CHARACTER COUNTS: TRAITS IN TELEVISIONED POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENTS

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.............................................................................................................6

ABSTRACT.......................................................................................................................7

INTRODUCTION...............................................................................................................8

VOTER EVALUATIONS’ OF POLITICIANS’ TRAITS......................................................11
Importance......................................................................................................................11
Trait Ownership............................................................................................................14
Political Traits.............................................................................................................15

TELEVISED POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS..........................................................18
Priming.........................................................................................................................19
Content.........................................................................................................................21

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.........................................................28

METHOD.......................................................................................................................31
Sample..........................................................................................................................31
Coding Categories.......................................................................................................32
Coding Reliability........................................................................................................37

RESULTS......................................................................................................................38
Hypothesis 1................................................................................................................38
Hypothesis 2................................................................................................................40
Hypothesis 3................................................................................................................41
Research Question 1....................................................................................................43
Research Question 2....................................................................................................48
TABLE OF CONTENTS – *Continued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Implications</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: CODEBOOK</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Advertisement Type by Party Sponsor..............................................32
Table 2: Advertisements by Election...............................................................33
Table 3: Positive Trait Information in Advocate Ads by Party Sponsor...............38
Table 4: Positive Trait Information in Contrast Ads by Party Sponsor...............39
Table 5: Negative Trait Information in Attack Ads by Party Sponsor...............40
Table 6: Negative Trait Information in Contrast Ads by Party Sponsor...............41
Table 7: Positive Trait Information in Ads by Election Type..........................42
Table 8: Negative Trait Information in Ads by Election Type..........................42
Table 9: Speaker by Positive Trait Information............................................44
Table 10: Speaker by Negative Trait Information..........................................44
Table 11: Family Appearance, Candidate Dress, and Types of Sound by Positive Trait Information.................................................................46
Table 12: Family Appearance, Candidate Dress, and Types of Sound by Negative Trait Information.................................................................46
Table 13: Style Elements by Positive Trait Information..................................47
Table 14: Style Elements by Negative Trait Information..................................48
Table 15: Positive Trait Information by Issue...............................................50
Table 16: Negative Trait Information by Issue..............................................50
ABSTRACT

This study examines character traits in United States presidential campaign advertisements. It was predicted that Republican and Democratic trait content would be similar in appeal advertisements but would differ in attack and contrast advertisements. Additionally, it was expected that the traits most frequently conveyed in primary election advertisements would differ from those most frequently employed in general election advertisements. The conveyance of traits in conjunction with issues was examined. The hypotheses and research questions were tested on televised campaign ads from the 2008 and 2012 primary and general elections. Overall, both parties appeal to and attack specific character traits with similar frequencies. The traits used in primary election advertisements were much more positive than the traits used in general election advertisements. Campaigns combine issue content with specific traits in their ads. The findings of this study answer questions about how candidates build and shape their images through televised political advertisements.

Keywords: traits, political advertisements, campaigns, presidential elections, priming
INTRODUCTION

Political campaign advertisements are created for the purpose of attracting and mobilizing one’s base, while steering voters away from other candidates. Such advertisements focus on image and issues. Image advertisements have the power to influence votes (Franz & Ridout, 2007; Houser, Morton, & Stratmann, 2011; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011; Shaw, 1999) and have had a place in presidential elections since 1840 (Jamieson, 1996). As Glass (1985) points out, elections are not only a contest between major political parties and policies, they “are also a selection between people” (p. 518).

Campaign messages alter the standards by which people evaluate candidates through priming, the cognitive mechanism that leads individuals to alter the standards they use in making evaluations (Domke, Shah, & Wackman, 1998; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010). Advertisements can both lead people to believe a candidate possesses a certain character trait and to believe a certain trait is important in a president (Hardy, 2010; Jamieson, 1996). Evaluations of specific traits have been found to also influence global evaluations of candidates (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Funk, 1996).

Character traits are vital to presidential candidates, as public perception of candidate traits can have a direct effect on vote choice (Prysby, 2008). Such an effect of candidate personality on vote choice remains significant even when controlling for issue stance (Bishin, Stevens, & Wilson, 2006; Pierce, 1993). Thus, campaigns strategically build an image of their candidates. Often, candidates appeal to traits “owned” by their given parties and issue stances, though infringing upon one’s opponent’s traits might be advantageous (Hayes, 2005). Not only must a candidate develop a platform and adopt
issues, s/he must appeal to one’s own positive personality traits and attack the opponent’s. Though research has established the important of candidate image, less is known about the specific character traits that comprise such an image and the ways in which such traits are conveyed (Hardy, 2010).

Image or character content is often conveyed in televised political campaign advertisements. The advent of the radio transformed political campaigns by 1928, as politicians no longer needed to traverse the country in order to speak to potential voters (Jamieson, 1996). While newsreels did enable audiences to view presidential hopefuls, the invention and diffusion of television once more changed the nature of political communication. Televised campaign advertisements continue to pervade presidential elections, as the 2012 general election saw almost $900 million worth of advertisements for Barack Obama and Mitt Romney (Andrews, Keating, & Yourish, 2012). Ultimately, televised political advertisements possess the power to influence votes (Franz & Ridout, 2007; Houser, Morton, & Stratmann, 2011; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011; Shaw, 1999).

Considering the importance of campaign advertisements and the lack of research on their use of traits, this content analysis measured advertisements’ use of character traits. It was hypothesized that the traits used in appeals differed from the traits used in attacks, and that the traits used to identify the Republican candidate differed from the traits used to identify the Democratic candidate. It was also expected that the traits conveyed most frequently in primary election advertisements differed from those most frequently conveyed in general election advertisements. Measuring the combinations of verbal, nonverbal, and production techniques used to convey each trait, as well as the
issues coupled with each trait, added to the literature on how candidates build and shape their images through televised political advertisements.
VOTER EVALUATIONS OF POLITICIANS’ TRAITS

Importance

Image advertising was first employed in a broad and efficient manner in William Henry Harrison’s 1840 campaign and developed into an essential component of campaigns by 1860 (Jamieson, 1996). Such advertisements allow candidates to make appeals based on their own character traits and attack other candidates’ traits. Character traits are of central importance in voters’ overall evaluations of candidates. Hardy (2010) explains, “the value of traits lies in their predictive value for a candidate’s future behavior” (p. 86). By giving voters clues as to who the candidate is and how s/he will behave in while in office, political advertisements containing character trait content can influence voters.

Voter ratings of candidate traits have a direct effect on vote choice (Prysby, 2008). Certain traits have a greater influence on voters’ perceptions than others, with research supporting leadership, caring or compassion, and competence as the most influential candidate traits (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Markus, 1982; Prysby, 2008). Research on Senate races has found that individual trait perceptions influence overall candidate evaluations of both incumbents and challengers (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). In addition to the issues of a campaign, the candidate’s image is one of the key aspects that can be built and sold.

Issues vs. Image

Several studies have found support for the influence of candidate traits on vote choice, regardless of issue evaluations (Bishin, Stevens, & Wilson, 2006; Pierce, 1993).
For instance, an analysis of data from the 1984 American National Election Study yielded evidence that the influence of certain issues on candidate preference drops once perceptions of leadership, competence, integrity, and empathy are taken into account (Pierce, 1993). These findings bolster voters’ self-reports, in which personal attributes of candidates have been found to be more important than issue stance regarding vote choice (Williams, Weber, Haaland, Mueller, & Craig, 1976).

More specifically, when controlling for partisanship and issue stance on Social Security, tax cuts, and gun control legislation, evaluations of George W. Bush’s and Al Gore’s honesty and fairness had a significant effect on vote choice (Bishin, Stevens, and Wilson, 2006). Further analysis yielded evidence of a profound influence of character on vote choice, as believing Bush or Gore to be untruthful or unfair dropped the likelihood of the average voter casting a ballot in favor of that candidate by 12 to 21 percentage points (Bishin, Stevens, Wilson, 2006). The combined effects of finding Bush or Gore to be untruthful and unfair are even greater, with the likelihood of voting for the candidate decreasing by 37 or 30 percentage points, respectively (Bishin, Stevens, Wilson, 2006).

On the other hand, there were only modest differences in overall ratings of Bush and Gore, specifically, to what degree each candidate was evaluated as moral, knowledgeable, inspiring, providing strong leadership, and really caring about people like you (Bartels, 2002). Incorporating additional data, Bartels (2002) found that Bush was seen as more honest and Gore as more intelligent. Despite comparable character evaluations of Bush and Gore, slight differences can be decisive in an incredibly close election (Bartels, 2002).
Image might matter even more during the primaries than during the general election, as primary voters must choose between candidates with similar issue positions (Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino, & Rohde, 1992). Gopoian (1982) found that issue preferences were not very predictive of the primaries in 1976 and “suggested that the personal characteristics of the candidates played a critical role in determining the candidate preferences of voters” (p. 544). During primaries, each candidate competes against candidates with similar political perspectives (Abramson et al., 1992). If small issue differences are not made clear or do not seem significant to voters, they might assign more weight to candidate image perceptions. Campaigns might therefore choose to emphasize or attack certain candidate traits more heavily during primary elections than general elections, as they are fighting a different battle in each election.

**Moderators**

Previous research has explored individual differences in both the utilization of candidate traits and which traits are prioritized over others. Party identification can influence which traits are employed in voting decisions. For example, an analysis of the 2004 presidential election found that ratings on competence and empathy factored most strongly into Democrats’ vote choices, while leadership and morality were more related to Republicans’ vote decisions (Prysby, 2008). Party identification can also influence the degree to which a given trait appeal or attack is effective. In November of the 1992 presidential election, Republicans were approximately 45% more likely to report Bill Clinton had lied on his draft status (Doherty & Gimpel, 1997). Which traits voters find
important and which trait advertisements are effective can be influenced by the partisanship of the viewers.

