

**GENDER DIFFERENCES AND NEGATIVE
POLITICAL ADVERTISING**

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**GENDER DIFFERENCES AND NEGATIVE
POLITICAL ADVERTISING**

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Chapter One

Introduction

Candidates running for political office aim to earn favor with voters by sending their message out to the masses and projecting a favorable image to the public.

Candidates will use their charisma, intellect, and strategic skills to enchant the public and accomplish their electoral goals. Winning votes involves a process of communication with voters, and in today's world of campaigns the most common method of communication revolves around the use of the television (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Time simply does not allow a candidate to personally contact every single voter and television allows the candidate to impress an image upon the voters in a more time efficient way. Campaign activities are magnified by television, and therefore become more useful and effective. By utilizing the most convenient and arguably the most popular media outlet, candidates are able to reach a large segment of the population they are attempting to appeal to.

It is rare in today's media-dependent society to find a campaign that does not use television as a means of communication (Stevens 2005). Money that is raised on a campaign is used first and foremost for creating and airing advertisements, and therefore ads become one of the most important aspects of the campaign (Yoon, Pinkleton, and Ko 2005). Airing advertisements on television is expensive, but it can be assumed that the cost of an advertising strategy is justified if the electoral goals are met. Campaign

strategists must take advantage of our media-driven society and make the public's dependence on television work for the campaign. Television is central to a campaign's success, and it is this notion that makes it so important to better understand how candidates use advertisements during the course of a campaign.

Television advertising is used to communicate with the public. Ads are the electronic equivalent of shaking hands with as many voters as possible. Usually these advertisements boast the accomplishments of the candidate, or tell the candidate's biographical story (Jacobson 2004). Candidates use advertisements to touch the voters when time does not allow for personal contact, and for the most part advertisements focus on the positive attributes of the candidate sponsoring the ad. However, on some occasions focus is shifted from the candidate to the opposition in an attempt to tear down the opponent's good ground gained by their campaign efforts. This type of negative advertising has proved itself to be an effective tool in the campaign world, and the use of these types of ads is significantly increasing (Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko 2005). But do all candidates take advantage of these negative, or attack ads? It is not mandatory that a candidate create and air negative ads about one's opposition and not all candidates will use this option during the campaign. All candidates, regardless of gender, must decide at some point during the stages of a campaign cycle whether to go negative and attack the opposition.

Discovering if both male and female candidates running for political office launch negative advertisements will provide a better understanding of the differences and similarities between how men and women run for office. Due to the fact that campaigns are such a significant part of the political process, it is important to understand how

campaigns work. By examining male and female campaigns, and the similarities and the differences, there will be more insight into the world of campaigns. This thesis will attempt to determine how, and if, male and female candidates for office use negative political advertisements. Specifically, this thesis will look at the content of negative advertisements used during the course of a campaign cycle. By examining past advertisements it may be possible to determine whether negative attack ad content is crafted in a certain way depending on the gender of the candidate. This thesis will offer an overview of campaign importance, candidate self-assessment and gender, gender and campaigns, and negative advertisements as a campaign tool. This thesis will look at the content of negative attack ads to draw conclusions about whether gender is an explanation for why and how negative advertisements are used. An attempt to discover how gender affects the content of negative advertisements will be made within the body of this thesis, with the hopes that this thesis will yield more information regarding how gender affects the use of negative advertisements during a campaign cycle.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Importance of Political Campaigns

Campaigns are at the heart of the American political process. They are the very core of democracy. Campaigns allow voters to decide who will represent them and work to serve the constituency as a whole (Jacobson 2004). The idea of democracy revolves around the notion that the people should have a say in who represents their needs. Without campaigns, voters would be removed from the democratic process and politicians would not be held accountable for their actions. Voters are given the opportunity to hand pick the person they feel will best represent the needs of the masses. A candidate running for office is seeking the approval of the general voting public, and in the hopes of being anointed will cater to the desires of the electorate. Campaigns offer the voters the information necessary to fulfill their democratic duty of choosing an elected official.

Campaigns are the primary link between citizens and their leaders (Stevens 2005). Communication between the people and the leaders occurs during the course of a campaign. Campaigns provide the voters with a chance to hear what candidates stand for, and in turn a campaign gives the politician a chance to connect with voters. The basic

function of a campaign from the point of view of the voters is to give people an incentive to go to the polls and cast their vote for the candidate of their choice (Kahn and Kenney 1999). The main goal of a candidate running for office is fundamentally to win elections. These functions and goals could not come to fruition without a political campaign to facilitate them. Without a campaign cycle voters would not be afforded the opportunity to gather information and choose the candidate of their liking, and in turn would be robbed of their right to choose who should represent their interests. The importance of political campaigns is clear, and it is essential to understand how these campaigns work and what tools are employed to achieve the desired effect of winning.

