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There's No Crying in Politics:
Emotional and Issue Based Voter Responsiveness to
Political Campaign Advertising

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Abstract

The goal of my research is to examine the impact of television political campaign advertising on voters. Elections are a fundamental aspect of the liberal democratic system in the United States and the primary ways in which the general public holds power and influence over elected officials. Unless a politician can succeed in getting elected, he or she will have little to no impact on government overall. As a result, politicians devote an exorbitant amount of time, effort and resources to convincing voters to give their support.

This study seeks to measure how voters respond to campaign advertisements as they encounter the ads. To achieve this, participants in the study were administered a baseline survey and then shown a series of 10 presidential campaign advertisements. Following each ad, respondents were asked to rank those featured in the advertisement on a series of character issues, describe the issues discussed, and make a vote choice for that election. I anticipate that respondents will have a basic emotional reaction to the advertisements which will be reflected in their character scores. These scores, along with factors such as ideology, will be able to predict vote choice.

In today's world, information about politics reaches the average citizen in a variety of ways. Often times, the source of one's political information is a reflection of his or her interest in government. Those who are most interested in American politics may follow political blogs, partisan shows on cable news networks, or even the editorial sections of their favorite newspaper. In our modern political system, it has never been easier to follow the actions of government, party platforms, and election statistics because they are constantly broadcast over the television airwaves or mere seconds away on the nearest computer. With so many media sources available, it is important to examine what type of overall impact this readily available information has on the voting public. Furthermore, any such examination must be paired with an understanding of the processes individuals employ to make decisions on Election Day.

The goal of my thesis is to examine the impact of political campaign advertising on voters. Since the 1952 presidential election, television advertising has become an integral part of the electoral strategy of those seeking the nation's highest office. With each passing election cycle, more focus and resources are being spent to put together successful advertising strategies. In the 2008 election alone, the two candidates spent a combined \$361 million on ads targeting specific interests, issues, geographic areas, and character attributes. This, of course, was only the candidates themselves and doesn't even account for the millions in additional funds that were spent by the Republican and Democratic National Committees and countless interest groups to run spots favoring their candidate or issue preferences.

With that said, it is obvious that certain advertising strategies lead voters to reach different conclusions than others. While some may appeal to intellect and reason, others capitalize on triggers such as fear or a sense of patriotism. In addition, advertisements in a general election may be aimed at encouraging the base supporters to go to the polls, discourage voters from the opposition's side, or to win over centrist, independent, and moderate voters from

the opposing party. With so much election strategy and funds directed toward advertising, political scientists are forced to examine the impact that this has on the voting public. Do these advertisements actually change the minds of voters and propel candidates to victory? Is he that is ultimately victorious the candidate that best navigates the airwaves?

Speaking plainly about elections, Andrew Jackson once said, “To the victors, belong the spoils.” In our political system, it does not matter which candidate has the most natural intelligence, the most logical platform, or best plan of action. When all is said and done, he who wins governs. No matter how flawed or morally questionable an individual may be, if he is the first past the post, his rule is legitimate. It is for this reason that this study is relevant to political science. To understand the decisions made by the voting public allows us to ultimately evaluate the individuals they elect. Furthermore, it allows us to see whether elected officials are truly portraying a direction they will pursue in office or merely the ones who are most successful at triggering voters’ fears, desires, prejudices, and preferences.

Literature Review

In his book, Television Advertising in Election Campaigns: Air Wars, Darrell M. West provides a detailed account of how the use of television advertising has developed and expanded in political campaigns in the United States from 1952 to 2008 (2008). The author goes on to describe how advertising has developed since it was employed during the 1952 election, becoming more prevalent and influential. West identifies a number of traits that advertisements may use or manipulate such as visual images, visual text, music, voiceovers, editing, and color (3-24). He notes that over time, negative advertising is a tool that has been employed by candidates more regularly, often times very effectively. West’s analysis provides a basis for which to classify, categorize, and assess the content of the ads selected for this study.

In the work, Mass Media and American Politics, Doris A. Graber, examines the growing impact the media has on the political system in the United States (2005). For the most part, Graber does not distinguish between the information that comes directly from the candidate, such as political campaign advertisements, and information that is provided by other sources such as commentary by analysts and journalistic pieces. By not making a distinction though, she provides us with insight into the role that political campaign advertising plays in the collective message received by the voters. According to Graber, journalists tend to refrain from making any type of judgment on the political information they are reporting. Instead, in an attempt to be objective, they provide relatively equal content on each candidate that conveys their message, strategy, and current position in the “horserace” (218-244). Political campaign advertising is a reflection of a candidate’s message and rhetoric, and the content of ads is often mirrored by the media. Politicians seeking office tend to act in a manner that will attract media attention and the media, in turn, amplifies the effect of their rhetoric. As a result, Graber argues that the content of political campaign ads may have an impact on a much larger group of people instead of simply those who view them firsthand.

Graber identifies several key strategies politicians use that resonate with voters. She argues that messages need to be clear and easily understood. Furthermore, she notes that voters tend to have a stronger emotional recall than factual recall for some political information (201-202). For example, people tend to remember the emotions they experienced for events such as September 11, yet recall few of the actual circumstances and facts of the aftermath. Graber’s argument is relevant to my study because I argue that political campaign advertisements spark an emotional response in voters that can be recalled even if they are unable to recall the specific issues presented in the advertisement. Thus, the ability of an advertisement to trigger such a response is what ultimately makes a given ad effective.

While the content provided by the media is certainly important, when analyzing political campaign advertising it is equally important to consider differences in the people who are receiving the information. In, “Politicos, Apoliticals, and the Processing of Political Information,” Lodge and Wahlke examine the differences in recall levels between politically sophisticated individuals and those with a lesser interest in politics (1982). According to the authors, politically sophisticated individuals display a more active interest in politics, seek out information based on these interests, and are generally more polarized on the political spectrum (138). As the authors acknowledge, the structure of their experiment was flawed in a number of ways. Namely, their survey sample was not representative being that it consisted of a narrow age range and they failed to justify their specific categories of political ideas and concepts. Even with those limitations, however, Lodge and Wahlke’s findings are important. They found that politically sophisticated individuals have a significantly higher rate of recalling political symbols, ideas, and other related stimuli (146-149). If Lodge and Wahlke are correct, individuals who are interested in politics will have a greater command of the language, rhetoric, and ideas being conveyed in political advertising. As a result, politically sophisticated individuals may interpret political campaign advertising in a different way than people without that specified knowledge.

While logic would follow that politically sophisticated individuals would recall more political information, evidence indicates that there are other areas where politically sophisticated individuals receive and process political information differently than other citizens. In “Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making,” Lau and Redlawsk outline some of the shortcuts that are employed by voters to simplify their decision making process (2001). These basic shortcuts (or heuristics) include factors such as party affiliation, ideology, endorsements, political polls, and the physical appearance of the candidate.

According to Lau and Redlawsk, politically sophisticated individuals are more likely to use heuristics when making decisions. Effective use of a heuristic is defined by using a shortcut to determine a vote choice that most accurately reflects a voter's issue preferences when compared to the stances of the candidates. Furthermore, these subjects also used heuristics more effectively because they were able to place into context their political views in conjunction with a given heuristic. Politically sophisticated voters, however, are not the only ones using these shortcuts. Heuristics appear to be used by almost all voters according to Lau and Redlawsk (958-959). Since these methods are so widely employed by voters, political campaign advertising may attempt to capitalize on these shortcuts in order to be effective in their message. For my study, this requires that a baseline survey be administered to participants prior to witnessing the ads to determine which heuristics, such as party identification, they may be particularly inclined to use. Also, it requires an analysis of the ads used in the study to determine what content is aimed at manipulating which voter heuristics.