Additionally, education and political sophistication might alter the effects of candidate trait employment. More educated Americans were more likely to reference character attributes in explaining what makes them want or not want to vote for a certain candidate, a pattern that holds true for each presidential election from 1952 to 1984 (Glass, 1985). Alternatively, political sophistication does not significantly alter the process by which voters use candidate traits in their evaluations of candidates, though more politically sophisticated individuals are slightly more likely to use competence and less politically sophisticated individuals are slightly more likely to use integrity (Pierce, 1993). In another study, political experts were found to prefer candidate competence over warmth, while people with low political knowledge did not rate one of the two traits as more important than the other (Funk, 1997). Although there are individual differences in candidate image evaluation, the effects seem to be marginal compared to the priming power of advertisements in appealing to and attacking certain traits.

**Trait Ownership**

Hayes (2005) extended research on issue ownership and candidate traits to develop a theory of trait ownership, which explains that a given party’s issue ownership extends to the public’s association of certain traits with that party’s candidates. Issue ownership refers to the idea that the public considers each candidate to be more able to deal with particular issues, which can stem from partisanship and campaign messages (Petrocik, 1996). For example, the public usually perceives Democrats to be better than
Republicans at handling unemployment, and usually perceives Republicans to be better than Democrats at confronting national defense issues (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994). Issue ownership could extend to trait ownership, with Democrats seen as more empathetic of the middle class (as they are concerned with employment) and Republicans seen as stronger leaders (as they are concerned with the national defense). Indeed, Hayes’ (2005) work provides evidence for “strong leader” and “moral” as Republican-owned traits and “compassionate” and “empathetic” as Democrat-owned traits. When provided with both party stereotypes and candidates’ messages on policy, voters depend on the party stereotype to evaluate the candidate (Rahn, 1993).

Trait ownership might also derive from the content of a campaign, rather than a party’s traditionally owned issues. For instance, a candidate might attempt to engage in “trait trespassing,” appealing to traits anticipated to become the opponent’s (Hayes, 2005). Not only might the trait-trespassing candidate garner media attention as journalists latch onto the novel trait, s/he could effectively mute his or her opponent’s ability to appeal to that trait or spur a rebuttal acknowledging the trait trespassing. An examination of the 2006 senatorial and congressional elections found that trait trespassing was more advantageous than trait ownership, as “Republicans do best when they overcome their expected disadvantage on compassion and caring, whereas Democrats benefit when they erode the GOP advantage on leadership” (Hayes, 2011, p. 158).

**Political Traits**

Not surprisingly, many of the traits commonly used in campaign messages are found to be the most important in evaluating candidates. These include leadership, caring
or compassion, and competence (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Markus, 1982; Prysby, 2008). Nonetheless, the literature lacks standardization in which traits are measured with regard to candidate evaluations.

Commonly known as the Big 5, researchers in social psychology tend to measure personality based on extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness (Goldberg, 1990). People also use these five factors in evaluating themselves and celebrities, but were found to only employ two or three factors in evaluating politicians, such as “energy/innovation” and “honesty/trustworthiness” (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1997). This finding is similar to Markus’ (1982) factor analysis of trait ratings from the 1980 election, as he found one factor of competence (candidates who are knowledgeable, inspiring, and strong leaders) and one factor of integrity (candidates who are moral, not dishonest, and not power hungry). Survey respondents in another study reported honesty and leadership as the most important attributes weighing in on their votes (Williams et al., 1976). Energy/innovation might be considered akin to leadership or competence for the job, while honesty/trustworthiness might be considered to represent integrity.

Even so, there is evidence that additional traits carry weight in candidate evaluations. Fridkin and Kenney (2011) included intelligence, leadership, honesty, caring, and experience in their analysis of Senate candidate evaluations in 2006. By differentiating between incumbents and challengers, they found leadership, followed by caring, to have the greatest influence on incumbent evaluations, and caring, followed by leadership, to have the greatest influence on challenger evaluations (Fridkin & Kenney,
Hardy’s (2010) analysis of the 2008 presidential election found perceptions of the candidates’ leadership and inspiration to influence intended vote. Erraticism, which had yet to be measured as a candidate trait, was also found to influence candidate favorability and vote preference (Hardy, 2010). The use of erratic in labeling McCain in the 2008 general election might have functioned as the trait incompetence does, as beliefs of McCain’s erraticism were related to believing he was too old to be president and that he was worse-equipped to handle the economy than Obama (Hardy, 2010).

A comparison of George H. W. Bush’s economic handling and Bill Clinton’s honesty (with regard to his draft status), yielded additional evidence for the importance of candidate traits on character evaluations. Negative perceptions of Clinton’s character worked against Clinton more than negative perceptions of Bush’s economic performance worked for him in the 1992 presidential election (Doherty & Gimpel, 1997). This supports findings of the importance of honesty (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1997; Markus, 1982).

Candidate traits play an important role in presidential elections. Not only do they shape candidate evaluations, individual trait perceptions can have a direct effect on vote choice (Prysby, 2008). Certain traits might matter more depending on the election year, such as the appearance of erraticism in the 2008 presidential election (Hardy, 2010). A candidate’s image is not ready-made – it is built by the campaign, throughout the election. While the campaign has a variety of means by which to package its candidate, one of the most important is televised political advertising.
TELEVISED POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

Televised political advertising is an undeniable component of the modern presidential election. Though effects are far from uniform across different advertisements and candidates, advertisements ultimately possess the ability to influence votes (Houser, Morton, & Stratmann, 2011; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011; Shaw, 1999). Advertisements can shape voters’ beliefs, especially among those with low political interest (McClure & Patterson, 1974). Even mere exposure to campaign advertising can slightly increase senatorial candidate evaluations (Franz & Ridout, 2007) and congressional candidate evaluations (Atkin & Heald, 1976), with exposure to advertisements in support of the Republican Party increasing favorability of Republican candidates and exposure to advertisements in support of the Democratic Party increasing favorability of Democratic candidates. Political advertisements have the power to inform and influence the electorate.

The amount of campaign advertising is also on the rise. According to data from Kantar Media/CMAG, published by The Washington Post, $492 million was spent on Mitt Romney’s TV advertisements from April 11, 2012 through the election on November 6, 2012, and $404 million spent on Obama ads. The 2012 presidential election saw more ads than in years past, with a 39.1% increase from 2008 and 41% from 2004, considering ads for and against the two main-party presidential candidates up to October 29, 2012 (Wesleyan Media Project, 2012). Though extremely costly, campaigns find televised political advertising worth the expense.
Primming

Televised political advertisements have the power to influence audience members’ candidate evaluations through priming. A cognitive mechanism, priming is the process through which certain standards become more accessible, therefore changing how standards are weighted in evaluations (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). That is, “By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged” (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010, p. 63). For example, newspaper articles on abortion or euthanasia (social-moral issues) lead to greater consideration of candidate integrity than articles on the ethical aspects of health care (Domke, Shah, & Wackman, 1998). These changes can be the result of recent or cumulative exposure (Althaus & Kim, 2006). Of particular interest to the study of presidential campaign advertisements is the finding that media coverage can prime the audience to alter the standards by which they judge the president, leading to an overall change in presidential evaluations (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Iyengar, Kinder, Peters, & Krosnick, 1984; Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990).

Campaigns engage in both issue and image, or character, priming. An analysis of Richard Nixon’s 1972 re-election campaign found that he primed domestic issues in the face of the country’s most salient issue, the Vietnam War, but used the Vietnam War to prime image perceptions of strength and competence (Druckman, Jacobs, & Ostermeier, 2004). Interviews, public opinion data, and archival evidence suggest that John F. Kennedy made certain issues salient due to their appearances in polling results, with the
few exceptions of civil rights and foreign aid (Jacobs & Shapiro, 1994). More recently, “priming of economic perceptions probably cost incumbent Jimmy Carter about 3.3 percent of the vote in 1980, while priming of candidate images probably cost incumbent Bill Clinton about 2.2 percentage points in 1996” (Bartels, 2006, p. 91). Candidates and campaigns can also prime some voters to more strongly consider various identities, such as gender (Schaffner, 2005), race (Valentino, Hutchings, & White, 2002), and religion (Weber & Thornton, 2012). Although the majority of priming research has focused on media coverage, televised political advertisements can have similar priming effects.

The themes of political campaign advertisements pertain to either character or issues (Johnston & Kaid, 2002). Advertisements can prime voters to more strongly consider candidates in terms of issues or image. In evaluating candidates, readers of issue-oriented ads produce more issue-related thoughts and readers of character-oriented ads produce more character-related thoughts (Shen, 2004). Nevertheless, there is support that both opinions on issues and character factor into vote choice (Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, & Sullivan, 1990). Wattenberg (1991) suggests that as a result of the rise of candidate-centered politics, Downs’ economic theory of democracy holds greater relevance, as voters consider candidate issues, character, and performance, rather than rely on party affiliation. Strategically, campaigns prime voters on both issues and image (Druckman, Jacobs, & Ostermeier, 2004; Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010).

In examining several presidential elections, Bartels (2002) noted that, “the net impact of candidate traits on the election outcome was dependent on the relative weight attached to different specific traits…” (p. 57). Television advertisements have the power
to prime voters to weight certain traits more heavily, in other words, to ascribe them
greater importance than others. Moreover, mere exposure to trait-related information can
increase overall candidate evaluations, as exposure can decrease uncertainty, which is
inversely related to candidate evaluations (Glasgow & Alvarez, 2000).

