four indicators women have made a bigger step towards visual self-advancement.

We also find some support for the expected differences in men vs. women self-presentation styles in 2012. Consistent with hypotheses H2e and H2f, women feature larger images of themselves and appear closer to viewers in 2012 than their male colleagues. However, as already glimpsed from the simple variable comparisons in Figure 4, they do not outperform male politicians on all self-presentation features. They are as likely to place themselves in the middle of the cover as male candidates. They are also slightly lower on the cover. Thus, the evidence supports H2e and H2f, but not H2g and H2h.

The analysis to this point has indicated mostly support for our hypotheses, consistent with a shift in FN candidates' visual self-presentation strategies in 2012 toward a more personal, close candidate image, a shift more pronounced for women candidates. Our observations are nonetheless based on limited samples, which is why the next section performs several sensitivity analyses designed to establish the confidence we can have in these patters with respect to the entire candidate population.

Sensitivity analyses

Gallop and Weschle (2014) have argued that potential case selection biases in small samples can generate inference problems. To solve them, they have proposed an approach based on simulations of alternative samples with different characteristics. For example, starting from the original sample, one can simulate alternative samples with different first moments of the distribution (e.g. larger/smaller mean or standard deviation). Since the characteristics of the distribution influence the results, then, by observing how the original model performs on such simulated samples, one can better estimate the robustness of the findings to sample specifications.

In this section of the paper we consider the possibility that our data is biased in a direction that favors our hypotheses. For each of our finding, we simulate several possible alternative distributions that go against these hypotheses, and note how the results change with the sample. Below, we present this analysis by research question.

Sensitivity analysis for RQ1. We observed in our samples that candidates use more visual self-promotion strategies in 2012 than in 2007. But what if our observations

underestimated the true amount of visual self-promotion in 2007? Or conversely, what if we overestimated the true amount of self-promotion in 2012?

To check how robust the findings are to these potential biases, we simulate four alternative samples in 2007 whose distributions means are shifted respectively by 0.25, 0.5, 1 and 2 standard deviations from the original mean *in the direction of more self-promotion*. These simulated distributions assume, therefore, that the 2007 candidates whom we observed as *moderately to very high* on self-promotion are in fact *average in the true candidate population for those elections*. We also simulate another four samples in 2012 whose means are shifted by 0.25, 0.5, 1 and 2 standard deviations toward *less self-promotion.* These simulated distributions assume, therefore, that the 2012 candidates who in our observed distribution are *moderately to very low* on self-promotion are the *average in the true population of 2012 FN candidates*.

[Table 3 here]

Table 3 presents the analysis results comparing 2007 and 2012 candidates if we assume that our observations our biased. On the left side of the table we see how the results change if we assume that the true population of 2007 FN candidates relies on more self-promotion than the amount we observe. On the right hand side of the table we see how the findings change if the true population of candidates in 2012 promotes itself less. The entries are the absolute values of t-statistics for the group differences, and the color of cells indicate if the finding stays the same (green), changes to no differences (no color) or reverses (red).

The main conclusion of Table 3 is that the differences in self-promotion between 2007 FN candidates and their colleagues in 2012 are robust to many potential selection biases. Of the 48 tests, 36 yield the same results. Only if we assume biases of two standard deviations going

against the original finding do the results become weaker (in 7 cases) or change direction (in 5 cases). Thus, the sensitivity checks reinforce the confidence in the observed pattern toward visual self-promotion among FN candidates in 2012 compared to 2007.

Sensitivity analysis for RQ2. We found before that women FN candidates underwent a significant transformation in terms of self-promotion from 2007 to 2012. The differences were significant both when we just considered the women candidate population in the two elections, and when we compared women to men in each year.

But what if our samples underestimate or overestimate the amount of visual promotion in the population of men and women candidates? In this section we consider how the results change if the samples are biased against the original findings.

For each of the measures we observed differences between men and women candidates in 2007 and in 2012, we construct eight alternative samples. This takes the number of simulated distributions to 56. As in the sensitivity analyses above, these simulated distributions have their means shifted with respect to the original distribution to go against the original finding.