With the exception of some politically sophisticated individuals though, the average person in the United States appears to know very few of the basic facts about our political system. In fact, when surveyed during even the most publicized political campaigns, most voters can produce few, if any, concrete stances of the candidates involved and any that they do recall are typically general, blanket statements. Thus, some scholars have reached the conclusion that voters are uninformed at levels that do not bode well for any democratic system of government. However, in Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh's article, "An Impression-Drive Model of Candidate Evaluation," a very different view of voters is presented (1989). The authors do not refute any of the evidence presented in other works, agreeing that voters have low levels of recall and are more likely to remember evidence that is consistent with their current political beliefs. Instead, they attempt to compare a memory-based model of processing to an impression based model. In

short, their findings indicate that the memory-based model is much too taxing for individuals to use in a decision making process because it requires storing relevant political information in one's long term memory, recalling and evaluating it at the correct time, and basing a decision on the conclusions drawn (400-401). In contrast, the "on-line processing" system does not place nearly as much burden on the human processing system. In this model of decision making, individuals keep a "summary tally" of the pros and cons of a given decision. When a new piece of information is encountered, these individuals determine if the information is relevant enough to have an impact on their overall decision and update their tally with another pro or con point. Once this process is completed, they are able to discard the details of the original piece of information and simply remember the new, "summary tally." (401-402)

Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh's theory on on-line processing is particularly relevant when considering political campaign advertising because people encountering this type of information are already aware that they will ultimately be using it to make a decision. As a result, they are more likely to use an on-line method than they would be in cases where they receive information without the task of making a decision lying in front of them. It is also important to note that the authors found that politically sophisticated individuals were less likely to remember specific issues held by a candidate that match their preferences and also less likely to project their preferences incorrectly on a candidate (414-415). Those who have less political knowledge, on the other hand, were more likely to both recall specific policy preferences that matched their views and to project incorrect views on a candidate. Overall, however, since both groups utilize an "on-line process," voters' responses to political advertising may be most accurate immediately following their encounter with the information. For my study, this indicates that the most effective time to gauge a voter's response to an advertisement is immediately after he or she witnesses the ad. While they may certainly forget much of the content of the advertisement,

a respondent should be able to provide an initial response of how positive or negative their views are of the candidate(s) featured. This is most likely the information that they will ultimately store and recall when voting.

In a subsequent work by Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau (1995) entitled, “The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation,” many of the ideas of “on-line processing” are supported. The authors conclude that voters are generally responsive to the campaign information they receive instead of merely basing their decisions on party identification or other shortcuts (321-322). This responsiveness was generally not reflected by the information voters could recall. If Lodge, *et. al.*, are correct and voters are responsive to campaign information overall, the implication is that political campaign advertising can impact the decisions of voters. To do this, however, it is not necessary for the content of the advertisement to be remembered. Instead, the most effective political campaign advertisements will have the greatest impact on the “summary tally” of voters.

If the evidence presented by Lodge and his colleagues is reflective of the decision making process that voters use to make decisions about vote choice, it is important to consider what type of information voters have at their disposal when making these “summary tally” judgments. In the work, The Reasoning Voter, Samuel L. Popkin attempts to construct a general theory of voting to explain the “gut reasoning” employed by voters at the polls. In short, he argues that individuals combine the information they have received from their own past experiences and daily life with the information that is presented to them in a campaign in order to reach a conclusion. The daily life information can be acquired from a person’s employment or status as a full time student. It can also be impacted by the government programs that the individual or individual’s friends and relatives benefit from. For example, a person who receives Social Security or Medicare will naturally be more in tune to the intricacies of that particular program

and, in turn, be more sensitive to campaign information about that issue (24-25). As a result, we receive a view of the voting public as “issue voters,” or individuals that care a great deal about one or a small set of issues which primarily determines their vote choice.

The author notes, however, that this is not the only factor that voters consider when deciding who to cast their ballots for. For example, Popkin identifies competence as one of the other factors that voters use to evaluate the field of possible candidates (61-62). Voters, he argues, may be inclined to support the candidate that they feel is most able to carry out campaign promises rather than the one who most closely matches their policy preferences. Specifically for the office of the Presidency, voters with limited information may seek out the candidate they feel is best equipped to manage the country on a daily basis. Also, since it is uncertain what types of problems a sitting President will face during his term, competency is the best gauge that voters have at their disposal to evaluate candidates on their ability to not only deal with current problems, but future problems as well. Many factors, of course, can play into this evaluation, ranging from past experience and incumbency to educational background and overall intelligence. In addition to this type of evaluation, Popkin notes that voters also appear to evaluate candidates based on the candidate’s relationship to his or her own message. As voters watch candidates present their views to the American public, they examine the candidates to see if they truly have a personal connection to their platform or if they are merely taking stances that they feel will get them elected (70-71)

Moving on from these voter shortcuts, Popkin describes some of the ways that voters process information and form images of candidates. For example, he points out that voters do not always account for the fact that they may have different levels of information about the candidates (72-75). As a result, new candidates in a national election can both benefit and suffer from a voter’s limited amount of information. If there is a small amount of generally positive

information about a candidate, he or she can appear to be less-flawed than more experienced opponents. At the same time, small amounts of negative information about that candidate may damage his or her chances to the point that they are no longer viable.

Lastly, Popkin discusses how candidates present their arguments in relation to one another. He argues that voters seek simple, logical differences between candidates to serve as a basis for their vote choice. As a result, candidates often point out ways that they specifically differ from another candidate (92-95). These obvious differences will more than likely be the subject of candidates' rhetoric, political campaign advertisements, and overall strategy.

For my study, Popkin's section on issue voting has led me to carefully assess the issue preferences of participants and isolate the specific issue topics covered in the individual ads. In addition, since voters make judgments based on the sincerity of a candidate, respondents were asked to evaluate the strength and importance of the argument in each ad. This should measure if voters perceive the message is weak or lacks sincerity. Popkin's argument about voter access to differing amounts of information on candidates is helpful in dealing with the respondents' access to advertisements from different presidential elections. Since respondents will logically have more information about the advertisements from the most recent elections, past ads will more than likely have a greater impact on the reactions of the respondents because they have less information to place the ads in context. Lastly, Popkin's discussion of shortcuts speaks to a theme that is present in many of the advertisements of the study. The candidates who are best able to create clear differences between themselves and their opponents may ultimately have the most effective advertisements.

Data and Methods

The data was collected from a set of surveys administered to undergraduate college students with ages ranging from 18 to 24. Each attends a private college in the Northeastern part

of the United States. During the baseline survey, each was asked a series of background questions, including family income, party identification, and level of political interest. In addition to this, respondents were asked to rank a series of character traits and issues on a scale of how important those factors are to them as voters. A complete copy of the survey that was administered is available in the Appendix 1.

Specifically, participants were examined in an experimental setting in order to determine the effects witnessing presidential television advertisements had on their decision making process. Each respondent was administered a baseline survey to determine political affiliations, party identification, interest in politics, and several other factors that might impact their voter patterns. During this baseline, they were also asked to rank the importance of a series of issues and character traits on a scale of one to five. Following the baseline, individuals watched 10 carefully selected presidential campaign ads from past elections. The ads shown were selected to represent a wide range of issues and traits that voters would encounter. The set contained comparison, positive, and negative advertisements from presidential elections ranging from the 1976 election to 2008. Every election is represented with the exception of the 2000 campaigns. The advertisements contain a variety of traits including visual texts, footages of candidates and/or their opponents, and bipartisan appeals. While some advertisements focus primarily on issues and stances that the candidate holds, others focus on past records or character traits and personal descriptions. After each advertisement, participants were asked to rank the candidates featured in the ad on the same character traits. They were also asked a series of questions regarding their thoughts on the effectiveness of the argument presented and who, if any, of the candidates they would have voted for.

All of the advertisements were roughly thirty seconds in length and were shown only once prior to asking for responses from participants. Each election year was represented by at

least one advertisement with the exception of the 2000 election between then Vice President Al Gore and George W. Bush. Two years, the 1988 and 2008 elections, had two ads contained in the set (for full descriptions of the ads see Appendix 2).