Campaigns have evolved over the years and have gone from grassroots party organizations to being sleek, sophisticated, and calculated machines. Homespun techniques such as passing out nail files and hand fans have taken a backseat to slick television advertisements created by media strategists. Advertising has become a major factor in a campaign, and the majority of funds raised for a candidate are spent on television advertising (Stevens 2005). The general population accumulates most of their information through television sources, and it is only logical that campaigns would take advantage of such a convenient media outlet (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). How candidates use advertising during a campaign depends largely on what the opponent is doing, and how well the candidate is fairing with the public. Before going into detail about how candidates use advertisements, it is important to first understand how candidates decide to run for office and what effects gender has on a candidate's decision.

Candidate Self-Assessment

When looking for differences between male and female candidates, it is wise to begin with how these candidates evaluate themselves, specifically because this is one area where there are differences due to gender. Candidates for political office are usually examined and scrutinized under the harsh microscope of the public eye, and therefore the decision to run for political office will weigh heavily on potential candidates (Fox and Lawless 2004). It is logical to assume that a candidate must be of sound character, both professionally and personally, in order to win favor with the public. It would make no sense for an individual with a questionable background to attempt to run for office, and these factors must be considered. This leads a person to examine their own life in great detail before putting themselves in front of a large electorate. When an individual is weighing the options as whether to run for political office, the first and possibly most important factor is if the person feels they are well qualified for the position. Men and women running for office go through a process of self reflection on their past experiences as a way of judging their ability to successfully win the race (Fox and Lawless 2004). Before the general public has the opportunity to pick a candidate apart, a candidate must be willing to look at his or her own attributes and identify the harmful flaws.

The process of candidate self-assessment and judgment includes an evaluation of professional accomplishments, level of civic involvement, and an assessment of one's personal life. Consideration must be given to the fact that all past indiscretions, both professional and personal, could be brought to light during the course of a campaign. Should the person determine themselves to be a good candidate for political office, it is

highly likely that they will make the decision to run for office. Women are more likely than men to consider themselves unqualified to run for office, and women tend to judge themselves on a more severe level than men do (Fox and Lawless 2004). Therefore, when a woman does consider herself qualified the female candidate is of excellent caliber and is well suited to run for office. Due to this harsh self-critique employed by women, the result is female candidates who are just as successful as men in their quest for electoral success (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Overall, the process of self-assessment leaves both male and female candidates ready to face the public inspection that is an inevitable part of the campaign process.

Gender may have something to do with how a person conducts a self-assessment, but a candidate's gender does not automatically have a negative or positive affect on their chances of achieving their electoral goals (Fox and Lawless, 2004). The issue of gender does inevitably enter into the political arena and will ultimately have some effect on the outcome of the election. Gender becomes an issue when men and women make gender a significant factor, and alter their campaigns according to pre-conceived notions of male and female candidates. This occurs when women use their campaigns as a way of demonstrating they are tough enough to handle to job, and when men attempt to run on issues usually associated with female candidates (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). The way a candidate perceives him or herself will not only affect whether they choose to run for office, will influence the types of campaigns that are launched as a result of certain stereotypes about men and women. Due to the fact that men and women are equally successful when running for office, there must be another factoring effecting why they tend to alter their personalities or issue concerns during the course of a campaign.

Issue Stereotypes and Gender Effects

Men and women not only critique themselves differently, but are viewed by the public to care about very diverse issues from one another. Issues are the cues voters' use when forming decisions about male and female candidates. Certain issues may be used by voters to make a vote choice similar to the way voters "use party identification and other voting cues" (Hernnson, Lay and Stokes 2003, 245). People have a tendency to assign gender to specific issues, and this association of issues results in the idea that men and women are only equipped to handle certain issues. Male issues are considered to be topics like the economy, foreign policy, and military issues. Female issues are thought to be topics that revolve around social issues, such as health care and education (Kahn 1993). If a voter prefers male issues over female issues it is likely that voters will have an inherent preference to vote for a male candidate, and vice-versa (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Male and female candidates react to these notions, and these stereotypical ideas may influence what topics men and women stress in their campaigns for political office (Kahn 1993). Men may attempt to convey messages about their desire to better the education system, and women may try to prove they are dedicated to issues of homeland security. Voter stereotypes regarding male and female issues will lead candidates to mold their campaign message to conform to those stereotypes in an attempt to woo voters who have an inherent preference for male or female issues.

Due to the stereotypical classification of male and female issues, candidates for office will on occasion feel the need to overcompensate for existing gender stereotypes.