While televised political advertisements can influence voters’ evaluations of
candidates, Hayes’s (2009) analysis of data from 1952 to 2004 found that voters have not
become more likely to cite candidates’ personalities as a greater influence on vote choice.
Though this might be considered evidence against the power of television to build and
shape candidates’ images, the results might also be interpreted as evidence for the
persistent importance of candidate trait evaluations over time, regardless of the medium
through which people are exposed to candidate images. Alternatively, voters might not be
aware of the effects of televised political advertisements on themselves, as priming can
occur subconsciously and people generally consider others to be more influenced by
persuasive communication than themselves (Davison, 1983). Indeed, viewers of political
advertisements believe that other viewers would be more influenced than them (Golan,
Banning, & Lundy, 2008).

Content

Image and Issues

Teledvised political campaign advertisements contain information on both the
candidate’s image and issues. West’s (2010) analysis of prominent presidential
advertisements from 1952 to 2008 found that a greater percentage of advertisements
included personal qualities of the candidate than specific domestic or foreign policies.
Interestingly, Republican ads were fairly similar in image and issue airtime, with 32% devoted to personal qualities and 29% to specific policies while 40% of Democrat ads were devoted to personal qualities and just 24% to specific policies (West, 2010, p. 50). Conversely, an analysis of over 5,000 televised advertisements from the 1952 to 2000 elections found that Democrats focused more heavily on policy than Republicans, with Democratic candidates’ ads 64% policy-focused and 36% candidate-focused, and Republican candidates’ ads 58% policy-focused and 42% candidate-focused (Benoit, 2001). Another possibility is that there is little difference in total amount of time devoted to issues/policy and image/character, but categorizing ads into either image- or issue-focused prevents examination of that possibility.

Although political campaign advertisements are often classified as having an image or an issues emphasis, there is notable overlap in actual content (Kenski & Kenski, 2004). For example, Johnston and Kaid’s (2002) large-scale content analysis of 1,213 televised presidential campaign advertisements from 1952 to 2000 found that 34% of issue ads mentioned candidates’ personal characteristics and 39% of image ads mentioned the candidate’s issue concerns. This finding of a good portion of campaign advertisements containing both issue and image content is true of presidential, senatorial, and gubernatorial races (Joslyn, 1980).

The relationship between image and issue advertising becomes more muddled when considering the interrelationship of image and issue perceptions considering the candidate. For instance, a candidate offering a specific issue message was rated more highly on sincerity, competence, leadership, character, honesty, and intelligence, than a
candidate offering an ambiguous message (Rudd, 1989). The inability to completely extract image advertising from issue advertising places importance upon examining specific content, such as character traits.

**Advertisement Function**

Political campaign advertisements can also be analyzed using a functional approach, outlined by Benoit (2001) as focusing on three key functions of campaign communication:

“(1) to enhance their own credentials as a desirable office-holder (positive utterances, acclaims), (2) to downgrade their opponent’s credentials as an undesirable office-holder (negative utterances or attacks), and, if their opponent attacks them, (3) to respond to those attacks (defenses)” (p. 114).

Each one of those functions; to acclaim, attack, or defend; can be the driving force behind a political advertisement. A content analysis of 918 televised ads from the 1952 to 2000 presidential elections found that acclaims were used most often (60% of total ads), followed by attacks (39%), and few defenses (1%) (Benoit, 2001). On its face, this finding seems disparate from the reality of political advertisements, as an attack ad is often responded to by the targeted candidate, thus, one might expect there to have been more defense ads than only 1% of the total.

Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr (2000) categorize advertisements as being advocate, attack, or contrastive ads. According to their categorization, advocate ads are comparable to acclaims, but attack ads are more narrowly defined than Benoit (2001) purported (Jamieson et al., 2000). Despite general public disdain for negativity in
political campaigning, both attack ads and contrastive ads can have valuable informative effects, as they contain more policy content than advocate ads (Jamieson et al., 2000). The contrast ad combines both advocates and attacks, as it pairs criticism of the opponent with the candidate’s own issue position (Jamieson et al., 2000). The differentiation between attacks and contrasts is an important one, because “When we conflate comparison/contrast with attack under the heading of negativity, we blame candidates for offering a form of discourse that is both informative and accountable” (Jamieson et al., 2000, p. 49). Advertisements can be categorized as advocate, attack, and contrastive, regardless of their focus on issues or image.

This study differentiated between ads using Jamieson et al.’s (2000) approach, categorizing ads as advocate, attack, or contrastive ads. Considering trait information, advocate ads contain positive trait information about the sponsoring candidate, attack ads contain negative trait information about the target candidate, and contrastive ads contain positive trait information about the sponsoring candidate and negative trait information about the target candidate. As advertisements can prime voters to believe that a given candidate possesses a certain trait and that a specific trait is more important than others, they can have bolstering or depressing effects on voters’ overall candidate evaluations. For instance, a positive editorial led readers to rate a fictional candidate significantly higher than a negative editorial (Moskowitz & Stroh, 1996). Campaigns might prioritize positive trait appeals for their candidates over negative trait attacks against their opponents.
A large-scale content analysis of presidential campaign advertisements from 1952 to 2000 found that 70% of the image ads were appeals, or ads designed to positively portray the sponsoring candidate’s character (Johnston & Kaid, 2002). In Johnston & Kaid’s study, candidates were more likely to go on the offensive when it came to issues rather than image. Conversely, a content analysis of the televised campaign advertisements from 21 Senate races found that candidates appeal to their own positive character traits in one-third of their ads and attack their opponents’ personality traits in 43% of ads (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). Despite conflicting voter turnout findings, it is clear that positive and negative advertising operate differently.

Party Differences

According to the theory of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996), the issues referenced in campaign advertisements should differ depending on which political party the candidate belongs to. This is supported by an analysis of advertisements from the 1980 presidential election (Shyles, 1983). Though both parties mentioned the nation’s well-being most frequently, Republicans then prioritized government management, the

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1 Though often believed to suppress turnout in the electorate (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1999; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994), negative advertising has been shown to have a greater effect on voter stimulation than positive or neutral advertising (Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011). Even so, other studies have found that attack advertising neither stimulates nor demobilizes the electorate (Finkel & Geer, 1998; Lau, Sigelman, Heldman, & Babbitt, 1999). Viewers evaluate positive advertisements more highly than negative advertisements (Meirick & Nisbett, 2011). Efficacy is slightly lowered by negative advertising, but care about the election outcome is marginally increased (Finkel & Geer, 1998).
economy, and federalism, while Democrats focused on foreign policy, the economy, and energy in their advertisements (Shyles, 1983).

*Videostyle*

All advertisement content is not portrayed in the same ways. In addition to examining traits by advertisement goal (appeal or attack), party identification, and nature of election, advertisements must be broken down stylistically. That is, the videostyle of the advertisements needs to be considered. Kaid and Davidson (1986) first detailed videostyle as the advertisement’s verbal and nonverbal content, as well as its production components. Videostyle was further described as the presentation by which “modern campaigns seek to construct for voters through television an image that serves to represent the campaign” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 26). The individual choices made in constructing this image, such as the semantic content, camera angle, camera movement, editing, setting, and sound, can influence the effects of the advertisement.

Choices made in producing an advertisement should change based on the advertisement’s goal, for example, which candidate trait the advertisement is attempting to convey. However, there is a fine balance that candidates attempt to achieve – they cannot be seen as too hard or too soft, too intelligent or too ignorant, too power-hungry or too passive. Thus, candidates unleash a variety of advertisements, each with different production choices. There has been limited research regarding the influences of individual production components on character trait evaluations. One study found that family background bolsters candidate characteristics such as warm, friendly,
compassionate, and kind, but dampens characteristics such as articulate, strong, smart, and experienced (Thorson, Christ, & Caywood, 1991).

Though she did not provide results on which individual production components were found to be related to character traits, Kaid (2009) examined the videostyle, including 7 trait mentions, of John McCain and Barack Obama’s 2008 general election advertisements. Kaid (2009) describes McCain’s image advertising strategy as designed to “highlight his own background and remind voters of his military service and the character and honor he displayed as a prisoner of war early in his career” (p. 215). She found significant differences between the two candidates’ trait mentions of strength, aggressiveness, activeness, and qualifications, with a greater proportion of McCain’s advertisements emphasizing those traits (Kaid, 2009). Kaid’s (2009) analysis did not yield significant differences between the candidates’ proportion of advertisements mentioning honesty, compassion, and competence. By incorporating videostyle components and more closely examining the role of candidate traits in televised political advertisements, this content analysis extended Kaid’s innovative approach to studying presidential campaign advertising.
HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

According to trait ownership (Hayes, 2005), candidates adopt certain traits as their own. These traits often derive from the candidate’s partisanship and core issues. However, candidates can also benefit from trait trespassing (i.e., appealing to a trait owned by their opponent’s party). In fact, Hayes (2011) found this practice to influence vote share more than appealing to one’s owned traits. Thus, I expected Republican and Democratic candidates to appeal to both the traits their party owns and the traits owned by their opponent’s party. In other words:

H1a: The character traits used in Republican candidate advocate ads do not significantly differ from traits used in Democratic candidate advocate ads.

H1b: The positive character traits used in Republican-sponsored contrast ads do not significantly differ from traits used in Democrat-sponsored contrast ads.

Though it is advantageous for candidates to appeal to character traits owned by both parties, it is disadvantageous for candidates to attack character traits owned by their own parties. That is, it is not in a candidate’s best interest to attack the opponent on a trait s/he is assumed to possess. In doing so, the candidate might prime the public to question whether the candidate sponsoring the attack actually owns that trait. Such a negative boomerang effect could serve to weaken trait perceptions of the candidate sponsoring the attack ad. Rather, the candidate will attack the opponent on a trait the opponent is assumed to possess. As such, the candidate can prime the public to question whether the opponent owns the trait s/he is assumed to possess. Thus, I expected:
H2a: The character traits used in Republican candidate attack ads differ from traits used in Democratic candidate attack ads, with Republican candidates less likely to attack traits owned by the Republican Party and Democratic candidates less likely to attack traits owned by the Democrat Party.

