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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

(NOT SO) DIVINE COMEDY:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HUMOROUS POLITICAL ADS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUTATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

KARLA M. HUNTER

Norman, Oklahoma

2000

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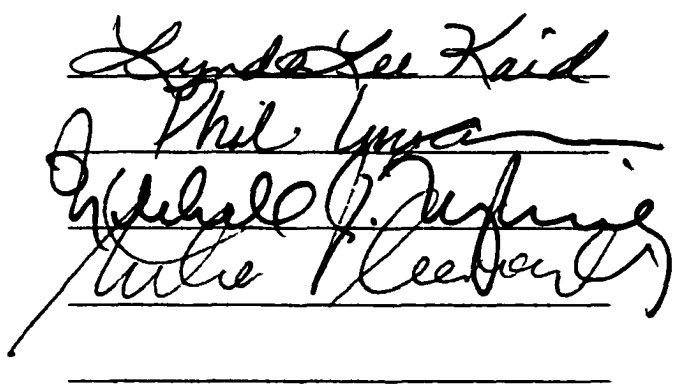
(NOT SO) DIVINE COMEDY:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HUMOROUS POLITICAL ADS

A DISSERTATION

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY



To my parents, Carl and Linda Larson

Whenever I said "Thanks for everything," you'd quote Grandpa Larson, joking "I didn't give you everything." I beg to differ.

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As I look back over the research accumulated in this document over the past five years, what strikes me is how truly amazing the gift of friendship has been, and continues to be, in my life. Were it not for the kindness, caring and self-sacrifice of friends too numerous to mention who have blessed my life, this dissertation would have been impossible.

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(NOT SO) DIVINE COMEDY:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HUMOROUS POLITICAL ADS

Abstract

The current study is a content analysis of 379 humorous political advertisements from 1952 to 1996 in every election level from civic to presidential. Percentages, Chi Square analyses and one-sample t-tests are employed to illustrate the different characteristics of the ads' content and the candidates who sponsor them.

Based upon the theory that humor may serve to mitigate potential voter backlash against the sponsoring candidate, this study predicted that the majority of humorous political advertisements would be negative in focus. Results of the present research support previous research findings that, indeed, the majority of humorous political advertisements attack an opponent. Previous findings that the majority of such ads are sponsored by white men and challenging candidates were also supported. Candidate image and campaign issues were equally represented in the ads. Similarly, ads were equally likely to use logical and emotional appeals,

both of which were twenty percent more likely to occur than source credibility appeals. The ads were shown to utilize far fewer fear appeals, but to be three times more likely to employ unethical distortions of audio or video technology, than were general political advertisements studied in past content analyses (Kaid, 1987).

Results of this study support the theory that humor often serves to mitigate voter backlash against the sponsoring candidate which may result from negative advertisements. In addition, the results suggest that female and minority candidates are still hesitant to employ humorous strategies, which are viewed by practitioners as less traditional or "safe" than straightforward attacks. The implications and limitations of this research are discussed.

(NOT SO) DIVINE COMEDY:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HUMOROUS POLITICAL ADS

Chapter I

Introduction

Political humor is, by no means, a laughing matter. Due to their ability to taint subversively the public's views of politicians, humorous attacks have historically affected political outcomes. Ron Faucheux, publisher and editor of Campaigns & Elections magazine, states in the epilogue to the video production "The 25 Funniest Political Ads" (1992):

> In their time and context, humorous negative political ads have helped turn losers into winners and winners into losers. They made voters laugh and they made a lot of politicians cry. Year to year, election to election, humor has always found its place in American politics and, for the most part, Democracy is better for it.

While scholars such as Huizinga (1970) have viewed humor as "play," as merely a means toward

achieving catharsis; other scholars assert that this "Play Theory" perspective is far from complete. Gerald Gardner asserts that "humor is a form of voter seduction that is more insidious than dirty tricks and much more amusing" (1986, p. 11). The veil of humor carries vast potential as a rhetorical tool for camouflaging the underlying motives in political situations. Humorous attacks make people laugh, and that laughter is key to their power--the public is not as profoundly aware of humor's persuasive voice as are those who speak through it.

Political figures from Aristotle to Ailes have understood and capitalized upon the premise that humor can be an effective persuasive tool. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in every case the available means of persuasion" (Golden, et. al., 1989, p. 30). Modern spin doctors and pundits express views which differ from Aristotle's only in their verbage: "The only 'formula' that seems to work is recognizing the reality that any approach must be adapted to the continuously shifting political

landscape" (Wendel, 1998, p. 18). Scholars, both classical and modern, have defined political humor and attempted to explain its utility for attacking one's opponents. They also assert that humor can create a means toward audience attention toward one's message, recall of one's content and affect for oneself.

Aristotle specifically discussed humor in his Rhetoric and his Ethics as well as in Poetics I. In Poetics I, Aristotle stated that comedy is "an imitation of characters of a lower type, but only the ludicrous, a subdivision of the ugly or base" (Lauter, 1964, p. 14). He says that the rhetorician may ridicule men of corrupt and degenerate nature by portraying them as even worse than they truly are. Scholars such as Richard Janko (1984) have also attempted to recreate the lost lecture notes of Poetics II and have speculated that this writing spoke most authoritatively of all of Aristotle's works about the use of humorous persuasive strategies. Janko's (1984) reconstruction of Poetics II states that humor or comedy lowers the perceived worth of its subjects.