Female candidates for office may feel it is necessary to run on more traditionally masculine issues in an attempt to appeal to the base of voters that prefer male issues (Dolan, 2005). Male candidates, when running against female candidates, may find it necessary to focus on issues usually associated with female candidates in order to appeal to a woman's base of voters (Dolan 2005). Men and women cannot ignore voters of the opposite gender and candidates feel that in order to win that vote they must prove they are competent when discussing certain gendered issues. However, it may be a mistake to concentrate on female gendered issues because displaying an understanding of and running on female issues does not appear to be particularly advantageous to candidates running for office (Huddy and Terkildson, 1993). Women and men may be putting themselves at a disadvantage by focusing on what are considered by many to be female issues. Voter stereotypes are particularly influential to the message a candidate puts forward, and these stereotypes may ultimately affect the type of campaign message a candidate chooses to present.

Campaign Similarities and Gender

Despite the differences in the types of issues men and women run on, or are associated with, the fact remains that men and women do tend to run very similar campaigns (Dabelko and Herrnson 1997). Different genders do not automatically indicate that the campaign strategy will be different, nor does gender indicate that the types of resources utilized will differ significantly. Being male or female does not instantly mean that a candidate will follow certain guidelines for running a campaign. In fact, it is clear

that male and female candidates create similar strategies (Herrnson, Lay and Stokes 2003). Gender has its place in the campaign process, but creating actual strategic moves a campaign will adhere to does not depend primarily on the gender of the candidate.

Activities such as campaign strategy and fundraising are crucial aspects of the campaign process. Notwithstanding the perception that female candidates have a difficult time raising money it is apparent that campaigns launched by female candidates raise equivalent amounts of money to male candidates. By being able to raise campaign funds similarly to male candidates, females are separating the gap between how men and women run their campaigns. Both male and female candidates hire professional campaign staffs to create a strategy and manage the campaign. In addition to money and staff, female candidates communicate with voters the same way male candidates do (Herrnson, Lay and Stokes, 2003). Due to the fact that female candidates are able to procure the same kinds of resources as male candidates, gender does not have an affect on the way male and female campaigns are run in regards to resources. The issues are what set male and female campaigns apart, not the resources or strategy choices (Dabelko and Herrnson, 1997).

The allocation of campaign resources is a crucial part of a campaign's strategy. Once men and women have raised their money they distribute their fiscal resources in very similar fashions. They both spend almost equal portions of money on "radio, literature, direct mail, and most other kinds of communications" (Dabelko and Herrnson 1997, 124). This indicates that not only are the amount of available resources attainable regardless of gender, but men and women are communicating with voters the same way. Gender does not appear to have a bearing on what candidates choose to spend their

money on. Again, the type of campaigns that are being run are similar in many regards, it is the type of message crafted that sets men and women apart. Gender does not affect the way money is spent getting the message out, but gender does affect the message that is being projected.

Negative Advertisements as a Campaign Tool

It is clear that male and female candidates run campaigns similarly, including the implementation of negative advertisements when creating an advertising strategy. Some critics of negative attack advertisements believe negative ads are detrimental to the American political process. They believe these ads turn voters off, and sour them on the electoral process as a whole. In reality the opposite appears to be true. Negative advertisements have proved themselves to help the democratic process by informing the general public and presenting information about the voters' issues and concerns (Geer, 2006). Negative ads raise the incentive a person has to vote by bringing to light issues that will motivate people to vote for or against someone (Wattenberg and Brains, 1999). The actual content of attack ads has more information than any other type of political advertisement, and negative ads are recalled more easily than other advertisements that are political in nature (Stevens, 2005). Not only are these ads popular among candidates, but they are full of useful information and are retained more readily by the electorate. Negative advertisements have suffered their fair share of scrutiny, but have turned out to be valuable campaign resources that provide voters with information that is easily retained.

Negative advertisements are extremely well-liked by candidates and political strategists alike because of the fact that the ads are memorable and do their job well. It is estimated that “up to half of political campaign advertising budgets are devoted to negative advertising” (Yoon, Pinkelton, and Ko 2005, 96). The popularity of negative advertisements directly contradicts the notion that negative ads are a tool the electorate finds distasteful. If these ads were hurting a candidate’s chance of electoral success this strategy would not continue to be found in the political realm of advertising. Negative advertisements provide the opportunity for political candidates to present the public with a critique of the opponent in an exciting and dramatic way. The dramatic dynamic of the ads commands the public’s attention and is considered to be more interesting than a benign advertisement (Kahn and Kenney, 1999). The attention these advertisements receive is appealing to a candidate who must maximize a budget by creating memorable and effective ads. These ads seem to offer more bang for the buck, and therefore it is highly unlikely that there will be a decline in negative advertising any time soon (Geer, 2006). Due to the fact that for the time being negative attack ads are here to stay, it is important to understand how candidates use these advertisements to their advantage.