H2b: The character traits used in Republican candidate contrast ads differ from traits used in Democratic candidate contrast ads, with Republican candidates less likely to attack traits owned by the Republican Party and Democratic candidates less likely to attack traits owned by the Democrat Party.

Throughout the research on televised political advertisements, there is a call for contextual attention (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994). The sample for this study is comprised of the ads from two presidential elections, occurring a mere four years apart from each other; any differences in image appeals or attacks from 2008 to 2012 are not expected to be drastic. Nevertheless, both campaign advertisements and media coverage change from the primary election to the general election. Throughout the primary election, candidates compete against candidates from their own political parties who generally hold similar political perspectives (Abramson et al., 1992), while the media tend to focus on viability rather than electability (Brady & Johnston, 1987). Due to the differing nature of the primary election, I hypothesized:

H3: The character traits used most frequently in primary election advertisements differ from the traits used most frequently in general election advertisements.

Videostyle, as first detailed by Kaid and Davidson (1986) and later explained by Kaid and Johnston (2001), is comprised of verbal, nonverbal, and production
components. By examining the videostyle of political advertisements, one is able to interpret them in context. Production components implying, complement, or strengthening trait mentions cannot be studied until the candidate traits have first been coded. Though Kaid’s (2009) analysis of 2008 general election advertisements measured seven trait mentions, it is unclear which production aspects accompanied which traits. Therefore, I asked:

RQ1: In terms of verbal content, nonverbal content, and production components, how is each trait most often conveyed?

Though usually measured as a dichotomous variable, there is considerable overlap between issue and image advertisements. This thesis is focused on candidate traits, which contribute to perceptions of candidate image. Even so, it is important to note instances in which issues are employed to convey certain traits. Thus, I asked:

RQ2: How are issues used in conjunction with some candidate traits more than others?
METHOD

Sample

The advertisements analyzed in this thesis aired in the 2008 Democratic primary, 2008 Republican primary, 2008 general election, 2012 Democratic primary, 2012 Republican primary, and 2012 general election campaigns. Advertisements were obtained on Stanford University’s Political Communication Lab website, pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns.

A total of 160 ads were coded, 16.7% of the census of televised presidential campaign advertisements aired in the 2008 and 2012 primaries and elections. Rather than cut down the sample to only include image advertisements, both image and issue advertisements were coded. There is often considerable overlap between image and issue advertisements, with image ads including issue content and issue ads including image content (Kaid & Johnston, 2002). Thus, the final sample in this study includes 160 advertisements referencing character traits, even if some might be considered issue advertisements. This inclusion enriched the findings, as all trait mentions were taken into account.

The first set of ads was randomly selected and was comprised of 75 appeal ads (55%), 39 attack ads (28.7%), and 20 contrast ads (14.7%). In order to test hypothesis 2, quota sampling was employed to increase the amount of attack and contrast ads in the sample. The final sample is comprised of 79 appeal ads (49.4%), 57 attack ads (35.6%), and 24 contrast ads (15%). The GOP sponsored 86 of the ads (53.8%); the Democratic Party sponsored 74 of the ads (46.3%). There were 86 ads from the 2008 and 2012
primary elections (53.8%) and 74 ads (46.3%) from the 2008 and 2012 general elections. Further details regarding sample composition are located in Table 1. Though limited by time constraints, this sample size allowed comparisons to be made between party and election type.

Table 1

*Advertisement Type by Party Sponsor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Appeal</th>
<th>Attack GOP</th>
<th>Attack Democrat</th>
<th>Contrast with GOP</th>
<th>Contrast with Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coding Categories**

The entire codebook is included in Appendix A. Key variables of interest are described below.

*Nature of Election*

Whether the advertisement was used in the primary or general election was determined by the dates on which each advertisement first ran. For the purposes of this study, the cut-off date for each primary season is when the last candidate to unofficially clinch his party’s nomination was reported to have secured enough delegate support in order to become the party’s nominee. Therefore, the 2008 primary lasted until June 3, 2008, and the 2012 primary lasted until May 29, 2012 (Election Center 2008, 2008; Wallace, 2012).

Table 2 shows how many ads came from each election.
Table 2
Advertisements by Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Republican Primary</th>
<th>Democratic Primary</th>
<th>Primary - Total</th>
<th>General - Republican</th>
<th>General - Democratic</th>
<th>General - Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Party Identification**

Party identification was measured as the party to which the advertisement’s sponsoring candidate belongs. In this study, Democrats and Republicans were the two party identifications considered.

**Advertisement Function**

An advertisement supporting the sponsoring candidate was considered an advocate ad and an advertisement opposing the sponsoring candidate’s opponent was considered an attack ad. An advertisement that both supports the sponsoring candidate and attacks another candidate was considered a contrast ad.

**Videostyle**

Videostyle coding refers to measuring how traits are conveyed, be it through verbal, nonverbal, or production components. Videostyle coding was guided by Kaid and Johnston’s (2001) work detailing videostyle theory and application. Various nonverbal and production components were coded. These include: music, who spoke in the ad, if a candidate and/or party representative appeared in the spot, the tone of the candidate or party member’s appearance, any family members shown in the ad, candidate dress, sound, and American symbols (i.e., the American flag, the American colors, the bald
eagle, iconic American landscapes, the White House, patriotic songs, famous American
documents such as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, past presidents,
and American soldiers).

Emphasis of Ad

Each advertisement was coded as an issue or image advertisement. In the event
that an advertisement contains both issue and image content, the focus receiving more
airtime was considered the emphasis of the advertisement.

Traits

The primary variable of interest is character trait. Each trait mentioned or
described in an advertisement was coded. In the first reliability round, coders measured
21 traits: integrity/morality, honesty, strength, knowledge, inspiration, work ethic,
competence, compassion, commanding respect, intelligence, trustworthiness, kindness,
leadership, fairness, productivity, humility (with regard to power), setting a good
example, caring about people like you, sharing your values, understanding people like
you, and in touch with ordinary people. Various combinations of these traits have been
used by other researchers studying voter evaluations of politicians (Caprara, Barbaranelli,
& Zimbardo, 1997; Hardy, 2010; Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980; Peterson,
2005). The antonyms of these traits were also be coded, for example, dishonesty and
weakness.

Many of the traits measured in the first round of reliability were synonyms, for
instance, “knowledgeable” and “intelligent.” To account for significant overlap in trait
content and definitions, the 21 traits were collapsed into seven traits. In other words,
similar traits were grouped together as constituting one major trait. The seven traits (and their synonyms or dimensions) were honorable, nice, in touch, strong, smart, leads, and inspiring.

Six of the traits stemmed directly from the “main component of credibility,” trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953, p. 35). Honorable, nice, and in touch are rooted in trustworthiness and strong, smart, and leads were rooted in expertise. Honorable was defined as honest, moral, and fair; nice was kind and caring; and in touch meant in touch with ordinary people like you. In terms of acting upon trustworthiness, honorable would be a candidate who does the right thing; nice, a candidate who does the kind thing; and in touch, a candidate who keeps ordinary people in mind. More specific traits that could be considered evidence of honorability, kindness, and being in touch were provided to coders and included has integrity/moral, fair, honest, trustworthy (honorable); compassionate, kind, cares about people like you (nice); and shares your values, understands people like you, in touch with ordinary people (in touch).

Strong, smart, and leads pertained to expertise. Strong was defined as firmness; smart as knowledgeable and intelligent; and leads as productive and possessing good leadership. In terms of acting upon expertise, strong would be commanding respect in one’s actions; smart, possessing the ability to fully understand complex situations and know how to act; and leads, setting a good example by working hard and making progress. More specific traits were provided to coders and included strong, commands respect (strong); knowledgeable, intelligent (smart); and good leader, good work ethic, competent, productive, sets a good example, and humble with regard to power (leads).
In addition to trustworthiness and expertise, dynamism has emerged as a component of credibility in previous research (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1970). Inspiring stems from this quality of dynamism and was defined as inciting positive influence. Acting upon dynamism, inspiring would be acting in a rousing or encouraging manner. Inspiring was coded if a candidate was considered to be inspirational.

Coders were asked to code only if there was a clearly discernible reference to character and the trait was verbally identified or implied. To code yes for a major trait, such as “leads,” the ad did not have to describe the candidate as a good, competent, productive, and humble leader with a good work ethic who sets a good example. Any of those traits would warrant a code of yes for “leads.” In other words, the ad did not have to contain information about the entire list of traits that might be considered evidence of good leadership. For example, the ad could describe the candidate as a good leader or competent, and would in either case be coded as containing “leads.”

**Issues**

Several issues were coded to determine if there is an association between the presence of certain candidate traits and specific issues. The issues that were coded are: international or foreign affairs, military or defense spending, economic concerns (inflation, unemployment jobs), deficit/need to balance budget, taxes, welfare reform, crime/prisons/penalties/gun control, drugs, concern for children or children’s issues, education, Medicare/Social Security/problems of older adults, abortion, birth control/contraception, climate change/global warming/environmental concerns, health care, and immigration. If an unlisted issue is used, it was also be coded.
Coding Reliability

Five coders participated in the first round of training and coding. Reliability was computed using an adjusted Scott’s $\Pi$ formula (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Inter-coder reliability was considered to be $\Pi$ values of 0.80 and above. As variables were measured using latent content, this was a conservative measure chosen to indicate agreement among coders. After the initial reliability round, coders were reliable on ad length (0.98), speaker identification in the ad (0.90) and sound (0.96). Coders interpreted certain traits as synonymous with others (e.g., knowledgeable and intelligent, compassionate and kind). After collapsing the 21 character traits into seven trait categories, coders were reliable on the presence of positive trait information (0.93), honorable (0.90), strong (0.89), smart (0.91), leads (0.97), nice (0.90), in touch (0.90), inspiring (0.96), the presence of negative trait information (0.93), dishonorable (0.82), weak (0.93), dumb (0.90), mean (0.92), out of touch (0.82), and uninspiring (0.96).