Of the set of 10 advertisements, three can be broadly classified as positive, five as negative advertisements, and the final two compared both candidates in the election. Seven of the ads were sponsored by Republican presidential candidates, while the other three were produced by Democratic campaigns. This can be attributed to the overall success of the Republicans in presidential elections during the time period examined. Of the ten ads, seven focused on or mentioned specific issues, two were biographical ads, and one was almost strictly a character attack. The ads also contained unique traits that went beyond these classifications. Since they were all taken from presidential elections, many of them were aimed at convincing centrist voters to either support or reject a specific candidate. Two advertisements, however, made very specific bipartisan appeals. In one case, the candidate argues that he is not a traditional partisan. In the other case, the ad features a member of the opposite party in the ad and ends with visual texts asking voters from that party to support him. For example, one of the advertisements from Ronald Reagan ends with the words, “Democrats for Reagan.” Another unique trait present in some of the advertisements is visual footage used in a manner that is contrary to its original purpose. For example, in the ad entitled “Windsurfing” from 2004, images of John Kerry windsurfing were shown throughout the thirty second spot. Originally this footage was taken because the Kerry campaign wanted voters to see his active lifestyle. Instead, in this advertisement, his opponent was able to take the footage and constantly reverse it back and forth to illustrate the idea of Kerry “flip-flopping.” Of the four advertisements that used this type of footage, three used footage of the opponent that was targeted, while the fourth advertisement featured the opponent’s primary challenger. The advertisement depicting the

primary challenger was unique in that it used a member of the Democratic Party to point out flaws in the democratic presidential nominee.

Advertisements from past presidential elections were selected for a number of reasons. First, since they were readily available, it allowed for the survey to be easily administered. Second, and quite possibly the most important, it allowed for voters to react to candidates of which they already possess some prior knowledge, much like an actual election. Of course, since all of the respondents were born in 1986 or later, their set of knowledge varies greatly depending on the year of the election. For the most part, the group examined would have been able to vote in the 2008 election and a select few in 2004. As a result, these elections signify years where respondents may have formed an opinion knowing that they would have to make a vote choice. By contrast, all of the elections prior to the 2000 election year would not have required them to make a vote choice so the information they have received about these candidates is based mostly on how history has documented their political careers.

After viewing each of the advertisements, respondents were asked to rank each candidate on the series of character traits that were presented to them in the baseline survey. Collectively, these character trait scores were combined into one composite score to reflect a respondent's overall view of a given candidate. This score allows for a comparison of how voters react to different candidates, as well as how their reactions to the same candidate change after seeing different advertisements involving that candidate. These character traits were identical to the set that was ranked originally in the baseline survey. It is important to note that while these are certainly not the only character dimensions upon which a voter might judge a candidate, respondents across the board ranked the set as extremely important during the baseline survey. As a result, we can assume that candidates who are ranked favorably in these areas received that ranking because of a positive response from voters. Likewise, candidates receiving low

character scores by respondents received those scores because of a negative response from respondents. Respondents were also asked to rank the effectiveness of the message, the importance of the information contained in the ad, and whether the message changed their perception of any of the candidates. After viewing the ad, respondents were asked if their perception of the candidate's stance on the issues changed and if their perception of the candidate's character had changed. Next, respondents were asked which, if any, of the candidates they would have voted for in the general election if they had the opportunity to vote. They were also asked to indicate whether this decision was based on the candidate's party affiliation, character, issue stance, or some other factor(s).

To analyze this data set, a separate linear regression was run for each of the tens ads. The dependent variable was the respondent's voter choice. The vote choice was scaled on a range from least desirable to most desirable response when based on the advertisement. For example, if an ad is supporting a Democrat, a vote for the Republican candidate would be the lowest score and coded as 1, a decision to not vote would be the middle value and coded as 2, and a vote for the Democratic candidate would be the highest value and coded as 3. This scale was decided for two reasons. First, strong partisans will be unlikely to vote for a candidate from the opposing party, but may choose not to vote if the candidate from their party is not desirable. The second justification is that certain negative ads may be aimed more at discouraging support of one candidate, rather than inspiring support for the ad's sponsor.

The independent variables in the linear regressions were the composite character scores for the candidates viewed in the advertisements and respondent's assessment of the strength of argument and importance of the issues presented. From the baseline surveys, ideology scores, party identification, and the salience of any issues presented in a given advertisement were included as independent variables as well. In the event that any of these variables lacked in

statistical significance they were removed from the analysis and the model was run again. Since the composite character score is a scale that is based on a subjective assessment, it seemed logical that certain voters would rank candidates higher across the board while others would rank them collectively lower. As a result, a control variable was added to each linear regression that was the average of all the composite character scores for all of the ten advertisements. This was to account for those who have a generally positive view of political candidates versus an overall negative view.

Hypothesis

I anticipate that the data will indicate that respondents' vote choice can be predicted by a number of factors in both the baseline survey and the response to specific advertisements. While numerous factors may impact a voter's decision, I expect that the composite character score for each individual advertisement will be the most successful factor in predicting vote choice. The reason for this expectation is the concept of "online processing" and "summary tally" previously described in the works of Lodge, *et. al.* and the "gut reasoning" described by Popkin. I expect that voters will make an instant, emotional judgment about candidates which will ultimately impact their choice in each election year. For the most part, issue preference will not play a significant role in their decision making process because many issues that are covered in political campaign advertising are ambiguous and difficult for the average respondent to understand. As a result, issue preference will only play a role in the decision making process when issues are simple, clear, and easily processed by respondents. In most cases, however, voters will witness an ad, register whether they like or dislike a specific candidate, and respond according to their "gut reasoning" which will be measured by examining the composite character scores for each individual candidate. For positive advertisements, I expect respondents to generally rank the

targeted candidates higher and for negative advertisements they will rank the targeted candidates lower. Comparison advertisements will have a dual effect, boosting the character scores for the candidate the ad supports and lowering the scores for the candidate the ad attacks.

In addition to these expectations, I anticipate that the amount of time since the election took place will affect the impact of the composite character scores on vote choice. According to the theory of online processing, when voters are faced with making a decision during an election, they will process information as it is received, add this to the current tally for the candidates, and base their decision on which candidate has the higher tally. I expect when viewing ads from the last two presidential elections (2004 and 2008) respondents may have an established summary tally which would mean that voters already have an established view of each candidate and viewing a political campaign ad about those candidates would have a minor impact on vote choice. In such a situation, any information and character judgment about the ad would be affected by the previous tally. By contrast, for election years prior to the 2000 election, it is unlikely that voters will have an established tally or view of the candidates involved. Due to respondents' age (mean= 20.5) ads from these years will have a much greater impact on voters because I expect the ads provide one of the few pieces of information the respondents can utilize for their decision.

In addition to the composite character scores for each candidate, a number of other factors will be examined to determine their impact on vote choice. Of these, I anticipate that ideology will be most predictive and relevant to the respondents' vote choice because it allows for greater variation. A voter selecting their ideology will be able to choose from seven options ranging from strong liberal to strong conservative and assess their views more specifically while for party affiliation, they can only choose between Republican, Democrat, and independent. Also, since all of the respondents are current college students, their selection of party affiliation

may be determined more by their parents and family cues than their personal beliefs and ideals. Furthermore, I expect ideology will be especially relevant for the most recent election cycles since information from these elections probably played some role in determining the ideological worldview of these particular respondents.

In summary, I posit the following hypothesis:

1. Voters will have an emotional reaction to the political campaign advertisements and this will have a greater impact on their vote choice than issue preference.
2. Composite character scores will be more predictive of vote choice for in ads from election years prior to the 2000 presidential election.
3. Ideology will be predictive of vote choice, especially in years following the 2000 election.

Results

Upon the final compilation of the data set for this study, a total of thirty-three persons had completed the survey to be included in the final data set. Of the set of 33 respondents, nine considered themselves Republican, fourteen were Democrats, and the remaining ten described themselves as independent. Ideologically, there was a fairly even breakdown of individuals, with fifteen identifying as some type of liberal, twelve as conservative, and six replying as centrist. It is important to note, however, that the ideological orientation of the sample skewed to the left or more liberal side of the spectrum; most liberals described themselves as “liberal” or “strong liberal” and most conservatives described themselves as “weak conservatives.”