Negative Political Advertising and Gender

Negative political advertising, or attack ads, are an increasingly popular tool in the world of political campaigns. Not only are attack ads a way for the public to gather significant candidate information, but they are also an important tool in a candidate’s arsenal (Herrnson and Lucas, 2006). Men and women both employ attack ads when they

are campaigning, and women “use similar amounts of negative advertising as male candidates” (Herrnson and Lucas 2006, 71). Gender does not appear to be a determinant of whether male and female candidates will use negative attack advertising. Because men and women both use attack advertising during their campaign for office, it is important to determine whether these advertisements discuss the same issues within the context of the ad. While men and women do run similar campaigns, they tend to focus on different issues (Dabelko and Herrnson, 1997). This information could indicate that while all other aspects of the campaigns are similar: fundraising ability, strategy, and success rates, the actual content of the attack ad must be different. Men and women will use different issues and approaches when running an attack ad campaign during the course of an election cycle. Therefore, while gender does not have an affect on whether advertisements will be used, gender may determine the content found within the advertisements.

Chapter Three

Hypotheses

Contrast Advertisements

There are a several varieties of advertisements candidates may choose from while planning a media strategy. Advertisements that work to promote a candidate simply present positive information about the candidate who is sponsoring the advertisement. One goal of an advertisement that aims to promote a candidate is to stimulate name recognition, and raise voter awareness about the candidate's platform (Jacobson 2004). Ads that attack the opposition work to tear down the character or good standing of the opposing candidate (Wattenberg and Brians 1999). Contrast advertisements combine elements of ads that promote and ads that attack into one ad, in order to provide positive information about the sponsoring candidate while presenting negative information about the opposing candidate, contrast ads work to highlight the differences between the two candidates (Jacobson 2004). It is possible that contrast advertisements are used in an attempt to mask an overbearing negative attack, or can be used when a candidate has something particularly nasty to say about the opposition. In addition, the contrast ad may be employed by female candidates who are not comfortable launching an entirely negative advertisement.

H1: Male and female candidates will use contrast ads to reduce the appearance of negativity and launch a more personal attack on the opponent.

Personal and Policy Based Attacks

There are basic differences between the content of an attack ad depending on the gender of the candidate. Female candidates feel that it is not always “appropriate to raise scandals related to” youthful indiscretions (Herrnson and Lucas 2006, 81). In general women find attacking a man’s personal issues to be somewhat distasteful, and have voiced the opinion that they may not be inclined to use this type of attack during a campaign cycle (Herrnson and Lucas 2006). Previous research has indicated that female candidates do not find it palatable to attack on personal issues when measuring attitudes. This thesis will attempt to prove that female candidates do not attack the opposition on personal issues in practice, as well as theory.

Men on the other hand feel that it is perfectly acceptable to “adopt more general appeals that include” attacks on an individual’s personality traits (Kahn 1993, 492). Men appear to be more aggressive during a negative ad campaign, and may be inclined to attack more frequently on a personal basis. Therefore, there seems to be a difference between the general attitudes towards personal and policy based attacks. Men may be more inclined to attack on a personal basis because the general public tends to feel it is more acceptable for a male candidate to attack on a personal level (Sapiro and Walsh 2002). Female candidates will stick to the issues in their attack ads due in part to the fact

that they do not feel it is appropriate, but there is another significant driving force behind why female candidates shy away from attacking the opposition on a personal level.

Women who run for office may have another, more specific reason for avoiding a personal attack on an opponent. Female candidates, as stated earlier, want to appear tough when running a campaign, and often feel they must come across to voters as being capable of serving in office (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). One way of doing this would be to avoid getting personal and maintain the position of discussing only the issues. Some voters hold the opinion that male candidates are more “knowledgeable than women”, and this fact motivates women to “demonstrate their competence in campaign appeals” (Kahn 1993, 492). This preconceived notion that women are less suitable for office may put pressure upon female candidates to prove they are anything but unqualified. Female candidates strive to prove to voters that they are competent candidates for political office, and may do this by avoiding a personal attack on an opponent.

The perceived emotional qualities of a candidate may also be a factor in whether a personal attack is employed. Women are viewed as being more emotional than men, which is not a desirable trait in a political candidate (Sapiro and Walsh 2002). Candidates for office are more attracted to voters who appear more resilient and less emotional, and therefore female candidates will not benefit from being perceived as more emotional than male candidates. One way for women to establish themselves as a professional and capable candidate is by sticking primarily to the issues while attacking, and avoiding a personal attack on an opponent. This strategy allows women to appear as feasible candidates who are capable of adequately serving their constituency without being overly

emotional, but at the same time still equips the female candidate with the powerful tool of an attack ad.

H2: Female candidates are more likely to attack their opponents on policy issues and will tend to stay away from focusing on personal issues, whereas men will more often attack on personal issues.