A second round of training was conducted to clarify coding rules, add relevant issues and American symbols, and explain the combination of 21 traits into seven major traits. In the second reliability round, coders were reliable on advertisement focus (0.93), candidate or party representative appearance (0.85), tone of candidate or party representative appearance (0.97), family members shown in the ad (0.94), candidate dress (0.85), misleads (0.82), issues (adjusted Scott’s $\Pi$ for each issue was at least 0.88), and American symbols (adjusted Scott’s $\Pi$ for each American symbol was greater than 0.90). Despite two rounds of coder training, coders did not become reliable on music or advertisement focus.
RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicted that the use of positive character traits in advocate and contrast ads would not differ significantly by party. Table 3 shows the amount and proportion of each party’s advocate ads containing each trait.

Table 3

| Positive Trait Information in Advocate Ads by Party Sponsor |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                     | Party              | Honorables          | Strongs             | Smarts              | Leads               | Nices               | In Touch            | Inspiring           |
|                     | Democrat           | 34 (81%)            | 24 (57%)            | 22 (52%)            | 28 (67%)            | 11 (26%)            | 26 (62%)            | 1 (43%)             |
|                     | GOP                | 21 (58%)            | 21 (58%)            | 16 (44%)            | 24 (67%)            | 9 (25%)             | 13 (36%)            | 3 (42%)             |
|                     | Total              | 55                  | 45                  | 38                  | 52                  | 20                  | 39                  | 4                   |

A series of chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine each trait and the two parties’ advocate ads. There were two significant differences between trait information in Republican and Democrat advocate ads: honorable, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 4.77$, $p = .029$, and in touch, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 5.16$, $p = .023$. Strong, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 0.01$, $p = .916$; smart, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 0.49$, $p = .484$; leads, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 0.00$, $p = 1.000$; nice, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 0.14$, $p = .904$; and inspiring, $X^2 (1, N = 78) = 0.01$, $p = .916$, did not differ between Republican and Democrat advocate ads.

Democratic ads were more likely to appeal to integrity or morality, fairness, honesty, trustworthiness, and honorability than Republican advocate ads, with 81% of Democratic ads in comparison to 58% of Republican ads containing such information. Democratic ads were also more likely to appeal to sharing your values, understanding people like you, and being in touch with ordinary people than were Republican advocate ads.
ads, as 62% of the Democratic ads and 36% of Republican ads appealed to such traits.

Therefore, Hypothesis 1a is supported for strength, intelligence, leadership, kindness, and inspiration, but not supported for honorability or in touch.

It was also expected that the positive trait information in contrast ads would not significantly differ by party. Table 4 contains the amount and percentage of positive trait information in each party’s contrast ads.

Table 4  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Trait Information in Contrast Ads by Party Sponsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 1b was supported for all seven traits in this analysis, as a series of chi-square tests of independence did not find any significant differences between ads sponsored by the Republican and Democratic Parties; honorable, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.50, p = .221$; strong, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.03, p = .148$; smart, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 0.09, p = .770$; leads, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 0.60, p = .439$; nice, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.09, p = .236$; in touch, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 0.34, p = .562$; and inspiring, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.71, p = .190$. Though Democratic appeal ads were more likely than Republican appeal ads to include honorability and being in touch with the public, there were no significant differences in the use of positive trait information in contrast ads. Hypothesis 1 is thus largely supported, with the exception of honorability and in touch content in appeal ads.
Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2a predicted that the use of candidate traits in Republican attack ads would differ from the use of candidate traits in Democratic attack ads. Table 5 shows what proportion of each party’s attack ads contained each trait.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Dishonorable</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Dumb</th>
<th>Misleads</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Out of Touch</th>
<th>Uninspiring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>14 (56%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>15 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (46%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>21 (64%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
<td>14 (42%)</td>
<td>19 (58%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several chi-square tests of independence were conducted to examine each trait and the attack ads of the two parties. There were no significant differences between the negative trait information in Republican-sponsored attack ads and Democrat-sponsored attack ads, yielding no support for Hypothesis 2a; dishonorable, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 0.35, p = .556$; weak, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 1.19, p = .275$; dumb, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 2.40, p = .121$; misleads, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 0.03, p = .853$; mean, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 2.73, p = .098$; out of touch, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 2.04, p = .153$; and uninspiring, $X^2 (1, N = 58) = 0.94, p = .331$.

A similar prediction was tested with negative character traits in contrast ads, using a series of chi-square tests of independence. Table 6 shows the trait percentages of each party’s contrast ads.
Table 6

Negative Trait Information in Contrast Ads by Party Sponsor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Dishonorable</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Dumb</th>
<th>Misleads</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Out of Touch</th>
<th>Uninspiring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One significant difference was found between Republican-sponsored contrast ads and Democrat-sponsored ads, as misleads $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 4.11, p = .043$. No other significant differences were found; dishonorable, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.50, p = .221$; weak, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.61, p = .204$; dumb, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 0.00, p = 1.000$; mean, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.71, p = .190$; out of touch, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 0.09, p = .759$; and uninspiring, $X^2 (1, N = 24) = 1.71, p = .190$.

Republican-sponsored contrast ads were more likely to include information regarding poor leadership, poor work ethic, incompetence, a lack of productivity, setting a poor example or not setting a good example, power hungriness, and not commanding respect. More than two-thirds of Republican-sponsored contrast ads contained such information regarding poor leadership while only a quarter of Democrat-sponsored contrast ads included such information. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are unsupported with the exception of poor leadership information in contrast ads, as there were no significant differences between the majority of negative character trait information by party.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that trait information in primary election advertisements differs from trait information in general election advertisements. Table 7 shows positive
trait information in ads by election type; Table 8 shows negative trait information in ads by election type.

### Table 7

**Positive Trait Information in Ads by Election Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Any Positive</th>
<th>Honorable</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Smart</th>
<th>Leads</th>
<th>Nice</th>
<th>In Touch</th>
<th>Inspiring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>72 (84%)</td>
<td>51 (59%)</td>
<td>42 (49%)</td>
<td>35 (41%)</td>
<td>51 (59%)</td>
<td>16 (19%)</td>
<td>37 (43%)</td>
<td>29 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>30 (41%)</td>
<td>14 (19%)</td>
<td>17 (23%)</td>
<td>16 (22%)</td>
<td>23 (31%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>13 (18%)</td>
<td>7 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8

**Negative Trait Information in Ads by Election Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Any Negative</th>
<th>Dishonorable</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Dumb</th>
<th>Misleads</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Out of Touch</th>
<th>Un-inspiring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>25 (29%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>10 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>55 (74%)</td>
<td>31 (42%)</td>
<td>7 (10%)</td>
<td>18 (24%)</td>
<td>36 (49%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>24 (32%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several chi-square tests of independence yielded support for Hypothesis 3; positive content, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 30.35, p = .000$; honorable, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 25.01, p = .000$; strong, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 10.20, p = .001$; smart, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 6.67, p = .010$; leads, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 12.74, p = .000$; in touch, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 10.64, p = .001$; and inspiring, $X^2 (1, N = 160) = 13.43, p = .000$. The amount of generally positive, honorable, strong, smart, good leader, in touch, and inspiring content significantly differed between primary and general election ads, as primary election ads were much more likely to feature positive trait information than were general election ads. The only positive trait that did not significantly differ based on the election was kindness, $X^2 (1, N = 160) =$
3.70, \( p = .055 \), though 19\% of primary election ads contained compassion, kindness, and caring about people like you, while only 7\% of general election ads contained such information.

A similar relationship was found in comparing the negative trait information in primary and general election ads. A series of chi-square tests of independence supported differences between primary and general election ads’ generally negative, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 34.56, p = .000 \); a lack of honorability, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 12.91, p = .000 \); unintelligent, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 6.81, p = .009 \); poor leadership, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 19.40, p = .000 \); and out of touch, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 11.43, p = .001 \); content. General election advertisements were more likely to contain negative trait information. Though there were no significant differences between primary and general election ads’ weak, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 2.18, p = .140 \); or mean content, \( X^2 (1, N = 160) = 2.37, p = .124 \); general election advertisements did contain a greater proportion of both those negative traits.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question asked how each trait is most often conveyed. Most analyses did not yield clear patterns between traits about various advertisement aspects or productive components.

Positive trait information is associated with the main speaker being a candidate, as 87\% of the ads candidates spoke in contained positive trait information. Negative trait information was more often conveyed by an anonymous speaker; 66\% of the ads with an anonymous speaker contained negative trait information. Due to the small sample size, the only other significant relationships between character trait and speaker pertain to the
absence of the trait. Tables 9 and 10 show the percentages of speakers present in the ads of each positive and negative trait.