All of the respondents of the survey were college age students roughly age 18 to 24 (mean age=20.59) enrolled at a small private liberal arts college in the northeastern part of the United States. With twenty-one women responding compared to twelve men, the numbers were

significantly skewed towards the female population. With one exception, all of the respondents' yearly family income amounts fell between \$25,000 and \$100,000 yearly. All but two of the participants described themselves as Caucasian.

It is important to note that a small group of respondents was selected for convenience and not representativeness. The results are therefore limited in their level of representativeness. Yet even with these limitations, the findings do reinforce several theories about how voters respond to advertising. The results of the following tests indicate that voters were reacting to the content of the advertising in the way that was intended by the candidates who sponsored the commercials. Advertisements aimed at producing a negative response averaged composite scores for candidates of 2.37 while those aimed at producing positive responses returned scores averaging 3.82. As anticipated, comparison ads resulted in higher scores for the candidate the ad supported and lower scores for the opposing candidate.

For the different types of advertisements, biographical advertisements generally resulted in the highest character composite scores, yet scored lower for importance and strength of argument. By contrast, issue advertisements had lower composite character scores, but higher assessments by respondents regarding their strength and importance of argument. These numbers, however, merely give us an overview of what type of responses the advertisements received collectively. The next step is to analyze and assess the impact of the advertisements on the vote choices of the respondents.

Advertisements—Set 1

First, I analyzed a set of two advertisements that produced the expected response in participants. These advertisements include “Leader 2” by Bill Clinton (1996) and “Reaganomics” by Ronald Reagan (1984). This group of advertisements includes a positive

issue ad and a comparison ad (see data tables 1-2). These advertisements were from elections prior to the 2000 presidential election and therefore, any summary tally that the respondents might have for the candidates involved would not be as well formed as those for later election years. For these regressions, the R-square is relatively high with one having R-square results above .5 and the other with an R-square surpassing .6. This means that, in both cases, more than fifty percent of the variation in vote choice of respondents is explained by the model.

In regard to the composite character scores, in both cases the p-values were statistically significant with values of less than .05. In the case of the Reagan composite character score, the results were highly statistically significant with a p-value of .000. The Clinton advertisement, in turn, had a p-value of .032.

For both of these advertisements, ideology was statistically significant with a p-value of .05 or less. Party identification, on the other hand, was removed from the analysis of these cases as it had no statistical or substantive significance. This is relevant because it means that, as mentioned earlier, due to the age of these specific respondents, self-identified ideology is a more relevant predictor of vote choice than party affiliation.

In regard to the issues discussed in the advertisements, there were no instances where issue rankings were statistically significant in determining vote choice. With that said, however, both advertisements had one issue that was approaching statistical significance with the death penalty .102 for the Clinton ad and cutting government waste at .058 for the Reagan advertisement. With a larger sample, logic would follow that these may also reach statistical significance in the event that there were more respondents tested.

As far as the substantive significance for the independent variables included in the model, the B coefficients for issues and ideology are typically higher than for the composite character scores. The composite character scores, however, are measured on a scale of one to thirty-three

rather than one to seven or one to five like the other variables. Because of this range of values and units of measurement of the two different variables, the standardized beta coefficients are more relevant because they measure the amount of change in the dependent variable as it correlates to one standard deviation change in the independent variables. As a result, in both of the advertisements, the character composite score for one of the candidates returned the highest beta value of all the independent variables, indicating that it is arguably the most important variable in these models. It is worth noting that both included some type of bi-partisan appeal. These were the only two advertisements in the study that included an appeal of this nature.

Advertisements—Set 2

To test my second hypothesis, the results from the next set of advertisements from elections following the 2000 presidential election must be examined. This set includes “Freedom” by John McCain (2008), “Honor” by Barack Obama, and “Windsurfing” by George W. Bush (2004). Collectively, the R-square scores for these regressions were lower than the previous set of advertisements. With that said, these were still significant models, with R-square values ranging from .35 to .49, meaning that the independent variables explained roughly 35% to 50% of the variation in vote choice (see tables 3-5).

As anticipated, the composite character scores for the candidates featured in these ads were less statistically and substantively significant than the previous set of ads. The composite score was not a significant predictor of vote choice for any of these ads. The composite score for John McCain in Obama’s “Honor” advertisement was the closest to approaching statistical significance with a p-value of .196. It is possible that with additional respondents, this score might improve. This variable also displayed substantive significance with a B coefficient value of .04. While this seems low, the scale of this variable once again results in a much higher

standardized coefficient score with a beta value of .313. This means that the variable is as substantively significant as ideology or composite scores in other models.

Overall, the most important independent variable in these three regressions is ideology. The Obama, McCain, and Bush advertisements received p-values of .006, .000, and .002 respectively, making them highly statistically significant. Furthermore, they are also the most substantively significant variables in each model, returning the highest beta values. It is important to note that in one of the regressions, an issue salience variable was important. For Bush's "Windsurfing" advertisement, the issue of education is both statistically and substantively significant in determining vote choice.

These results seem to support the idea that voters use a form of "online processing" when determining vote choice. Clearly, different advertisements caused a different reaction from voters. A positive McCain advertisement resulted in an average character composite of 3.95, while a negative ad resulted in an average composite score of 2.53. However, since the respondents were more familiar with these candidates prior to viewing the ad because of the proximity of these elections, I expect that the respondents had an established summary tally for the candidates. As a result, this assessment has much less of an impact on vote choice.

Advertisements—Set 3

The following discussion pertains to the results of the linear regressions performed for the final five advertisements. This set included "Kennedy" by Ronald Reagan (1980), "Tank" and "Revolving Door" by George H. W. Bush, "Desperate" by Bill Clinton (1996), and "Biography" by Gerald Ford (1976) (see data tables 6-10). Based on content of the advertisements, "Kennedy" and "Tank" are the most similar in this set since they are both attack advertisements that use video footage out of its original context. In both cases, the character

composite scores were not statistically significant, nor did they display large substantive results. For the ad “Kennedy,” the model was statistically significant and explained roughly fifty percent of the variance in respondents’ vote choice. Unlike many other advertisements, however, issue salience appears to be the most predictive independent variable. The issues ranking of both inflation and terrorists are significant ($p=.045$ and $p=.021$ respectively) and have relatively high beta scores, making them substantively significant. Additionally, in this model both these issue ranking scores have results that are more significant than ideology in predicting vote choice.

In regard to the “Tank” advertisement, none of the variables were statistically significant at a .05 level. The R-square score indicates that roughly 17 percent of the variation in vote choice is described by the model. Compared to the analysis of all the other advertisements, the variables in this case do little to explain the vote choice of respondents.

While it is clear that the results for these two advertisements differ greatly from those previously discussed, there may be a reason for this difference. During debriefing, respondents were asked about their reactions to the structure of the survey, the advertisements, and their understanding of the context of the advertisements. In the case of the ad “Kennedy,” a significant number of individuals did not recognize that the individual speaking in the ad was the late Senator Ted Kennedy. In addition to this, almost none of them were aware that Kennedy was a primary candidate during that election cycle against sitting President Jimmy Carter and that this was the source of the footage. As a result, instead of taking cues from those factors, respondents may have taken the speech in the advertisement at face value and reacted to the issues presented.

Similarly, in the Bush advertisement, very few of the voters recognized that it was Michael Dukakis who was depicted in the “Tank” footage. In this advertisement, however, the issues in the advertisement were not significant either. This might be explained by considering the time context of the advertisement. Logic would argue that defense spending would have

been a much more relevant issue to voters during the Cold War and the existence of the Soviet Union. These respondents, however, have no memory of this time period and may not be affected by arguments that were more relevant in that context.

Much like the ad entitled “Tank,” for the ad “Revolving Door” none of the variables were statistically significant at a .05 level. The R-square value for the model was just under .18, meaning that less than 18% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained. The reason for this may be similar to the reason why the independent variables tested were not predictive in the model. Respondents were not familiar with Dukakis, his candidacy or background, and the ad focused on a very specific issue rather than providing a broad overview of the candidate. It is important to note that in both “Tank” and “Revolving Door” high composite character scores (which indicate a negative view of Dukakis) in many cases were linked with a choice to not vote. Since both were negative attack ads and the candidate sponsoring the ad was barely mentioned, witnessing the ad may have led to respondents choosing not to vote rather than supporting the ad sponsor.