Male use of Humor in Negative Advertisements

Male candidates do not always take on a chivalrous role when it comes to attacking their female opponents. Male candidates will attack their female opposition with the same frequency they would a male opponent (Sapiro and Walsh, 2002). However, in order to soften the blow of a harsh attack, men may feel it is necessary to employ a different tactic than their female opposition. An example of a humorous negative advertisement is best exemplified by an ad from Tim Hutchinson's campaign that attacks the opposition, Mark Pryor. The ad portrays various political figures as plastic bobble head figurines, and attempts to associate Mark Pryor to these figures. The language of the ad is as follows:

“This is senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle. Tom Daschle and the Daschle Democrats like to say no. No to President Bush on job creating tax cuts. No to President Bush on Homeland Security. No to President Bush on Economic Stimulus. But the Daschle Democrats say yes to Mark Pryor for U.S. Senate, and

that's bad for Arkansas. Call Mark Pryor. Tell him to say no to Daschle Democrats”.

While the message of the advertisement does focus on policy issues, it attacks Pryor on several different issues, the ad associates Pryor with political figures such as Hilary Clinton and Ted Kennedy, portrayed as bobble head figures. Therefore, the advertisement has a very negative message, and humor may be used to soften the harshness of the attack. The message is clear: there are certain political figures such as Daschle, Clinton and Kennedy, who are bad for voters. Pryor is, by insinuation, bad for the voters of Arkansas. By adding the element of humor to the intense negative message, it becomes more of a joke and less of a serious negative attack. However, the negativity of the message has been presented, and the information will resonate with voters. The humor element makes the sponsor of the ad look more as if he is presenting information and less as if his goal is to tarnish Pryor's reputation.

Past research indicates that humor is used most often when a race becomes heated and tense. The negativity in messages tends to snowball, becoming more and more negative as the race continues. When the level of competition increases, so will a man's use of humor when attacking the opposing candidate (Sapiro and Walsh, 2002). Regardless of the gender of the opposition, a candidate will use all means necessary to achieve electoral success, and men will not be deterred from launching a negative attack against women. Because women are actually viable and serious candidates, men will view them as a threat and use certain strategies, such as employing humor, to defeat their opponent. A man is not afraid to attack a woman, but will find it necessary to use humor

as something of a cushion in order to soften the tone of the attack. Humor may provide an opportunity for a male candidate to attack a female opponent in a harsh way without appearing too harsh.

H3: Male candidates are more likely to use humor in their attacks on a female opponent than on a male opponent.

Male and female candidates share many qualities: they both must consider themselves worthy of running for office, and they both must raise considerable amounts of money to achieve electoral success. Men and women both hire professional campaign staff, and spend their money on similar campaign tools such as advertising. The overall strategies of male and female campaigns appear to be very similar. Where men and women differ is in the type of content they use in their attack ads. Women will stick to policy issues, and men will take a more personal approach. Women will make efforts to appear more competent and tough on issues, whereas men will take a humorous tactic to advertising to avoid looking like a bully. The effect gender has on male and female campaigns for office appears to revolve around what kind of issues are present in negative political advertisements.

The use of negative advertisements during political campaigns has been criticized by some who feel that these types of ads are harmful to the political process. Some feel these ads are a detriment to the practice of political campaigns by turning voters off, and do not feel the negative advertisements provide useful information to the public (Stevens 2005). Nonetheless, negative advertisements are a useful and highly utilized campaign

tactic. Both male and female candidates use these types of ads to increase their electoral advantage and decrease opponent's public appeal (Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko 2005). While both men and women choose this method of communication, it is true they find it necessary to use different content within the attack ads. In order to better understand the differences between how men and women run for political office it is important to understand how gender affects the content found within negative advertisements.

Chapter Four

Data and Methods

This content analysis was conducted by using information from the Wisconsin Ad Project (WiscAds). The mission of WiscAds was to study campaign advertisements for House, Senate, Gubernatorial, and Presidential races across the United States by focusing on the nation's 75 largest media markets and the advertisements aired during the election cycle. The project was successful in examining over 1.5 million campaign advertisements between 1998 and 2002. In 2002, the study increased from looking at 75 media markets to 100 markets (Goldstein and Rivlin 2005). For purposes of this study the 2002 WiscAds data were examined, focusing on 681 negative advertisements run by both male and female candidates for both the House and Senate. In 2002 alone there were close to three thousand advertisements aired during the course of the election cycle, therefore offering a wealth of advertising information to inspect. The advertisements in the Wiscads data provide significant amounts of data regarding both male and female advertisements in order to test the hypotheses laid out in the paper.

The advertisements were coded for content and storyboards were constructed, including a complete transcript of all audio and a still capture of every fourth second of video. These storyboards allowed the coders to carry out a comprehensive coding exercise. A team of graduate and undergraduate students were responsible for coding the content of each of the advertisements over a vast array of topics, from the spot's main

objective to its tone, the issues discussed, and even the characterizations used to describe candidates (Goldstein and Rivlin 2005).