Table 9

*Speaker by Positive Trait Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Gov. Rep.</th>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Anon.</th>
<th>Combo</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Positive</td>
<td>39 (38%)</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
<td>37 (36%)</td>
<td>11 (11%)</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Positive</td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>36 (63%)</td>
<td>8 (14%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorable</td>
<td>27 (41%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>23 (38%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td>7 (12%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>17 (33%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>19 (37%)</td>
<td>7 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads</td>
<td>26 (35%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>27 (36%)</td>
<td>9 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>8 (36%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Touch</td>
<td>20 (39%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>18 (35%)</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>17 (47%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>10 (28%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

*Speaker by Negative Trait Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Gov. Rep.</th>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Anon.</th>
<th>Combo</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Negative</td>
<td>13 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>48 (59%)</td>
<td>11 (14%)</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Negative</td>
<td>32 (41%)</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>25 (32%)</td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonorable</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>27 (60%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>15 (58%)</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misleads</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>22 (44%)</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Touch</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>25 (71%)</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninspiring</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, there were no significant relationships between candidate dress or family appearance and use of character traits. A series of independent chi-square tests
was performed to test for difference between candidate dress and trait information; positive trait presence, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 4.54, p = .103$; honorability, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 2.04, p = .361$; strength, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 0.31, p = .856$; smart, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 1.09, p = .581$; leads, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 1.51, p = .471$; nice, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 3.50, p = .174$; in touch, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 1.98, p = .373$; inspiring, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 2.08, p = .353$; negative trait presence, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 0.89, p = .642$; dishonorable, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 3.14, p = .208$; and misleads, $X^2 (1, N = 113) = 1.05, p = .592$. Candidate dress was coded too infrequently for independent chi-square tests to be performed with weak, dumb, mean, out of touch, and uninspiring. Spouses or family members appeared too infrequently for independent chi-square tests to be performed.

Traits in general were more likely to be conveyed through sound-over than through live sound. This was especially true of dishonorable content, as 69% of the ads featuring the trait used sound-over. Tables 11 and 12 show the percentages of family appearance, candidate dress, and types of sound used in the ads of each positive and negative trait.
containing negat... positive trait information and a little more than half of the advertisements containing negative trait information. The other American symbols, including the bald

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Any Family</th>
<th>Candidate Formal</th>
<th>Candidate Informal</th>
<th>Candidate Varied</th>
<th>Live Sound</th>
<th>Sound Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Appearance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Dress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Sound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

*Family Appearance, Candidate Dress, and Types of Sound by Positive Trait Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Any Family</th>
<th>Candidate Formal</th>
<th>Candidate Informal</th>
<th>Candidate Varied</th>
<th>Live Sound</th>
<th>Sound Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Positive</td>
<td>11 (11%)</td>
<td>49 (48%)</td>
<td>22 (21%)</td>
<td>12 (12%)</td>
<td>41 (40%)</td>
<td>53 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Positive</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>24 (42%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>12 (21%)</td>
<td>39 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorable</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
<td>34 (52%)</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>25 (38%)</td>
<td>32 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>31 (52%)</td>
<td>12 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (10%)</td>
<td>19 (32%)</td>
<td>34 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>31 (61%)</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>18 (35%)</td>
<td>26 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>35 (47%)</td>
<td>15 (20%)</td>
<td>9 (12%)</td>
<td>26 (35%)</td>
<td>40 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>9 (41%)</td>
<td>7 (32%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
<td>9 (41%)</td>
<td>8 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Touch</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
<td>25 (49%)</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>19 (37%)</td>
<td>25 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>17 (47%)</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>13 (36%)</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

*Family Appearance, Candidate Dress, and Types of Sound by Negative Trait Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Any Family</th>
<th>Candidate Formal</th>
<th>Candidate Informal</th>
<th>Candidate Varied</th>
<th>Live Sound</th>
<th>Sound Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Negative</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>34 (42%)</td>
<td>9 (11%)</td>
<td>7 (9%)</td>
<td>21 (26%)</td>
<td>53 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Negative</td>
<td>10 (13%)</td>
<td>39 (49%)</td>
<td>16 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
<td>32 (41%)</td>
<td>39 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonorable</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>24 (53%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>31 (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>16 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misleads</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>24 (48%)</td>
<td>7 (14%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>19 (38%)</td>
<td>25 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Touch</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (29%)</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>8 (23%)</td>
<td>27 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninspiring</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The American flag was shown in a little more than half of the advertisements containing positive trait information and a little more than half of the advertisements containing negative trait information. The other American symbols, including the bald...
Eagle, iconic landscapes, the White House, patriotic songs, patriotic documents such as the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, past Presidents, and soldiers, were each shown seven or fewer times in the ads. Therefore, no conclusive relationships can be found between other American symbols and character traits. Tables 13 and 14 show the percentages of the style elements present in the ads of each positive and negative trait.

Table 13

*Style Elements by Positive Trait Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Flag</th>
<th>Eagle</th>
<th>Landscapes</th>
<th>White House</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Docs</th>
<th>Past Pres.</th>
<th>Soldiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Positive</td>
<td>58 (56%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
<td>7 (7%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Positive</td>
<td>27 (47%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorable</td>
<td>34 (52%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>33 (55%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>29 (57%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads</td>
<td>44 (59%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>8 (36%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Touch</td>
<td>29 (57%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>20 (56%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

The second research question asked how issues are used in conjunction with character traits. The most commonly referenced issue in this sample was economic concerns such as inflation, unemployment, and job creation, which was mentioned in 49% of the total advertisements. Other issues included taxes in 23% of the ads; war, military, or defense spending in 14%; health care in 12%; international or foreign affairs in 9%; the deficit or the need to balance the budget in 7%; immigration in 6%; and Medicare or Social Security in 4% of the ads. Welfare reform; crime, prisons, and gun control; drugs; concern for children or children’s issues; education; abortion; birth control or contraception; and climate change or environmental concerns were each mentioned 3% or fewer of the total ads and were thus dropped from subsequent analyses.

Character traits are used in conjunction with issues, as various issues show different patterns of accompanying trait information. For example, of the total

### Table 14

*Style Elements by Negative Trait Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Flag</th>
<th>Eagle</th>
<th>Landscapes</th>
<th>White House</th>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Docs</th>
<th>Past Pres.</th>
<th>Soldiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Negative</td>
<td>46 (57%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Negative</td>
<td>39 (49%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonorable</td>
<td>27 (60%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>15 (58%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misleads</td>
<td>33 (66%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Touch</td>
<td>17 (49%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-inspiring</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
advertisements on the war, military, or defense spending, 74% contain positive trait information, 57% contain references to honorability, 57% contain references to strength, 61% contain references to leadership, as compared to 65% of total ads containing positive trait information, 41% honorability, 39% strength, and 54% leadership. In other words, campaigns used war and military in a positive manner, by appealing to their candidate’s honorability, strength, and leadership.

Other patterns between issues and trait information were found in the ads. The economy was paired with increased references to strength, intelligence, leadership, and being in touch; taxes with intelligence and being out of touch; health care with kindness and being in touch; foreign affairs with strength, good or poor leadership, and a lack of honorability; the deficit with honorability, strength, intelligence, and good leadership; immigration with good leadership; and Medicare with a lack of honorability, weakness, meanness, and being out of touch with the public. Tables 15 and 16 show the percentages of each positive and negative trait in the ads overall and by issue.
### Table 15

*Positive Trait Information by Issue*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Any Positive</th>
<th>Honorable</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Smart</th>
<th>Leads</th>
<th>Nice</th>
<th>In Touch</th>
<th>Inspiring</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>83 (65%)</td>
<td>52 (41%)</td>
<td>50 (39%)</td>
<td>46 (36%)</td>
<td>69 (54%)</td>
<td>14 (11%)</td>
<td>46 (36%)</td>
<td>23 (18%)</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>61 (78%)</td>
<td>35 (45%)</td>
<td>37 (47%)</td>
<td>37 (47%)</td>
<td>56 (72%)</td>
<td>7 (9%)</td>
<td>38 (49%)</td>
<td>17 (22%)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>21 (58%)</td>
<td>11 (31%)</td>
<td>13 (36%)</td>
<td>17 (47%)</td>
<td>19 (53%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (36%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>17 (74%)</td>
<td>13 (57%)</td>
<td>13 (57%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>14 (61%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>13 (68%)</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
<td>8 (57%)</td>
<td>5 (36%)</td>
<td>9 (64%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>10 (91%)</td>
<td>6 (55%)</td>
<td>6 (55%)</td>
<td>10 (91%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 16

*Negative Trait Information by Issue*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Any Negative</th>
<th>Dishonor-able</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Dumb</th>
<th>Misleads</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Out of Touch</th>
<th>Uninspiring</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>63 (50%)</td>
<td>37 (29%)</td>
<td>11 (9%)</td>
<td>21 (17%)</td>
<td>41 (32%)</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>29 (23%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>35 (45%)</td>
<td>19 (24%)</td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
<td>13 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (32%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>16 (21%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>20 (56%)</td>
<td>10 (28%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>11 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>13 (36%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>8 (42%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (16%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>7 (50%)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

This study begins to explain how U.S. presidential candidates used character traits to build their images and attack those of their opponents in the 2008 and 2012 primary and general elections. Distinctions were drawn between the use of traits in advocacy, attack, and contrast ads; Republican and Democrat candidates; and primary election advertisements and general election advertisements. In addition, this content analysis examined the relationships between the portrayal of specific traits and certain verbal, nonverbal, and production components of advertising. By examining both image and issue advertisements, this study drew conclusions about the use of various issues with character traits.

Theoretical Implications

The findings add to the literature on presidential campaigns, political advertising, and trait ownership. How political candidates choose to build their images and attack their opponents' images has implications for the campaign environment and advertising effects. By priming voters to consider a specific trait to hold more weight or to consider a certain candidates as possessing a given trait, political advertisements alter the standards by which voters evaluate candidates (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). Previous research has found that this alteration in standards can lead to an overall change in presidential evaluations (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Iyengar, Kinder, Peters, & Krosnick, 1984; Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Further understanding the use of character traits in political advertisements can inform future research on candidates and campaigns.
Findings of this study indicate that candidates both appeal to traits considered to be owned by their own parties and trespass upon the traits owned by the opponent’s party, practices described by Hayes’ theory of trait ownership (Hayes 2005, 2011). Even so, finding two significant differences between the frequency with which candidates appeal to their own traits or appeal to the oppositions’ (honorability and in touch) suggests hesitation in further applications of the theory. It is unclear whether candidates are actually trait owning and trespassing or if all candidates attempt to emulate an “ideal candidate.” While the results of this study provide support for the theory of trait ownership, they also provide support for an “ideal candidate,” regardless of partisanship.