Another advertisement that did not produce results that were originally anticipated was “Desperate” by Bill Clinton (1996). The model as a whole is highly statistically significant with a p-value of .001 and an R-square of .503. The most predictive variables in this model were ideology and the issue salience for campaign finance reform. Both were statistically significant at a .05 level and had large standardized coefficient scores indicating substantive significance. While the scores for ideology were anticipated, it is worth examining why this advertisement’s featured issue was particularly relevant in determining vote choice. By observing the issue’s salience itself, and considering it in conjunction with the responses of voters about the content of the advertisement, one gains a clearer view of the significance of the data. When taking the mean of the salience scores for campaign finance reform, one finds that the issue received a score of roughly 2.9 by respondents on a scale of 1 to 5. Of the twenty issues that were ranked

by voters, this is the lowest mean issue salience recorded, which may lead one to believe that the issue is not significant to voters. The range of the values, however, is not clustered around the mean, but instead is fairly evenly distributed, meaning that there is a great deal of variation in the responses. The reason for this variation may be revealed by the responses to one of the only open ended questions of the survey. For each advertisement, respondents were asked the question, “What issue(s) does this ad focus on?” For the advertisement entitled “Desperate,” responses to this question also varied across the board. Some examples of responses from participants include “spending,” “economy,” “foreign policy,” “trade,” and “stealing money from foreign stuff.” With such a wide range of responses, the determining factor in the variation of issue rankings for campaign finance reform may have been comprehension of the issue. In short, some voters knew what campaign finance reform was, while others apparently had no idea. As a result, it is very difficult to have a gut emotional response to an issue that is not understood.

Lastly, the final advertisement that I would like to consider is the 1976 ad entitled “Biography” and produced by Gerald Ford’s campaign. This advertisement is unique in a number of ways. It was the oldest ad in the set that was shown to voters and during administration of the survey it was shown first out of the ten advertisements. The ad is biographical and there are no specific issues mentioned in this advertisement. While there are certainly concepts mentioned in this advertisement that are linked to the specific time period, including the idea of restoring trust in the executive following the Nixon era, this positive ad could very easily be understood in any time period. All of these reasons determined why this advertisement was placed first in the survey. It was likely to be understood, but unlikely to spark overwhelmingly partisan or emotional responses. Thus, it served as a way of introducing respondents to the structure of the survey and ranking systems they would encounter. As a result, the strongest variable in this model appears to be the control variable.

Conclusion

Overall, I found that there was strong evidence to support my hypothesis that political campaign advertising triggers an emotional response in voters. There was clear variation in assessments of each candidate, and in many cases, composite character scores were predictive of vote choice.

The advertisements from the 2004 and 2008 elections returned results that supported my hypothesis. There was variation between advertisement responses and respondents supporting different candidates after seeing different advertisements in the same election. Overall, however, the established “summary tally” for each of these candidates dwarfed the impact of the advertisements on vote choice. In short, it is impossible for a single ad to cancel out all other information a voter has acquired. Instead, an ad can provide a new piece of information to add to existing tallies.

Ideology returned strong results almost across the board and appears to be a key determinant for many voters in this sample. This may be because respondents had more options to choose from than a simple party affiliation question. Of course, it is important to note that the voting behavior of the fringe of the political ideological spectrum is typically easy to predict. This adds to the significance of the results for the character composite scores, which are predictive for some models even while controlling for ideology.

Finally, the other ads indicate the importance of contextual understanding of advertisements by voters. Additional factors come into play when respondents were unable to identify or understand critical facts and information about the issues contained in the advertisement or which might inform in the ad. In short, respondents cannot react to things they do not grasp or fully understand.

Data Table 1, Clinton (Leaders 2, 1996)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.733 ^a	.537	.466	.55148

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), (Death Penalty) , FNLClint2Comp

ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	9.189	4	2.297	7.554	.000 ^a
Residual	7.907	26	.304		
Total	17.097	30			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), (Death Penalty) , FNLClint2Comp

b. Dependent Variable: Vote92_Rscale

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.550	.953		-.578	.569
	(Ideology)	-.158	.069	-.328	-2.305	.029
	FNLClint2Comp	.068	.030	.359	2.265	.032
	(Death Penalty)	.159	.094	.258	1.695	.102
	VoterCompAverage	.075	.042	.288	1.761	.090

a. Dependent Variable: Vote92_Rscale

Data table 2, Reaganomics (Reagan 1984)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.793 ^a	.628	.557	.27962

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Cut Gov Waste), (Ideology), FNLRGN2Comp, FNLMondComp

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.436	5	.687	8.789	.000 ^a
	Residual	2.033	26	.078		
	Total	5.469	31			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Cut Gov Waste), (Ideology), FNLRGN2Comp, FNLMondComp

b. Dependent Variable: Vote84_RGN2Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.377	.458		5.190	.000
	(Ideology)	.075	.034	.276	2.199	.037
	(Cut Gov Waste)	-.105	.053	-.243	-1.983	.058
	FNLRGN2Comp	.047	.008	.773	5.599	.000
	FNLMondComp	.018	.015	.235	1.181	.248
	VoterCompAverage	-.040	.029	-.285	-1.396	.175

a. Dependent Variable: Vote84_RGN2Rescaled

Data table 3, Freedom (McCain 2008)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.703 ^a	.494	.442	.68503

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, FNLMcCN1Comp, (Ideology)

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.300	3	4.433	9.448	.000 ^a
	Residual	13.609	29	.469		
	Total	26.909	32			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, FNLMcCN1Comp, (Ideology)

b. Dependent Variable: Vote08_MC1Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.288	1.068		1.207	.237
	(Ideology)	.401	.089	.677	4.497	.000
	FNLMcCN1Comp	-.004	.027	-.025	-.164	.871
	VoterCompAverage	-.038	.043	-.123	-.873	.390

a. Dependent Variable: Vote08_MC1Rescaled

Data Table 4, Honor (Obama 2008)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.633 ^a	.401	.339	.74043

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), FNLMcC2Comp

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.647	3	3.549	6.473	.002 ^a
	Residual	15.899	29	.548		
	Total	26.545	32			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), FNLMcC2Comp

b. Dependent Variable: Vote08A_Ob1Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.015	1.181		2.554	.016
	(Ideology)	-.279	.095	-.473	-2.938	.006
	FNLMcC2Comp	.040	.030	.313	1.324	.196
	VoterCompAverage	-.024	.067	-.078	-.357	.723

a. Dependent Variable: Vote08A_Ob1Rescaled

Data Table 5, Windsurfing (GW Bush 2004)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.591 ^a	.349	.277	.67273

a. Predictors: (Constant), (Edu), FNLKerryComp, (Ideology)

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.555	3	2.185	4.828	.008 ^a
	Residual	12.219	27	.453		
	Total	18.774	30			

a. Predictors: (Constant), (Edu), FNLKerryComp, (Ideology)

b. Dependent Variable: Vote04_GWB1Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.132	.902		3.470	.002
	(Ideology)	.279	.081	.539	3.420	.002
	FNLKerryComp	-.005	.018	-.045	-.288	.775
	(Edu)	-.389	.184	-.333	-2.111	.044

a. Dependent Variable: Vote04_GWB1Rescaled

Data Table 6, Kennedy (Reagan 1980)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.704 ^a	.496	.359	.54202

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Stock), FNLCart1Comp, (Ideology), (Terrorists), (Inflation)

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.364	6	1.061	3.611	.012 ^a
	Residual	6.463	22	.294		
	Total	12.828	28			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Stock), FNLCart1Comp, (Ideology), (Terrorists), (Inflation)

b. Dependent Variable: Vote80_Rscale

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.297	1.114		-.267	.792
	(Ideology)	.113	.072	.264	1.573	.130
	(Inflation)	.286	.120	.402	2.380	.026
	(Terrorists)	.282	.134	.351	2.109	.047
	(Stock)	-.175	.111	-.263	-1.578	.129
	FNLCart1Comp	-.012	.016	-.124	-.775	.446
	VoterCompAverage	.044	.039	.191	1.126	.272

a. Dependent Variable: Vote80_Rscale

Data Table 7, Tank (GHW Bush 1988)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.414 ^a	.172	.049	.73273