The first order of business when coding was to differentiate between advertisements that promote a candidate, ads that attack the opposition, and advertisements that contrast the sponsoring candidate and the opposition. Advertisements that promote a candidate consist of messages that encourage name recognition, reinforce the good character or policy stances of a candidate, and introduce the public to a candidate in a positive way (Jacobson 2004). Ads that are negative, or intended to attack the opposition consist of messages that attempt to shed light to the opposition's past indiscretions, point out policy flaws, and generally paint a negative portrait of the opposition (Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko 2005). The main function of a contrast advertisement is to highlight the differences between two candidates by offering positive information regarding the sponsoring candidate, and presenting negative information about the opposition (Jacobson 2004).

In addition to coding for the type of advertisement, the advertisements were coded for a "wide range of campaign themes and issues" (Sapiro and Walsh 2002, 11). This coding provided opportunity to determine if there is a regular propensity for women and men to run using specific content such as personal and policy related issues. Coders were responsible for identifying issues that were personal in nature, as well as issues that were policy related. Personal and policy issues are of specific interest in regards to this study, and these topics were coded to indicate if the candidate was attacking the opposition on personal or policy issues. By identifying the different issues, and coding them

accordingly, it is possible to determine if gender plays a role in the content of negative advertisements.

Personal issues were coded by asking what opposing candidate characterizations were present in an ad. Codes were assigned to personal labels such as: incompetent, Right-wing, weak, and hypocrite (Goldstein and Rivlin 2005). An advertisement from Chris Chocola's campaign will help to illustrate and example of a personal attack advertisement. The ad begins by identifying Chocola's opponent, Jill Long Thompson, and immediately aligning her with Hilary Clinton. The ad states verbatim, "As the Congresswoman from Ft. Wayne, Jill Long Thompson co-sponsored Hilary's plan to raise your taxes by billions". The ad appears to be an attack on Thompson's policy stance on taxes, but it is clear the attack is personal when the ad continues by stating:

"What's worse is the House Ethics Committee found Jill wrote 21 bad checks in the House bank scandal. The Journal Gazette called the bad checks "interest free loans" and said they're an "abuse of power" and a "question of character"... bad checks is a question of character".

Codes were assigned to policy related topics like: health care, abortion, taxes, and military spending or defense stance (Goldstein and Rivlin 2005). An advertisement from Jean Carnahan's campaign will provide a good example of policy related issues. The ad begins by stating the problem and addressing the past policy indiscretions of the incumbent, Jim Talent, as follows:

“We absolutely need to provide good quality prescription drugs to our seniors. “
[Announcer]: Just a minute, Jim. Should we believe your ads or your record? In Congress, Talent voted against a guaranteed Medicare prescription drug benefit. Check his record. And he voted to cut Medicare by more than \$270 billion dollars to give tax breaks to millionaires. So, Jim Talent can keep talking but his record is clear, he voted to cut Medicare and is against prescription drug benefits for seniors.”

These are just two examples of the various personal and policy attacks launched during the 2002 election cycle. However, they are clear indications of the differences between a personal and policy related attack. Personal attacks focus on the indiscretions of the individual that involve questions of their character when dealing with issues that aren't necessarily legislative in nature. Policy attacks focus primarily on the opposition's stance on an issue, past votes made, or campaign platform. While both personal and policy issues do focus primarily on choices made by the opposition, they are looking at two different aspects of the opposition's life.

Dependent Variable

The actual content found within the advertisements is the dependent variable in this study with the main focus being on negative content. There is an adequate amount of negative advertisements aired by both male and female political candidates during the course of the 2002 election cycle, therefore providing ample data by which to draw

conclusions from. There were approximately 150 negative advertisements launched by female candidates, and 531 negative advertisements run by male candidates. These ads were coded for tone (ad_tone), with 1 for promote, 2 for attack, and 3 for contrast. The focus in this analysis was on attack ads, with some attention given to contrast ads. Adjectives found within the bodies of the ad that worked to describe the opposing candidate were identified and coded accordingly. Whether the ad focused on personal issues, policy issues, or both personal and policy were coded as 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Themes and issues that were present in the advertisements were also coded and considered when drawing conclusions about how male and female candidates use negative political advertising.

Independent Variables

The independent variables for this analysis were gender and party identification. Gender was coded as 1 for female and 2 for male. In this study there were a total of 423 candidates: 80 females and 343 males. Party identification was coded as 0 for Independent, 1 for Democrat, 2 for Republican, 3 for Libertarian, and 4 for Green Party. Overall there were five Independent candidates, two candidates from the Green Party and one candidate from the Libertarian Party. In this study there were 196 Democrats, and 219 Republicans. These numbers are close enough to offer a feasible comparison between party affiliation, gender, and use of negative advertisements.

Chapter Five

Findings

Contrast Ads

H1: Male and female candidates will use contrast ads to reduce the appearance of negativity and launch a more personal attack on the opponent.