[Table 4a here]

Table 4a presents the results for the difference between men and women candidates in 2007 in the simulated data. In the observed data, men tend to visually place themselves closer to the viewer. This finding is moderately robust to sample specifications: the significance and sign of the difference is the same in 7 tests, the difference disappears in another 7 tests and the finding is reversed in 2 cases (if the data significantly overestimates males' presentation features).

[Table 4b here]

Table 4b presents the results for the difference between men and women candidates in 2012 using the simulated samples. In the observed data, women are more likely than men to visually promote themselves according to three indicators. In the simulated data, the sign and significance of the group difference stays the same in 7 alternative specifications; but the difference disappears in 9 other specifications, and the findings are reversed if the sample significantly overestimates women candidates' presentation features or significantly underestimates those of male candidates (in 8 cases). The least robust finding among the three indicators is the one for "Close-Up;" the other two indicators of Entire Candidate Area and Head over Body Area are quite robust to different sample specifications. In the observed data, men were more likely to promote themselves according to two other indicators, Face over Body Area and Top Face Position. In the simulated data, the gender differences disappear in 7 cases, get reversed in another 7 and only maintain the sign and significance in 2 cases.

[Table 4c here]

Table 4c presents the results from the difference between women candidates in 2007 and 2012, using simulated samples that account for possible overestimation of self-presentation features in 2012 or underestimation of self-presentation features in 2007. Of the 48 different tests accounting for possible biases, 43 reveal the same findings: women candidates in 2012 are significantly more likely to visually promote themselves to invite a personal vote.

The results from the sensitivity analyses reinforce the confidence in the shift in visual presentation features from 2007 to 2012, particularly for women candidates.

Discussion

Marine Le Pen's success at the helm of the Front National has profoundly shaken the French electoral scene. The party and its leader have attracted previously unconceivable high electoral support since 2011. Since numerous analyses of the new FN leader's interventions found mainly superficial changes from her father's discourse, the factors influencing this success are still up for debate. While this paper does not directly explain the party's new electoral fortunes, it does draw attention to a previously all but ignored aspect of the party's communication: the visual presentation of its candidates. The results from the analyses leave little doubt as to the significant visual transformation that FN legislative candidates' images underwent since Marine Le Pen took direct command of the party. Specifically, 2012 FN candidates portray themselves significantly more like mainstream party candidates. They make visual choices that create the illusion of personal closeness to voters, and of personal importance, as they place themselves larger, more central and more to the top of their electoral materials. Thus, they use the visual tools to demand not just a party vote, but a personal vote as well. Women candidates have, in particular, undergone a significant transformation from 2007. In some respects they visually promote themselves more than men – for example, when it comes to the size of their picture. Thus, this paper finds substantial changes in the FN party's visual strategy, reflecting the promises (not carried out in the policy domain) made by Marine Le Pen to open up the party more to women, a previously shunned category of voters, and to transform the party into a worthy contender for the power. Importantly, the sensitivity checks suggest that many of these patterns are robust, despite our access to small samples in each year.

This project raises new questions for investigation. First, further study should be devoted to the relation between the visual image that candidates want to convey and their actual role in the party organization. The party candidates' self-centered visual appeal clashes with the strong

hold that Marine Le Pen (like her father before her) is known to have on all the organizational aspects of the party. Second, the within-year and between-years variation in candidates' presentation styles raises questions as to the role played by visuals in FN candidates' success at the polls. Unfortunately, the contextual data needed for investigating this question (for example, candidate-specific data beyond gender; constituency-specific variables; local-campaign specific variables) is very hard to find for the previous years. Thus, it is hoped that more light will be set on this relationship in the upcoming legislative elections. A third question concerns the extent of the changes in the party's visual strategy. This article finds strong evidence of promotion strategies consistent with those of a mainstream party in documents that by definition, reach virtually every voter in France. However, voters' exposure to the candidates' PFs is brief and occurs only before the election. By this time, the average citizen may have arguably been exposed to substantially more visual information about the FN leader and her party through TV reports of her interventions. Given the rich informative content of TV visuals (e.g., Grabe & Bucy, 2009; Dumitrescu, 2016), significantly more research should be devoted to analyzing TV footage of the Marine Le Pen and the party's candidates, and in investigating the impact of their visual presentation on voters' opinions. The results in this paper open up, therefore, a rich research agenda that can help lead to a better understanding of the evolution of France's main far-right party.