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), (Defense), FNLDuk2comp

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.004	4	.751	1.399	.261 ^a
	Residual	14.496	27	.537		
	Total	17.500	31			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), (Defense), FNLDuk2comp

b. Dependent Variable: Vote88A_GHWB2Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.388	1.179		2.025	.053
	(Ideology)	.123	.097	.252	1.269	.215
	FNLDuk2comp	.000	.036	.003	.011	.991
	(Defense)	.152	.150	.198	1.014	.319
	VoterCompAverage	-.046	.071	-.180	-.646	.523

a. Dependent Variable: Vote88A_GHWB2Rescaled

Data Table 8, Revolving Door (GHW Bush 1988)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.420 ^a	.176	.091	.63598

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), FNLDuk1Comp

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.513	3	.838	2.071	.126 ^a
	Residual	11.730	29	.404		
	Total	14.242	32			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Ideology), FNLDuk1Comp

b. Dependent Variable: Vote88_GHWB1Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.290	.985		2.324	.027
	FNLDuk1Comp	-.031	.026	-.303	-1.217	.233
	(Ideology)	.118	.077	.273	1.529	.137
	VoterCompAverage	.023	.054	.102	.423	.676

a. Dependent Variable: Vote88_GHWB1Rescaled

Data Table 9, Desperate (Clinton 1996)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.709 ^a	.503	.410	.65990

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Camp Fin Reform), (Ideology), FNLClint1Comp, FNLDoleComp

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.879	5	2.376	5.456	.001 ^a
	Residual	11.758	27	.435		
	Total	23.636	32			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VoterCompAverage, (Camp Fin Reform), (Ideology), FNLClint1Comp, FNLDoleComp

b. Dependent Variable: Vote96_CL1Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.797	1.014		1.771	.088
	(Ideology)	-.284	.079	-.511	-3.605	.001
	FNLClint1Comp	.019	.025	.118	.773	.446
	FNLDoleComp	-.011	.022	-.084	-.500	.621
	(Camp Fin Reform)	-.233	.112	-.290	-2.078	.047
	VoterCompAverage	.094	.053	.327	1.778	.087

a. Dependent Variable: Vote96_CL1Rescaled

Data Table 10, Windsurfing (GW Bush, 2004)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.591 ^a	.349	.277	.67273

a. Predictors: (Constant), (Edu), FNLKerryComp, (Ideology)

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.555	3	2.185	4.828	.008 ^a
	Residual	12.219	27	.453		
	Total	18.774	30			

a. Predictors: (Constant), (Edu), FNLKerryComp, (Ideology)

b. Dependent Variable: Vote04_GWB1Rescaled

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.132	.902		3.470	.002
	(Ideology)	.279	.081	.539	3.420	.002
	FNLKerryComp	-.005	.018	-.045	-.288	.775
	(Edu)	-.389	.184	-.333	-2.111	.044

a. Dependent Variable: Vote04_GWB1Rescaled

Appendix1—Baseline Survey

- 1 All in all, are you satisfied with the way things are going in this country today?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know

- 2 How have you been getting most of your news about national and international issues?
 - a. From television
 - b. From newspapers
 - c. From radio
 - d. From magazines
 - e. From the Internet

- 3 If from television do you get the majority of your news from
 - a. Local station
 - b. ABC
 - c. CBS
 - d. NBC
 - e. CNN
 - f. FOX
 - g. Other _____

- 4 People like me don't have any say about what the government does
 - a. Completely agree
 - b. Mostly Agree
 - c. Completely disagree
 - d. Mostly Disagree
 - e. Don't know

- 5 Voting gives people like me some say about how government runs things
 - a. Completely agree
 - b. Mostly Agree
 - c. Completely disagree
 - d. Mostly Disagree
 - e. Don't know

- 6 Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control
 - a. Completely agree
 - b. Mostly Agree
 - c. Completely disagree
 - d. Mostly Disagree
 - e. Don't know

Appendix1—Baseline Survey

- 7 Hard work offers little guarantee of success
 - a. Completely agree
 - b. Mostly Agree
 - c. Completely disagree
 - d. Mostly Disagree
 - e. Don't know

- 8 Some people don't pay much attention to campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in following the political campaigns this year?
 - 1) Not interested
 - 2)
 - 3) Somewhat interested
 - 4)
 - 5) Very interested

- 9 How would you categorize your political beliefs on a traditional political ideological spectrum?
 - 1) Strong Liberal
 - 2) Liberal
 - 3) Weak Liberal
 - 4) Centrist
 - 5) Weak Conservative
 - 6) Conservative
 - 7) Strong Conservative

- 10 In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?
 - a. Republican
 - b. Democrat
 - c. Independent

- 11 If a Republican or Democrat do you consider yourself
 - a. A strong Republican
 - b. A weak Republican
 - c. A strong Democrat
 - d. A weak Democrat

- 12 If Independent, As of TODAY, do you LEAN more to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?
 - a. Republican Party
 - b. Democratic Party

Appendix1—Baseline Survey

Which of the character traits do you find most important in a president? Please rank each issue on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important.

		Least important		Somewhat important		Most important
13.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

21 Year of Birth _____

22 Sex

- a. Male
- b. Female

23 Race or Ethnicity _____

- a. White
- b. Black or African American
- c. American Indian or Alaska Native (write in tribe)
- d. Asian
- e. Hispanic
- f. Other race (write in race)

24 Religious Affiliation

- a. Catholic
- b. Jewish
- c. Muslim
- d. Mainline Protestant
- e. Evangelical Protestant
- f. Other

25 Major _____

Appendix1—Baseline Survey

- 26 Combined income of parents
- a. \$10,000-\$25,000
 - b. \$25,000-\$50,000
 - c. \$50,000-\$100,000
 - d. \$100,000-\$500,000
 - e. \$500,000 and above

- 27 Are you registered to vote?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

- 28 Did you vote in the last presidential election
- a. Yes
 - b. No

- 29 If you voted, for whom did you vote?
- a. McCain
 - b. Obama
 - c. Other

Which of the following issues are important to you?
Rank each issue on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important

		Least important		Somewhat important		Most important
30.	Unemployment	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Education	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Aged/elderly	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Healthcare	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Poverty	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Welfare Reform	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Regulating growth or development	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Crime/violence	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Terrorists	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Inflation, high prices, and/or cost of living	1	2	3	4	5
40.	Taxes	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Trade	1	2	3	4	5
42.	Stock markets and financial institutions	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix1—Baseline Survey

43.	The economy	1	2	3	4	5
44.	U.S. military involvement	1	2	3	4	5
45.	Defense spending	1	2	3	4	5
46.	Campaign Finance Reform	1	2	3	4	5
47.	Cutting Government Waste	1	2	3	4	5
48.	Death Penalty	1	2	3	4	5
49.	Nuclear Weapons	1	2	3	4	5

1. Please rank Gerald Ford on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4) On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Gerald Ford's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of Gerald Ford's stance on the issue(s)?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

8. If you had been able to vote in 1976 which candidate would you have voted for?

- 1) Gerald Ford
- 2) Jimmy Carter
- 3) None

9. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?

- 1) Issue preference
- 2) Party affiliation
- 3) Character traits
- 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank Bob Dole on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please rank Bill Clinton on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

3. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

4. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the Bill Clinton's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:
 - 1) Very Weak Argument
 - 2)
 - 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
 - 4)
 - 5) Very Strong Argument

6. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.
 - 1) Not Important
 - 2)
 - 3) Somewhat Important
 - 4)
 - 5) Very Important

7. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Bob Dole's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. Did this advertisement change your perception of Bob Dole's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

9. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Bill Clinton's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

10. Did this advertisement change your perception of Bill Clinton's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

11. If you had been able to vote in 1996 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) Bill Clinton
 - 2) Bob Dole
 - 3) None

12. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank John McCain on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).
-
-

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of John McCain's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of John McCain's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. If you had been able to vote in 2008 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) John McCain
 - 2) Barack Obama
 - 3) None

9. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank Michael Dukakis on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Michael Dukakis's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of Michael Dukakis's stance on the issue(s)?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

8. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of George H. W. Bush's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

9. Did this advertisement change your perception of George H. W. Bush's stance on the issue(s)?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

10. If you had been able to vote in 1988 which candidate would you have voted for?

- 1) George H. W. Bush
- 2) Michael Dukakis
- 3) None

11. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?