Contrast advertisements are an attempt to highlight the differences between candidates, and are readily used by both male and female candidates (Jacobson 2004). Female candidates employed the use of a wide range of advertisements during their campaigns, and in the 2002 cycle 15% of those advertisements were an attempt to explain a contrast between candidates, all of which had an aspect of negativity towards to opposition.

[Insert Table 1 here]

These contrast ads should be considered when discussing negativity in advertisements, because while the entire ad is not negative there is a level of attack on the opposition occurring in the content of the contrast ad. This may be a strategy used by women that allows them to appear less negative than male candidates, but still provides them with the opportunity to include a powerful negative message in the campaign.

However, male and female candidates will use a combination of both personal and policy information within the context of a single attack ad.

[Insert Table 2 here]

As the table indicates, there is a significant amount of personal and policy information combined within the content of an attack advertisement. Perhaps by utilizing the contrast ad candidates are still able to provide negative information about the opposition without appearing to be totally negative. By allowing only a portion of the advertisement to be a negative attack, it could be possible that the candidate does not appear to be a bully but is instead simply offering up information about the opposition. The data indicate that male and female candidates take advantage of the contrast ad strategy when presenting information to the general public.

Female Candidates and Negative Advertising

H2: Female candidates are more likely to attack their opponents on policy issues and will tend to stay away from focusing on personal issues, whereas men will more often attack on personal issues.

Female candidates do appear to spend a significant amount of time and financial resources on attacking both male and female opponents during the course of an election cycle. In fact it is evident that women are just as likely as men to produce and air a negative ad attacking an opponent, regardless of the gender of the opponent. The findings

in the study indicate that out of 539 advertisements aired by female candidates for both the House and Senate in 2002, 28% of those ads were strictly negative in nature. When considering this, it is clear that female candidates are not deterred from airing negative attacks ads on their opposition, whether the opposition is male or female. Therefore, men and women both utilize negative political advertisements during the course of an election cycle. There are however, differences in the way these advertisements are used.

Female candidates' attitudes toward negativity in the past have indicated that women do not favor advertisements that focus on personal issues. When asked, females claim to find the use of personal information within negative ads distasteful, and claim not to favor this type of information. Male candidate's attitudes have been measured to indicate that men feel more comfortable touching on personal issues. Both female and male attitudes regarding negative advertisements do appear to translate into actions.

[Insert Table 2 here]

As shown in the table, the data yield information to prove the hypothesis that female candidates focus more on policy issues in their attack ads, whereas male candidates are more likely to discuss personal issues in an attack ad. It appears that not only do male and female candidates claim to feel a certain way about the content of negative ads, but they also act on those feelings when creating a negative message.

Humor in Negative Advertisements

H3: Male candidates are more likely to use humor in their attacks on a female opponent than on a male opponent.

There is a most definitely a place for humor in negative political advertising. When a race becomes heated and negative ads are being launched regularly, candidates will often incorporate humor into the ads in an attempt to lighten the message. Often when a candidate feels he or she has continuously cut down an opposing candidate, it may be necessary to make advertisements funny as a way of bringing a light-hearted approach to a serious message. However, the data in this study do not indicate that the humor phenomenon occurred during the 2002 election cycle.

[Insert Table 3 here]

As the table shows, humor does not appear to be used as frequently as negative advertisements that are free from a humorous tone. Humor does not have a significant presence in this data set and does not appear to play a large role in negative political advertising in the 2002 cycle. However, it is clear that male candidates do use humor in attack ads more often than female candidates, but this number is not statistically significant.

[Insert Table 4 here]

When humor is used the data indicate that women are more likely to attack on policy issues than on personal issues. Only one of the female candidates attacked on

personal issues, and even then the issues were topics such as government ethics. Male candidates used humor when attacking both male and female opponents, but used humor more often when attacking male opponents. This could be due to the fact that there were simply more male/male races during the 2002 election cycle. Regardless, the data indicate that men do attack female candidates and humor is a tactic employed during the negative attack. Perhaps an explanation for the lack of support of the humor hypothesis is that humor might be a relatively new tactic in negative advertising. Future research over the topic may indicate different results, and it will be interesting to see if data from future cycles will yield another explanation.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Televised media is responsible for providing most American's with the information they receive on a daily basis (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). One important aspect of televised media is television advertising. By using televised advertising, political candidates have a time efficient way of spreading their message throughout the public. The candidate's image, biography, and campaign platform are all projected through advertisements. When a candidate feels it is necessary, negative advertisements are used in an attempt to cause damage to the opposition's campaign without doing damage to the sponsoring candidate's image (Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko 2005). Because of their effectiveness, negative political advertisements are a popular tool in a campaign war chest, one that is not likely to fade from use in the near future (Wattenberg and Briens 1999). Regardless of whether the public claims to care for the ads, candidates for office do not appear to be deterred from using them as a campaign tactic. Negative advertisements can be expected to be utilized by both male and female candidates, and these ads are used frequently during a campaign regardless of gender.