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Figure 1. Example of analyzed PF covers

Note. The red selection indicates the area taken by the candidate's entire image on the cover, the green selection indicates the area taken by their head, and the blue selection indicates the area taken by their face. The entire area of the PF cover is marked with a pink border.
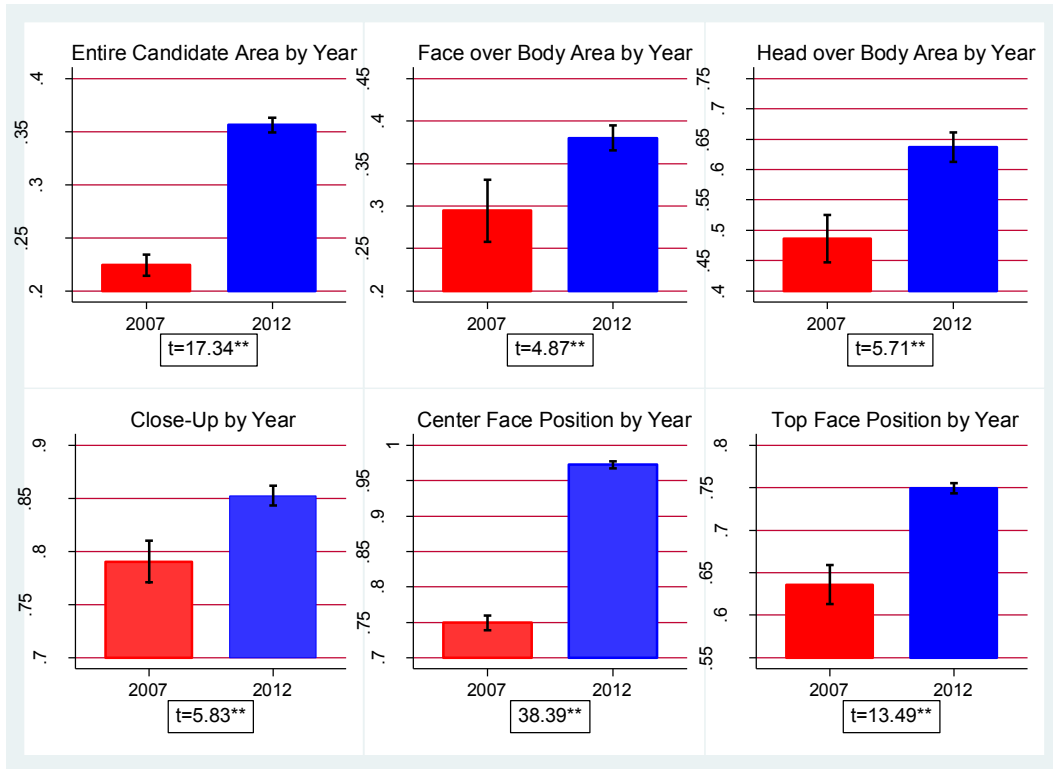
Figure 2. Candidate visual presentation differences from 2007 to 2012