Evidence of such an “ideal candidate” implies that both the Republican and Democratic campaigns value the same overall character image. Campaigns push what they believe voters want; this study provides evidence that the campaigns have similar expectations for the candidate personality most desired by voters. This suggests that, although the campaigns have quite different policy positions, they evaluate image in much the same ways. One alternative to this explanation might be that campaigns advertised the same positive traits in an effort to respond to each other’s ad content.

An agenda-setting process might explain the similarity in trait usage, especially in attack and contrast advertisements. For instance, it the Republican Party might air an advertisement attacking the Democratic candidate’s kindness. In responding to the attack, the Democratic Party might run an attack or contrast ad describing the Republican candidate as mean (and perhaps the Democratic candidate as kind). Agenda setting might be occurring from ad to ad, in an attack-rebuttal process. It might also be that news
coverage influences campaign advertisements in similar ways, regardless of the party. For example, the Democratic attack against McCain as “too old and ‘erratic’ to serve as president in these trouble economic times” can be attributed to increased economic news coverage in the fall of 2008 (Hardy, 2010 p. 72). Considering the strong relationship between issues and image, and that media have the power to set the campaign issue agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), it is likely that media coverage impacts the campaign image agenda as well.

Character trait usage was much different in the 2008 and 2012 primary elections and 2008 and 2012 general elections. There were significant differences for each positive character trait except kindness, with the traits more likely to be shown in primary advertisements than in general election advertisements. At the same time, lack of honorability, weakness, unintelligence, poor leadership, being out of touch, and negative trait content in general were significantly more likely to be in general election ads than in primary election ads.

Candidates have incentive to focus on their positive image during the primaries. Oftentimes, the candidate is not yet well-known by the American public and needs to reveal his or her character, which is done largely through televised campaign advertisements. Additionally, candidates must debate their issue positions in a means to distinguish themselves from candidates who hold similar issue perspectives (Abramowitz, 1989). In doing so, their image might be perceived as even more important than during the general election, as it can serve to separate a candidate from the pack. Ultimately, the candidate who wins the primary election is purported to be the party’s
ideal candidate. In order to be perceived as such, candidates run ads focused on their honorability, strength, intelligence, leadership, kindness, ways of being in touch with the people, and inspiration.

During the general election, the candidate is pitted against a candidate from the opposing party. As such, it is more acceptable to attack the opponent and focus on his or her negative traits. In a two-party system, the opponent can be sold as the villain while the candidate is the hero. Therefore, candidates continue to appeal to positive traits, but they also attack or provide contrast with the opponent’s negative character traits. Such manipulation of image can be effective in both bolstering the candidate’s image and mobilizing the electorate to vote for fear of the dishonorable, unintelligent opponent who has poor leadership skills and does not understand people like them winning the White House. This shift in advertised character content suggests that campaigns value strategy over actual character. These findings support the shift in campaign communication that occurs between the primary and general elections and encourages theoretical applications to make distinctions between the two contexts.

Findings relating character traits to specific issues pair two disparate areas of political communication research: candidate image and issues. The trait information accompanying the issues seems to have been strategically chosen to match the issue at hand. By pairing health care with information on kindness and being in touch with the public, the campaigns imply that their candidates care about viewers, their health, and their accessibility to health care. By pairing the economy with information on intelligence, leadership, and being in touch, campaigns imply that their candidates are
both capable of handling economic concerns and doing so in a way that benefits or takes care of the public. These and other relationships between trait information and issue content illustrate that campaigns combine image and issue. Therefore, future research on political campaign advertising might avoid focusing on either image or issue advertisements, as the two are inextricably paired.

Some of the patterns found between character trait information and issue content might be context-dependent. For example, the United States economy worsened in 2008 and was a major campaign issue (Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010). Additionally, the federal budget deficit hit a record high $455 billion in October 2008 (Congressional Budget Office, 2008) and rose to $1.1 trillion for the 2012 fiscal year (Congressional, Budget Office, 2012). Although issue content on the economy was accompanied by positive trait information 78% of the time, especially information pertaining to good leadership, the deficit was more often paired with positive trait content. Of all the ads mentioning the deficit, 91% contained positive trait content, 55% honorability, 55% strength, 55% intelligence, and 91% good leadership. In doing so, the campaigns used the deficit to sell their candidates as trustworthy, competent, and intelligent leaders who command respect.

It is likely these associations were made more often with the deficit than with the economy because the deficit is more difficult for individuals to understand and relate to. If a candidate attempts to appear productive and trustworthy with regard to fixing the economy, a viewer can easily picture an unemployed friend or the price of filling his or her car’s gas tank. When a candidate attempts to appear so with regard to handling the
deficit, a viewer does not have easily accessible information to the contrary. Not to mention, by appealing to a difficult to understand issue, the candidate can more easily appear intelligent (that is, the candidate is purporting to be knowledgeable about something the viewer most likely does not understand, making the viewer more inclined to find the candidate intelligent). Nonetheless, the relationship between the deficit and positive trait information hinges on issue salience. If the deficit is not a salient issue in 2016, it is unlikely that it will be as frequently associated with positive character traits.

Another context-dependent issue in the 2008 and 2012 elections was Medicare and Social Security. The issue was made salient by discussion and debate on health care reform. Though the deficit was largely used with positive trait information, 86% of the ads including information on Medicare or Social Security contained negative trait information. While the deficit was used to express that the candidate himself was capable and prepared of handling the budget and the United States gross domestic product (GDP), Medicare and Social Security were used to attack the opponent.

Of all the ads featuring at least one of the top eight issues, half contained negative trait information, 29% a lack of honorability, 9% weakness, 3% meanness, and 23% being out of touch. In comparison, 43% of Medicare and/or Social Security ads contained lack of honorability, 29% weakness, 29% meanness, and 43% being out of touch. Ads used Medicare and Social Security to describe opponents as uncompasionate candidates who do not understand people like you. Rather than using Medicare and Social Security to show what a candidate can accomplish as President, campaigns used the issue to show what the other candidate could take away or do to hurt the public. Without the context of
health care reform, it is unlikely viewers would be concerned with the threat of a candidate changing Medicare.

The campaigns used traits and issues included in this study in a variety of ways. Such results encourage a blurring of the line between theory concerning the candidate and theory focused on issue and policy. Though past research has found that perceptions of candidate traits can influence vote choice above and beyond issue evaluations (Bishin, Stevens, & Wilson, 2006; Pierce, 1993), it is likely that image influences issue and issue influences image prior to individuals providing survey responses, in ways that they cannot recall or consciously report. The current study provides evidence encouraging the examination of image and issue together. Rather than extend issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) to trait ownership (Hayes, 2005), it would be more heuristically beneficial to unite the two areas of research.

Limitations

The limitations of this study concern its methodology. A small sample size, especially when separating advertisements by function, limits the analyses and findings. This limitation was managed by using chi-square tests of independence. Even so, the answer to Research Question 1 was weakened by not having enough advertisement aspects and production components present in the ads viewed to draw connections between those components and character traits.

Additionally, only two election years were considered in this analysis. The Democratic presidential candidate was the same in both elections, which might have influenced the traits the Democratic Party appealed to. Findings that might be context-
specific, such as Medicare and negative trait information, are a valuable addition to the literature, as long as one does not attempt to generalize from them to other elections with different contexts.

For instance, Medicare might have been paired with positive trait information in the 2000 general election. Democratic candidate Al Gore supported a lockbox to make prescriptions affordable; Republican candidate George Bush supported an “Immediate Helping Hand” program that would give money to states for seniors (New York Times, 2000). During presidential debates, both candidates spoke about how they would improve Medicare and protect older adults (New York Times, 2000). As both candidates campaigned on bettering Medicare in ways that would benefit their constituents, it is likely campaign advertisements would contain positive trait information. Specifically, ads might pair Medicare with good leadership (improving policy) and compassion (taking care of voters). Extending the analysis to include additional elections would allow the examination of issue and trait combinations over time to determine which pairings are context-dependent and which pairings endure.

This analysis was also limited by the utilization of seven broad character traits. It possible differences in character trait use were masked by such an aggregation. For instance, if the Democratic Party appealed to fairness in 75% of their ads and honesty in 25% of their ads, while the Republican Party appealed to honesty in 75% of their ads and fairness in 25% of their ads, the results would imply that both Parties focused on honorability in half their ads. Even so, findings showing similar use of traits by the
parties in appeal, attack, and contrast ads suggest that the use of more specific traits would not differ by party.

**Future Research**

Additional research might pursue either a broader content analysis of televised political advertisements or test the effects of such advertisements. Both of these areas would provide findings that extend current research on candidate image, the relationship between image and issue, priming, and voting.

Future content analyses might increase the amount of traits measured, the years of presidential elections included, or the type of election considered. Although the traits in this study were grouped as they naturally clustered together, they might still be considered distinct traits. For instance, fairness has to do with being impartial while trustworthiness has to do with being dependable or reliable. More extensive coder training or utilization computer-based content analysis software might yield reliability among the components of each trait. For example, it might be possible to separate honorability into has integrity/moral, fair, honest, trustworthy, and honorable, rather than combine the individual traits into one overall trait. Accomplishing such would allow a more detailed examination of candidate character. In addition, it would be valuable to extend content analysis efforts beyond the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections to other presidential campaigns as well as senatorial, congressional, gubernatorial, and local races.