Gender does have a specific role in the context of political campaigns. Where gender does play a part during a campaign cycle is when it comes to voter stereotypes, issues, and ad content. Voters have certain pre-conceived notions about what kind of leader a person will be, and what kind of issues will be of importance to that individual

based on the gender of the person. However, gender does not determine the amount of money that will be raised, or what kinds of activities that money will be spent on. Gender does not hinder how a campaign strategy is formulated, and gender does not deter one from launching a negative attack. Regardless of gender, campaign finances and activities will be similar in nature (Dabelko and Herrnson 1997).

As discussed in the paper, it is clear that there are important differences in the way male and female candidates use negative advertising during the course of an election cycle. Female candidates are more likely to focus primarily on policy issues when attacking an opponent, whereas male candidates appear more comfortable with attacking the personal issues of an opponent. Female and male candidates do attack each other equally, and do not back down from a fight because of their gender. Therefore it is obvious that gender does not have an affect on whether a candidate will go negative, but does have an affect on the type of message found within the content of the negative advertisement.

It is evident, and should be researched further, that advertisements aiming to contrast the candidates do have a negative quality to them and should not be overlooked. Both male and female candidates pair positive information about themselves with negative information about the opposition. This may be done as a way to soften the blow of a negative message, or to hide a negative message within the package of a positive one. Either way, it is clear that contrast ads are a part of the negative advertising strategy of both male and female political candidates running for office.

Humor does not appear to be a significant factor in negative advertisements at the moment, as it appears to be used rarely. Men are the most likely to use humor in negative

advertisements, however they are just as likely to attack male opposition with humorous ads as they are female opposition. It is possible that in the future humorous advertisements will have a greater presence than they appear to have had in the 2002 election cycle. Past research indicates that the more intense a race becomes, the more humor will be used (Sapiro and Walsh 2002). Perhaps future political candidates will find more reasons to add humorous tones to their negative advertisements than did those candidates in the 2002 cycle.

This study could be expanded at a later date to discover more pieces of the negative advertising puzzle such as regional effects, age factors, and timing of advertisements. Finding out if a candidate's location has any effect on the decision to go negative and how negative the candidates goes may help discover more ways in which negative advertising is used as a campaign tool. Areas in the United states that are not used to female candidates may see less negative advertisements coming from women. Future research should be done to examine the effects of regional placement of candidates. The age of the candidate may also have an affect on the type of negative advertisements that are produced. For example, if female candidates are younger and have small children it may be that an opposing candidate may choose to portray the female candidate's willingness to devote time away from her children to serve the public as a negative thing. Therefore, age may affect the way attack ads are composed, and what kind of message is being sent through this campaign tool. The timing of when the advertisements actually air may also be a part of campaign strategy, and should be examined in future studies regarding negative advertising. Timing may have more to do with the actual budget of a campaign, however there may be other strategies involved

such as targeting certain groups of viewers. There are many possibilities for future research stemming from the topic of gender and negative advertisements, all of which could be significant contributions to this specific area of political science.

In realm of this particular study, the gap between the way male and female candidates run for political office appears to lie within the content of negative advertisements. Whether time is the determinant in this issue, it is clear that during the 2002 election cycle male and female candidates created negative advertisements that did focus on different issues. Those issues were both personal and policy related, and both were used in male and female negative advertisements. Another interesting phenomenon revolves around the use of contrast advertisements. Contrast advertisements add a layering effect to negative advertisements, by allowing both positive and negative information to be presented in a way that may soften the blow of a negative attack. While humor did not appear to play a major role in the 2002 cycle, it should not be an element of negative advertising that is ignored and will perhaps become more significant as the use of negative advertisements increases over time. Overall it is clear that negative advertisements are an important part of both male and female campaigns for political office. While gender does appear to have an effect on the content of these ads, it is clear that gender itself does not distract from the appeal of attack ads, and does not deter one from utilizing negative advertisements.

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Appendix

TABLE 1: Purpose of the Ad: Promote, Attack or Contrast

	Frequency	Percent
Promote	1642	60%
Attack	688	25%
Contrast	429	15%

TABLE 2: Percentage of Attack Ads Characterized as Personal, Policy or Both

	Female	Male
Personal	6%	12%
	(n=9)	(n=66)
Policy	57%	50%
	(n=80)	(n=276)
Both	33%	37%
	(n=46)	(n=200)

TABLE 3: Humorous Attack ads

	Humorous Attack Advertisements
No Humor	96%
	(n=656)
Humor	4%
	(n=27)

TABLE 4: Gender and Humorous Attack Advertisements

	Female	Male
No Humor	96%	95%
	(n=135)	(n=521)
Humor	4%	5%
	(n=5)	(n=22)

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