Note. All the variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus (see text for additional variable description).
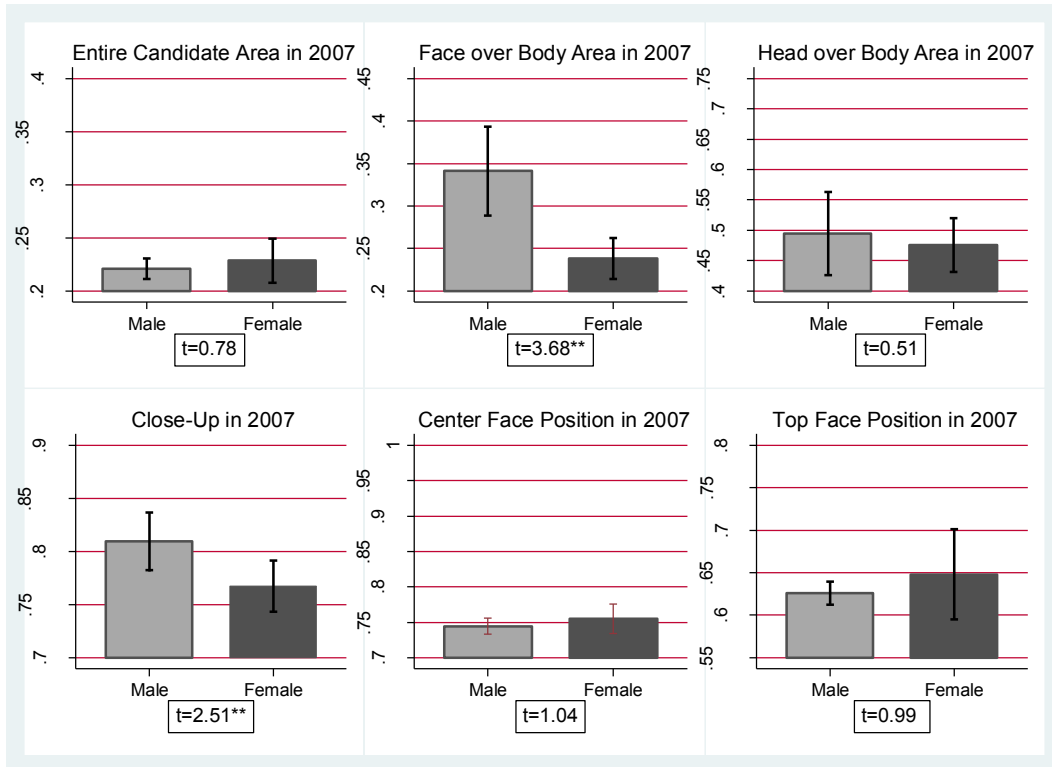
Figure 3. Visual presentation differences between men and women candidates in 2007

Note. All the variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus (see text for additional variable description).
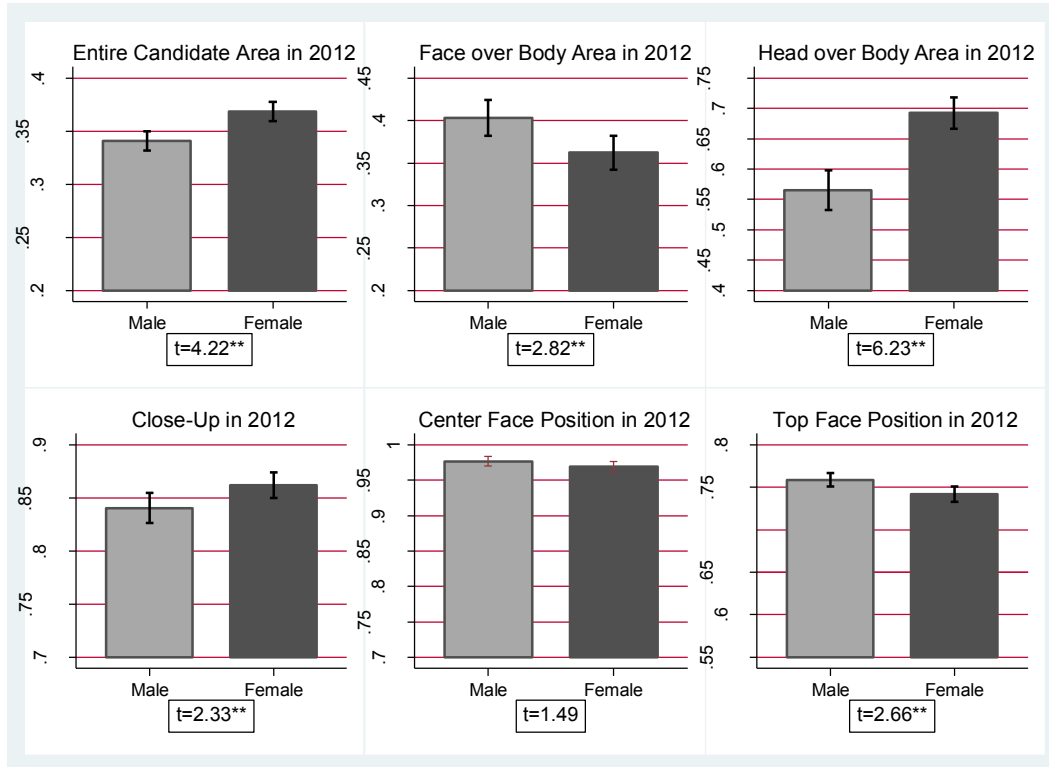
Figure 4. Visual presentation differences between men and women candidates in 2012