- 1) Issue preference
- 2) Party affiliation
- 3) Character traits
- 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank John McCain on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of John McCain's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of John McCain's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. Did this advertisement change your perception of John McCain's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

9. Did this advertisement change your perception of Barack Obama's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

10. If you had been able to vote in 2008 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) Barack Obama
 - 2) John McCain
 - 3) None

11. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank Jimmy Carter on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Jimmy Carter's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of Jimmy Carter's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Ronald Reagan's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

9. Did this advertisement change your perception of Ronald Reagan's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

10. If you had been able to vote in 1980 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) Jimmy Carter
 - 2) Ronald Reagan
 - 3) None

11. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank Bill Clinton on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Bill Clinton's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of Bill Clinton's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. If you had been able to vote in 1992 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) Bill Clinton
 - 2) George H. W. Bush
 - 3) None

9. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank Walter Mondale on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please rank Ronald Reagan on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

3. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

4. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the Ronald Reagan's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:
 - 1) Very Weak Argument
 - 2)
 - 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
 - 4)
 - 5) Very Strong Argument

6. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.
 - 1) Not Important
 - 2)
 - 3) Somewhat Important
 - 4)
 - 5) Very Important

7. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Walter Mondale's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. Did this advertisement change your perception of Walter Mondale's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

9. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Ronald Reagan's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

10. Did this advertisement change your perception of Ronald Reagan's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

11. If you had been able to vote in 1984 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) Walter Mondale
 - 2) Ronald Reagan
 - 3) None

12. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank Michael Dukakis on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of Michael Dukakis's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of Michael Dukakis's stance on the issue(s)?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

8. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of George H. W. Bush's character?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

9. Did this advertisement change your perception of George H. W. Bush's stance on the issue(s)?

- 1) Yes
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) No

10. If you had been able to vote in 1988 which candidate would you have voted for?

- 1) Michael Dukakis
- 2) George H. W. Bush
- 3) None

11. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?

- 1) Issue preference
- 2) Party affiliation
- 3) Character traits
- 4) Not applicable

1. Please rank John Kerry on a scale of 1-5 on the following character issues:

		Least		Somewhat		Most
1.	Trustworthiness	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relatable/Attractive Personality	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Family Values	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Honesty	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Ability to Lead	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Sense of Duty/Prior Service to Country	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Work Ethic	1	2	3	4	5

2. Does this advertisement offer you any new information about the candidates or issues of the campaign?

- 1) Yes, all new information
- 2) Yes, some new information
- 3) No, it offers no new information

3. What issue(s) does this ad focus on? (e.g., the economy, healthcare, character, etc.).

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rank the strength of the candidate's argument on the issues presented in the advertisement:

- 1) Very Weak Argument
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Strong Argument
- 4)
- 5) Very Strong Argument

5. As a voter, please rank the importance of the issues discussed in this advertisement.

- 1) Not Important
- 2)
- 3) Somewhat Important
- 4)
- 5) Very Important

6. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of John Kerry's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

7. Did this advertisement change your perception of John Kerry's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

8. Did this advertisement at all change your perception of George W. Bush's character?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

9. Did this advertisement change your perception of George W. Bush's stance on the issue(s)?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Somewhat
 - 3) No

10. If you had been able to vote in 2004 which candidate would you have voted for?
 - 1) George W. Bush
 - 2) John Kerry
 - 3) None

11. Why would you have voted for that particular candidate?
 - 1) Issue preference
 - 2) Party affiliation
 - 3) Character traits
 - 4) Not applicable

Bill Clinton and Al Gore represent a new generation of Democrats.

Ad sponsor: Clinton and Gore—seen throughout

Narrator: Male

Background music: upbeat and triumphant

Opponent: Not Mentioned

Issues: This ad says that Clinton and Gore are calling for an end to welfare as we know it so welfare can serve as a second chance, not a way of life. They are tough on crime as well, and send a strong message by supporting the death penalty. Lastly, they have rejected tax and spend politics. Clinton has balanced twelve budgets in the past and the ticket has proposed a list of \$140 billion in budget cuts of wasteful spending.

Images: The images begin with a large campaign rally where both men are speaking, talking to each other, and shaking the hands of the crowd. Interestingly enough there is a very symbolic shot of Clinton rolling up his sleeves. When each issues is presented, the ad cuts to a white screen with black text and a red underline to highlight the message the ad is presenting. The first images are followed by a strong image of Clinton, full suit, surround by police officers while addressing a crowd. The ad ends with a shot of a tractor that has a homemade banner that says Clinton/Gore '92 and a triumphant arm raised by Clinton.

Reaganomics (Reagan 1984)

Ad sponsor: Ronald Reagan, who is pictured and mentioned, but not seen or heard

Narrator: male voice

Background: No music, silent

Opponent: Mentioned, but not see or heard

Appendix—2

Issues: This advertisement is a comparison of the two different ways the candidates in the 1984 election hope to deal with the economy. Reagan's plan cuts taxes, cuts deficits and spending, and creates business incentives for new jobs. By contrast, Mondale's approach is noted simply as raising taxes. It ends by saying that Reagan's plan works for you, while Mondale's works against you.

Images: This advertisement is almost exclusively text based with a black background and blue writing. The screen is divided into two columns with Reaganomics on one side and Mondalenomics on the other. As each issue is brought up, it is written in white in the appropriate column. In the Reagan column, the words, "Cut Taxes, Cut Spending, Create Jobs, Growth" appear, while in the Mondale column, the words, "Raise Taxes," show up four times. At the end of the ad, the list is cleared in favor of a picture of President Reagan along with the words, "Leadership That's Working."

Freedom (McCain 2008)

Ad sponsor: John McCain, he is both seen and heard in the commercial

Narrator: the candidate himself (McCain); there is also a narrator that only says one word, the last name of the candidate

Background: light instrumental, emotional music, you also hear cheering in the background toward the end

Opponent: not mentioned (Obama)

Issues: While this advertisement is primarily a biographical ad, it does discuss building a stronger America. Specifically, McCain mentions in the ad working toward growing the economy and cutting government waste.

Appendix—2

Images: The images of this advertisement begin with still photographs of a much younger John McCain dressed in his Navy uniform while serving the country. Following these images, the viewer is exposed to footage of the injured McCain in a hospital bed who was longing for the shores of his country and footage of him returning home dedicated to a cause greater than his own. At this point, the advertisement switches to modern day footage of the candidate in full color. First, he is with his wife, shaking hands with an American worker promising to build the economy. Next, he talks about cutting government waste while a shot of him speaking and a crowd cheering, come across the screen complete with a mass of people waving American flags. As the images of greeting factory workers and a large scale rally are combined, the voter is left with the message, “don’t hope for a stronger America, Vote for one.” The image we are left with is the American flag waving that fades into a picture of McCain.

Honor (Obama 2008)

Ad sponsor: Obama—voice heard and an image of the candidate appears at the beginning of the commercial

Narrator: male narrator, the voices of the two candidates are also heard

Background: a light, almost inaudible, monotonous set of notes are playing in the background

Opponent: focus of the ad, mentioned, seen, and footage shown

Issues: This ad is primarily a character based attack on John McCain. The only hint at issues in this ad is the implications that come along with the mention that John McCain voted in favor of George W. Bush’s policies 90% of the time, which will lead to the “same disastrous policies.”