Experimental research might test the manipulation of various traits. For instance, holding all else constant, what are the effects of appealing to “good leadership” or “good work ethic”? Answering such questions would not only add to the literature on media and
advertising effects, but also inform content analysis efforts (e.g., if similar detailed traits have the same effects, it makes sense to combine them into one broad trait). Considering the relationship between image and issue content, researchers might test whether image information is more effective on its own or when compared with an issue and vice versa. Researchers might also examine the influence of image content given current events (e.g., after a natural disaster, is it more effective to appeal to compassion or being in touch with the public?).

In conclusion, the Republican and Democratic Parties used trait content in the 2008 and 2012 elections in similar ways. Though this might provide support for trait ownership and trait trespassing, it could also be considered support for a “candidate ideal” that both Parties strive to emulate in their chosen candidates. There were significant differences between character traits and election type, with positive trait information used more often in primary election advertisements and negative trait information used more often in general election advertisements. This encourages the distinction between primary and general elections in presidential campaign research. Issue and image content were paired in a variety of ways, supporting the examination of image and issue in conjunction. This heuristically provocative finding suggests that rather than extend issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) to trait ownership (Hayes, 2005), communication scholars would benefit from further uniting issue theory and research with image theory and research.
APPENDIX A: CODEBOOK

Ads are located at http://pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns/

- Coder initials – first and last initial
- Unit number
- Ad title
- Date
  - Use the date provided in the title of the advertisement (MM/DD/YY)
- Election
  - 2008 Democratic Primary (abbreviated as 2008 Dem)
  - 2008 Republican Primary (2008 GOP)
  - 2008 General Election (2008 Gen)
  - 2012 Democratic Primary (2012 Dem)
  - 2012 Republican Primary (2012 GOP)
  - 2012 General Election (2012 Gen)
- Advertisement number
  - Each advertisement number begins with 1 for the given election. This is not synonymous with unit number.

➔ Unit number, ad title, election, and ad number will be provided to you.

- Candidate (only last name is needed). Please code whichever candidate appears most in the advertisement (regardless of which candidate is sponsoring the ad). e.g., If the ad is attacking Obama, you would code Obama (even if the ad would be benefiting McCain, not Obama).
- RULE: For contrast ads, please code both candidates shown in the ad, with the candidate appearing positive first. e.g., if the ad is giving positive information about Newt Gingrich and negative information about Mitt Romney, you would code the candidate as: Gingrich/Romney.
  - Other
    - Democrat
  - Barack Obama
  - Hillary Clinton
  - John Edwards
  - Bill Richardson
  - Dennis Kucinich
    - Republican
- John McCain
- Fred Thompson
- Mike Huckabee
- Willard Mitt Romney
- Rick Santorum
- Newt Gingrich
- Michele Bachmann
- Ron Paul
- Rick Perry
  Independent
- Ralph Nader
- Bob Barr

• Party Identification
• RULE: For contrast ads, please code party IDs in the same order as the candidates (with the candidate appearing positive first). e.g., if the ad is giving positive information about Newt Gingrich and negative information about Mitt Romney, you would code Party ID as Rep/Rep. If the ad is giving positive information about Obama and negative information about McCain, you would code Dem/Rep.
  - Republican (Rep)
  - Democrat (Dem)
  - Independent (Ind)
  - Other (specify)

• Focus
  - Candidate – positive focus/appeal (Appeal)
  - Opponent – negative focus/attack (Attack)
  - Contrast – positive focus on candidate/negative focus on opponent (Contrast)

• Length of commercial
  - 5 to 17 seconds (5 to 17)
  - 17 to 32 seconds (17 to 32)
  - 33 to 47 seconds (33 to 47)
  - 47 to 62 seconds (47 to 62)
  - Longer than one minute (specify however many seconds)

• Advertisement sponsor: Code based on visual text shown at the end of the advertisement.
  - Committee for election/reelection (Campaign)
  - Other (specify)
    + Note: For all the ads you’ll be coding after training, the sponsor should be the committee for election/reelection, i.e., the candidate’s campaign. However, I request that you please verify that each ad is indeed from the campaign (by paying attention to the text at the end of the spot). Thank you!
• Music
  - Not present
  - Classical (Classical)
  - Modern (pop, rock, jazz) (Modern)
  - Instrumental (background but cannot be defined as classical or modern) (Instrum)
  - Marching band (MB)
  - Trumpet or announcing music (Trumpet)
  - Folk music, country, western (Folk)
  - National anthem (Anthem)
  - Other (specify)
  - Combination (specify)

• Who is speaking? (dominant)
  - Candidate (Cand)
  - Government official or office-holder (Gov)
  - Anonymous announcer (Anon)
  - Non-government celebrity (Celeb)
  - Spouse or family member (Fam)
  - Combination (specify)
  - Other (specify)

• Does a candidate or party representative appear in the spot?
  - No
  - Yes, candidate or party sponsoring ad (Cand/Party)
  - Yes, opponent(s) of candidate or party sponsoring ad (Opp)
  - Both appear (Both)

• If yes, is the candidate or party member presented:
  - Positively (Pos)
  - Negatively (Neg)
  - Neutrally (Neu)
  - Both positive and negative (Pos/Neg)

• Does family appear in the spot?
  - Spouse (Spouse)
  - Other family member (Other Fam)
  - Children (Kids)
  - Spouse and children (Spouse & Kids)
  - Spouse, children, and other family member(s) (S, C, & Other)
  - Other combination of family (Other)
  - No family (None)
• Candidate Dress (dominant)
  - Formal (e.g., suit)
  - Casual (e.g., shorts, jeans)
  - Varied (see the candidate in both formal and casual attire)
  - Not applicable (no candidate present)

• Sound (dominant)
  - Live – sound is live and on-video directly from person speaking (Live)
  - Sound-over – sound is placed over video (S-O)
  - Not applicable

• Emphasis of ad
  - Issue(s)
  - Image

• Positive trait (explicit or inferred): Code only if there is a clearly discernible reference to character. Trait can be verbally identified in audio and/or on-screen or implied. Code X (yes) or 0 (no) for each trait.
  - Please first code whether any positive trait information is present. X = yes, 0 = no.
  - Please note: To code yes for “Leads,” the ad does not have to describe the candidate as a good, competent, productive, and humble leader with a good work ethic who sets a good example. Any of those traits would warrant a code of X/yes. For example, the ad could describe the candidate as a good leader OR competent.
    + Honorable: Honest, moral, and fair
      = Has integrity/moral, fair, honest, trustworthy, honorable
    + Strong: Firmness
      = Strong, commands respect
    + Smart: Knowledgeable and intelligent
      = Knowledgeable, intelligent
    + Leads: Possessing good leadership
      = Good leader, good work ethic, competent, productive, sets a good example, humble (with regard to power)
    + Nice: Kind and caring
      = Compassionate, kind, cares about people like you
    + In touch: In touch with ordinary people like you
      = Shares your values, understands people like you, in touch with ordinary people
    + Inspiring: Inciting positive influence
      = Inspirational
• Negative trait (explicit or inferred): Code only if there is a clearly discernible reference to character. Trait can be verbally identified in audio and/or on-screen or implied. Code X (yes) or 0 (no) for each trait.
  - Please first code whether any negative trait information is present. X = yes, 0 = no.
  - Please note: As with the positive traits, the candidate does not have to be described as all the traits within a given category for it to count. One reference = Code X/yes.
    + Dishonorable = Lacks integrity/moral, unfair, dishonest, untrustworthy, dishonorable
    + Weak = Weak
    + Dumb = Unknowledgeable, unintelligent
    + Misleads = Poor leader, poor work ethic, incompetent, unproductive, sets poor example/does not set a good example, power hungry, does not command respect
    + Mean = Uncompassionate, unkind, does not care about people like you
    + Out of touch = Does not share your values, does not understand people like you/misunderstands people like you, not in touch with ordinary people
    + Uninspiring = Uninspiring

• Dominant trait
  - Rule: Of the traits in the ad, code which trait is dominant (i.e., mentioned most)

• Issues (any present)
  + International or foreign affairs (International)
  + War; military; defense spending (Military)
  + Economic concerns (inflation, unemployment jobs) (Econ)
  + Deficit/need to balance budget (Deficit)
  + Taxes
  + Welfare reform (Welfare)
  + Crime/prisons/penalties/gun control (Crime)
  + Drugs
  + Concern for children or children’s issues (Kids)
  + Education
  + Medicare/Social Security/problems of older adults (Medicare)
  + Abortion
  + Birth control/contraception (BC)
  + Climate change/global warming/environmental concerns (Climate)
  + Health care
  + Immigration
  + Other (specify)

• Dominant issue
  - Rule: Of the issues in the ad, code which issue is dominant (i.e., mentioned most)
• American symbols. Code X (yes) or 0 (no) for each symbol. Pictures of them count.
  + Flag
    - Rule: A flag pin on one’s label *does* count
  + National colors (red, white, and blue) (Colors)
    - Rule: A navy blue suit with a white shirt & red tie does *not* count
  + National bird (Eagle)
  + Famous American landscapes (Landscapes)
  + The White House and/or other D.C. landmarks (White House)
  + Famous patriotic songs (America the Beautiful, My Country ’Tis of Thee, the Star-Spangled Banner, God Bless America, You’re A Grand Old Flag) (Songs)
  + Famous documents (e.g., Constitution, Declaration of Independence) (Docs)
  + Representations of prior presidents (Pres) – Pictures count
  + Soldier(s)/Troops, active or veterans (Soldiers)
  + Other famous patriotic symbols (specify)
REFERENCES