Note. All the variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus (see text for additional variable description).

Table 1. The sample of professions de foi						
	Both years		2007		2012	
	Included (N=116)	Not included (N=1007)	Included (N=22)	Not included (N=535)	Included (N=97)	Not included (N=472)
First round election score (%)	9.20	8.85	3.30[a]	4.48[a]	10.58[a]	13.81[a]
Std. dev.	4.87	6.40	1.02	2.06	4.36	6.02
Female (%)	54.31	48.26	45.45	48.97	56.38	47.46
Superscripts indicate significant differences in variable means by year. [a] Indicates a significant difference at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed). [b] indicates a significant difference at $p<0.10$ (two-tailed)						

Table 2. Comparison of men and women by year in the same model						
	Entire Candidate Area	**Close-Up**	**Face over Body Area**	**Head over Body Area**	**Center Face Position**	**Top Face Position**
	Coef. (RSE)	Coef. (RSE)	Coef. (RSE)	Coef. (RSE)	Coef. (RSE)	Coef. (RSE)
Female	0.01	-0.04**	-0.10**	-0.02	0.01	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Election year 2012	0.12**	0.03**	0.06**	0.07**	0.23**	0.13**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Female * Election year 2012	0.02*	0.06**	0.06**	0.15**	-0.02	-0.04
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Constant	0.22**	0.81**	0.34**	0.50**	0.74**	0.63**
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)
R squared	0.77	0.30	0.30	0.43	0.93	0.64
F(3, 112)	236.48	22.65	46.41	36.77	664.97	124.11
P>F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.0000
N	116	116	116	116	116	116
Hypotheses supported by model	**H2a H2e**	**H2b H2f**	**H2b**	**H2b H2f**	**H2c**	**H2d**

Notes.

Linear regression results with robust standard errors computed in Stata 13.

All the dependent variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus (see text for additional variable description).

**Indicates significance at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed), *$p < 0.10$ (two-tailed).

Table 3. Year-based comparison of self-promotion differences in simulated data								
	Observed data UNDERESTIMATES personal presentation features in 2007				Observed data OVERESTIMATES personal presentation features in 2012			
	Simulated shifts in true mean				Simulated shifts in true mean			
	2 SD	1 SD	0.5 SD	0.25 SD	0.25 SD	0.5 SD	1 SD	2 SD
Entire Candidate Area	14.66**	18.44**	20.34**	21.29**	20.80**	19.38**	16.52**	10.80**
Close-Up	2.37**	1.73*	3.78**	4.80**	4.77**	3.70**	1.58	2.67**
Face over Body Area	4.51**	0.18	2.53**	3.70**	3.85**	2.82**	0.76	3.34**
Head over Body Area	0.98	2.36**	4.04**	4.87**	4.61**	3.51**	1.31	3.08**
Center Face Position	30.23**	34.31**	36.35**	37.37**	37.33**	36.26**	34.13**	29.88**
Top Face Position	0.79	5.31**	7.56**	8.70**	9.16**	8.50**	7.18**	4.54**

Notes.