Images: Following a brief image of Obama and Biden, the advertisement begins with footage from an earlier presidential campaign of John McCain from a campaign rally where he states that, “I will not take the low road to the highest office in the land.” This establishes a

comparison between the McCain of years past and his actions during the 2008 election. With a black background and an image of John McCain in the lower right hand corner seemingly looking down at the ground, the view is bombarded with quotes and outside sources arguing that he is running a dishonorable campaign. His ads are referred to as sleazy, vile, and dishonest smears. It even goes so far as to state that he continues to run such ads even after they are exposed as a lie. The ad then points out that McCain sides with the unpopular George W. Bush 90% of the time and argues that dishonesty is the only tactic he has left to be elected.

(sources: Time, The Washington Post, The New Republic, CBS News, Chicago Tribune,)

Windsurfing (Kerry 2004)

Ad sponsor: George W. Bush, both seen and heard at the beginning of the ad

Narrator: George W. Bush at the beginning and a male voice comes in for the end of the ad

Background: “The Blue Danube” by Johan Strauss, famous building symphony in the background and eventually some wind sound effects

Opponent: footage of John Kerry windsurfing is shown throughout the ad

Issues: The first issue addressed in the advertisement is John Kerry going back and forth on his support of the Iraq War. Then, it talks about him voting for a bill providing 87 billion dollars to support the US troops in Iraq before voting against it. After that it points out that he voted for education reform, but now publically opposes it. Kerry claims that he is against increasing Medicare premiums but, in the past, voted five times to increase them.

Images: The advertisement begins with footage of President Bush and his wife. Both are dressed casually on the front porch of a modest home and smiling, while there is a voice over from the President approving the message. This is then contrasted with an image of John Kerry in sunglasses and windsurfing gear. As the footage of him windsurfing is played, a visual

metaphor is established by flipping the image back and forth every time the voice over discusses Kerry, “flip-flopping,” on an issue. To reinforce this idea, the advertisement ends with a gust of wind as the voice over says, “John Kerry, whichever way the wind blows.”

Kennedy/ No More

Ad sponsor: seen at the end of the advertisement with an image and text of his name

Narrator: Kennedy is speaking, followed by a male narrator

Background: None, live footage

Opponent: Mentioned by Kennedy by name, not shown

Issues: The speech by Kennedy does not go into issues extensively although it does directly reference the mishandling of the Iranian Hostage Crisis. It also calls for “No more high interest rates.”

Images: The ad begins with a campaign rally for Ted Kennedy’s primary bid against incumbent president Jimmy Carter. While the attacks by Kennedy involve some of the issues of importance in the campaign, many of them also seem to take aim at Carter’s overall ability to lead the country. One of the moments that seems to resonate, however, is when Kennedy yells at the end of his speech, “No more Jimmy Carter.” To have a high profile member of the Democratic Party attacking an incumbent president from his own party provides a very unique image to be used by the Republicans. Combining this with an appeal specifically aimed at Democrats, it makes for an ad with elements of backfire and bipartisan appeal.

Tank (Bush 1988)

Ad Sponsor: George H.W. Bush who is not seen except in a tiny picture at the end of the advertisement.

Narrator: male voice

Background: The noise of a tank driving through a field

Opponent: Michael Dukakis

Issues: This ad centers on the defense record of Michael Dukakis. It states that he opposed new aircraft carriers, anti-satellite weapons, four missile defense systems including the Pershing Two Missile Deployment, the Stealth Bomber, and a ground emergency warning system against nuclear attack. It goes on to say that he criticized the rescue mission in Grenada and air strike on Libya. The ad ends with the statement that Dukakis wants to be commander in chief and that America can't afford that risk.

Images: The bulk of the images of this ad consist of footage of Michael Dukakis riding in a tank at a military base. He is wearing a helmet, which adds to the humor of the footage. As this is occurring, text is scrolling with all of the issues that are discussed above.

The Dukakis Furlough Program

Ad sponsor: George H. W. Bush—seen in the lower left at the very end of the commercial

Narrator: Male

Background: Low/ Eerie music and noise in the background, repetitive beat of a revolving metal door

Opponent: Mentioned several times, but not shown in image or video clip

Issues: While serving as the governor of Massachusetts, Dukakis vetoed mandatory sentences for criminals committing certain offenses and the death penalty. It also gave weekend furloughs for criminals that committed first degree murder and were not eligible for parole. According to the ad, 268 of these individuals escaped and have committed crimes such as kidnapping and rape and some are still at large.

Images: The images in this advertisement are very unsettling and appear to be aimed at striking fear in the hearts of the voters so that they do not support Dukakis. The footage opens with a prison guard running up the steps of a watchtower with a high-powered rifle in his hand. The whole commercial is presented to the audience in black and white, which seems to enhance the overall mood of a stark and fearful setting. Probably one of the most memorable images of the commercial however, is that in the midst of the high fences and barbed wire, there is a revolving door that has a steady stream of men dressed in prison garb walking in and immediately walking right back out. The ad ends with the narrator saying, “Now Michael Dukakis wants to do for America what he’s done for Massachusetts. America can’t afford that risk.”

Desperate (Clinton 1996)

Ad Sponsor: Bill Clinton is pictured in the ad, but does not speak

Narrator: male voice

Background: There is music playing in the background throughout the advertisement, although it has a very distinct change. While Clinton is being shown, the music is upbeat and building. By contrast, when Bob Dole is being shown, the music is much more menacing and grim.

Opponent: Seen throughout, but not heard.

Issues: The primary issue dealt with in this ad is a comparison of the two candidates on campaign finance reform. It notes the attack ads of Dole and then list how Clinton restricted foreign lobbying and fought four years for campaign finance reform. The text appears referencing Clinton’s executive order that placed a “Lifetime Ban on Foreign Lobbying by Top Officials.” The ad then attacks Dole, saying that he and the Republicans took 2.4 million dollars from foreign interest groups including oil, tobacco, and drug companies. In addition to this, a top aide to the candidate was fined 6 million dollars for a Hong Kong fundraising scandal. The advertisement reinforced all of this information by noting than an independent watchdog cited

Bob Dole as the single senator “most responsible for blocking any serious campaign finance reform.”

Images: The advertisement begins with a black and white image of Dole speaking in a manner that displays little emotion and energy. This image is followed by a full color shot of President Clinton energetically speaking at a podium with the American Flag serving as a backdrop. The next image is also full color of Clinton working in the oval office, seemingly signing an executive order. During each of these points, white text is displayed over the images describing the issues previously outlined. The images return to a black and white shot of Dole, this time conversing with Newt Gingrich as text appears between them that is partially red and partially white (all of the monetary amounts are red). This is followed by another image of Dole looking down and speaking, while an image of a newspaper article about the Dole aid fades in from the bottom of the screen. The capitol dome then fades in on the upper left corner of the screen, while the text from the Washington Post about the independent watching shows up on the left of the screen. The advertisement ends with this image as Bob Dole’s name comes up, with “Wrong in the Past. Wrong for our Future.” appearing next to him.

Biography (Ford 1976)

Ad sponsor: Gerald Ford—seen in still images and referred to throughout the advertisement

Narrator: male narrator

Background: None

Opponent: not mentioned

Issues: Few, if any, issues are discussed. This is a biographical and character advertisement.

Appendix—2

Images: This advertisement seems to trace the life of President Gerald Ford through a series of sepia tone pictures and images. It begins with a patriotic picture of Ford as a young eagle scout holding the American flag. This image is followed by a strong and triumphant photo of him in a four point stance over a football as the most valuable player at the University of Michigan. The ad then transitions to a more adult image of Ford, who graduated Yale law school in the top third of his class while holding down a full time job to pay for his schooling. Next comes another patriotic image of Ford in his military uniform and a mention of how he served in the Navy courageously in World War II. The first image tied to his political career comes with mention of how he led his party in Congress as Minority Leader. The advertisement ends with time pictures of Gerald Ford in the White house. One of the pictures is a shadowy image from the distance and the other is a close up of his face with his hand on his chin. The advertisement conveys how he has led the United States as President and returned the dignity to the office that he has served. With both of these shots near a window, you get the impression of a strong leader who has been watching over the American People.

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