The entries represent absolute t-statistic values for the difference between groups (df=114). The t-tests for the "Entire Candidate Area" and "Top Face Position" account for the inequality of variances between the samples.

The cell color indicates the direction of the finding in the simulated data: green if it matches the original observed one, red if it goes against it, and no color for no group difference.

**Indicates significance at p<0.05 (two-tailed), *p<0.10 (two-tailed)

Table 4a. Gender-based comparison of self-promotion differences in 2007 in simulated data.								
	Observed data UNDERESTIMATES women candidates' personal presentation features				**Observed data OVERESTIMATES men candidates' personal presentation features**			
	Simulated shifts in true mean				Simulated shifts in true mean			
	2 SD	1 SD	0.5 SD	0.25 SD	0.25 SD	0.5 SD	1 SD	2 SD
Close-Up	1.51	0.50	1.51	2.01*	1.87*	1.23	0.05	2.62**
Face over Body Area	1.37	2.65**	3.29**	3.62**	3.15**	2.35**	0.77	2.39 **

Notes.

The entries represent absolute t-statistic values for the difference between groups (df=20). The t-tests for the "Face over Body Area" take into account the inequality of variances between the samples.

The cell color indicates the direction of the finding in the simulated data: green if it matches the original observed one, red if it goes against it, and no color for no group difference.

**Indicates significance at p<0.05 (two-tailed), *p<0.10 (two-tailed)

RUNNING HEAD:
UP, CLOSE AND PERSONAL: THE NEW FN VISUAL STRATEGY

Table 4b. Gender-based comparison of self-promotion differences in 2012 in simulated data.

	Observed data UNDERESTIMATES men candidates' personal presentation features				Observed data OVERESTIMATES women candidates' personal presentation features			
	Simulated shifts in true mean				Simulated shifts in true mean			
	2 SD	1 SD	0.5 SD	0.25 SD	0.25 SD	0.5 SD	1 SD	2 SD
Entire Candidate Area	4.47**	0.13	2.05**	3.14**	2.94**	1.65	0.91	6.04**
Close-Up	7.45**	2.56**	0.12	1.11	1.14	0.04	2.42**	7.16**
Head over Body Area	3.89**	1.17	3.70**	4.97**	5.08**	3.93**	1.63	2.97**
	Observed data UNDERESTIMATES women candidates' personal presentation features				Observed data OVERESTIMATES men candidates' personal presentation features			
	Simulated shifts in true mean				Simulated shifts in true mean			
	2 SD	1 SD	0.5 SD	0.25 SD	0.25 SD	0.5 SD	1 SD	2 SD
Face over Body Area	7.14**	2.16**	0.33	1.57	1.67*	0.53	1.76*	6.33**
Top Face Position	8.21**	2.73**	0.01	1.38	1.70*	0.64	1.47	5.678**

Note: The entries represent absolute t-statistic values for the difference between groups (df=92). The cell color indicates the direction of the finding in the simulated data: green if it matches the original observed one, red if it goes against it, and no color for no group difference. The t-tests for the "Top Face Position" take into account the inequality of variances between the samples. **Indicates significance at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed), *$p<0.10$ (two-tailed)

Table 4c. Year-based comparison of self-promotion differences among women only in simulated data.								
	Observed data UNDERESTIMATES women candidates' personal presentation features in 2007				Observed data OVERESTIMATES women candidates' personal presentation features in 2012			
	Simulated shifts in true mean				Simulated shifts in true mean			
	2 SD	1 SD	0.5 SD	0.25 SD	0.25 SD	0.5 SD	1 SD	2 SD
Entire Candidate Area	7.17**	9.77**	11.07**	11.72**	11.63**	10.90**	9.42**	6.47**
Close-Up	1.85*	4.16**	5.31**	5.89**	5.72**	4.97**	3.48**	0.48
Face over Body Area	3.91**	6.22**	7.38**	7.95**	7.29**	6.05**	3.56**	1.40
Head over Body Area	3.00**	5.00**	6.00**	6.51**	6.25**	5.49**	3.98**	0.95
Center Face Position	16.66**	19.75**	21.30**	22.07**	22.13**	21.41**	19.98**	17.12**
Top Face Position	2.26**	0.84	2.40**	3.17**	3.61**	3.27**	2.58**	1.22
Note: The entries represent absolute t-statistic values for the difference between groups (df=61). The cell color indicates the direction of the finding in the simulated data: green if it matches the original observed one, red if it goes against it, and no color for no group difference. **Indicates significance at p<0.05 (two-tailed), *p<0.10 (two-tailed)								

Appendix

Note: the Tables are numbered to reflect the number of the Figure in the text that they complement (there is no Table A1)

Table A2. Candidate visual presentation differences from 2007 to 2012 (Complement to Figure 2)						
	2007 candidates (N=22)		2012 candidates (N=94)		T-test for the 2007-2012 Difference (df=114)	Hypothesis	Hypothesis supported? Yes/No
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	|t|		
Entire Candidate Area	0.22	0.02	0.36	0.03	22.23**	H1a	Yes
Close-Up	0.21	0.04	0.15	0.05	5.83**	H1b	Yes
Face over Body Area	0.29	0.08	0.38	0.07	4.87**	H1b	Yes
Head over Body Area	0.49	0.09	0.64	0.12	5.71**	H1b	Yes
Center Face Position	0.75	0.02	0.97	0.02	38.39**	H1c	Yes
Top Face Position	0.64	0.05	0.75	0.03	9.82**	H1d	Yes
Notes. **Indicates significance at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed). The variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus. The equality of sample variances was checked for each variable using the sdtest command in Stata 13. Sample variances were found to be different by year for the "Entire Candidate Area" and "Top Face Position" variables, and the t-tests for these variables take into account the inequality of variances between the two samples.							

Table A3. Visual presentation differences between men and women candidates in 2007 (Complement to Figure 3)

	Men candidates (N=12)		Women candidates (N=10)		T-test for the between groups difference (df=20)	Group using more self-promotion features
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	|t|	
Entire Candidate Area	0.22	0.02	0.23	0.03	0.73	No difference
Close-Up	0.81	0.04	0.77	0.03	2.51**	Men
Face over Body Area	0.34	0.08	0.24	0.03	3.94**	Men
Head over Body Area	0.50	0.11	0.48	0.06	0.51	No difference
Center Face Position	0.74	0.02	0.75	0.03	1.04	No difference
Top Face Position	0.63	0.02	0.65	0.07	0.91	No difference

Notes.
**Indicates significance at p<0.05 (two-tailed). * Indicates significance at p<0.10 (two-tailed).
The variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus.
The equality of sample variances was checked for each variable using the sdtest command in Stata 13. Sample variances were found to be different by candidate gender for the "Entire Candidate Area," "Face over Body Area" and "Top Face Position" variables, and the t-tests for these variables take into account the inequality of variances between the two samples.

Table A4. Visual presentation differences between men and women candidates in 2012 (Complement to Figure 4)

	Men candidates (N=41)		Women candidates (N=53)		T-test for the between groups difference (df=92)	Group using more self-promotion features
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.		
Entire Candidate Area	0.34	0.03	0.37	0.03	4.22**	Women
Close-Up	0.84	0.05	0.86	0.04	2.33**	Women
Face over Body Area	0.40	0.07	0.36	0.07	2.82**	Men
Head over Body Area	0.57	0.10	0.69	0.09	6.23**	Women
Center Face Position	0.98	0.02	0.97	0.03	1.49	No difference
Top Face Position	0.76	0.03	0.74	0.03	2.75**	Men

Notes.
**Indicates significance at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed).
The variables are coded so that larger values indicate a stronger candidate visual focus.
The equality of sample variances was checked for each variable using the sdtest command in Stata 13.
Sample variances were found to be different by candidate gender for the "Top Face Position" variable, and the t-test for it takes into account the inequality of variances between the two samples.