The reconstructed Poetics posits that an accurate portrayal of the Aristotelian definition of comedy is as follows:

> Comedy is a representation of an absurd, complete action, one that lacks magnitude, with embellished language, the several kinds of embellishment being found separately in the several parts of the play: directly represented by persons acting, and not by means of narration: through pleasure and laughter achieving the purgation of like emotions. It has laughter, so to speak, for its mother. (p. 93).

Modern trade publications' and political pundits' advice harmonizes with that of classical scholarship. Campaigns & Election's recent article, "Making political TV spots that work in an age of media clutter" advises, "[u]se humor--especially in negative spots" (Wendel, 1998, p. 18). The article goes on to state that "voters often resent slashing, heavyhanded negative ads. They've grown weary of a snarling, smug

'Anything you can do I can do better' approach" (Wendel, 1998, p. 18).

An article in The Cleveland Plain Dealer displays the headline: "Commercials get a laugh and a vote: A little humor can do a lot when candidates use it effectively." This article furthers the argument for humor as a political advertising strategy, stating simply, "Make 'em laugh and get their vote" (Keller, 1996, p. 1C). The same article cites award-winning Democratic media consultant Deno Seder's arguments for humorous advertisements. He points to a poll by a company entitled Video Storyboard which found that 58% of 25,000 television viewers polled found funnier commercials more persuasive. "Humor is an especially effective way to attack an opponent" Seder adds, "because such ads often 'defuse' or at least take the sting out of negative information" (p. 1C).

Political ads that employ humor are not only more palatable attacks than those which employ "straightforward attacks," they are also more impacting on viewers in the long term. In the Plain

Dealer article cited above, Seder states that "Voters are far more likely to remember the content of a funny advertisement when they head to the polls," (p. 1C). He cites an ASI poll which revealed that viewers have 28% higher recall of humorous advertising content than of non-humorous advertising.

Larson (1995) explains that humor works because it violates our expectations and that it provides candidates with small budgets a means by which they can capture the attention of the media and the electorate, alike. Larson cites the example of now-Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) who had very little money for his 1990 challenging senatorial campaign but who triumphed after running funny ads.

Political consultants and scholarly research have done well to document televised political advertising as an important format through which to communicate campaign information about candidate's images and issues (Bystrom, 1995), and the above studies show the support for humorous strategies by classical scholars and modern practitioners. Surprisingly few academic

studies have investigated humorous political advertising, however, despite the vast body of political ad research and the long history of scholarship regarding humor's merit as a rhetorical tactic.

The purpose of this research is to examine modern humorous political ads through content analysis in order to understand more fully this intriguing campaign technique. This study will follow up on Larson's (1995) pilot study analyzing 27 humorous political ads which were deemed the "funniest" by Campaigns & Elections magazine. Although sound in its procedures and theoretical grounding, that investigation was limited in scope and generalizability, due to the small sample size and the convenience method of sampling. Twenty-seven ads, in view of the entire population of political advertisements, could not be considered as more than the proverbial "drop in the bucket." In order to obtain results more generalizable to the universe of political ads, a larger sample is required. The second limitation of the pilot study involved the

sampling method. By investigating only the advertisements chosen by Campaigns & Elections as the funniest, this investigation lacked the reliability of a random sample.

For these reasons, the current study will analyze the content of a sample of 379 randomly selected humorous televised ads based upon hypotheses and questions gleaned from the existing literature regarding humor and political ads. The goal of this research is to expand the knowledge base of the academic community by establishing quantitative descriptions of the nature of the political humor in these ads. It is, however, my hope as well that this information will aid political practitioners in their understanding of humor's uses and help consumers of political media to be more aware of the strategies used to attain their votes.

In order to develop further the rationale for this study, Chapter Two reviews existent literature regarding political advertising and humor, and specific hypotheses and research questions are drawn from that literature. Chapter Three then proceeds with a description of the research methodology utilized in order to test those hypotheses and to answer those questions. This study will be a replication and expansion of a pilot study conducted by Larson (1995) which found that humorous political advertisements were mainly negative, image-based, challenger-focused, lacking in fear appeals, and ridiculing in strategy, as well as sponsored by Caucasian male candidates. Due to the small sample and pilot nature of that examination, further investigation of these and other elements of humorous advertisements is warranted. This study adds a prediction about candidate gender and likelihood of using humorous strategies and one about the correlation between the ethical abuse of technology with the humorous advertising strategy. After the review of literature and a detailed explanation of the

methodology employed in this study, this dissertation concludes with presentation of results and discussion in Chapters Four and Five, respectively.

CHAPTER II

Political Advertising and the Use of Persuasive Humor: Literature Review

> "There are three things that are real: God, human folly and laughter. The first two are beyond our comprehension so we must do what we can with the third." JFK (Gardner, 1988, p.10)

Classical Scholarship Regarding Humor

From about 500 B.C. to 500 A.D., Greek scholars including Aristotle and Plato and Romans such as Cicero and Quintillian formulated and taught ideas about rhetoric which laid the foundation for modern communication scholarship (Golden, et. al., 1989). This scholarship includes a great deal about the rhetorical value of humor.

Aristotle's Poetics I states that the rhetorician may use humor to ridicule those of corrupt and degenerate nature by portraying them as even worse than they truly are. Tragedy, he says, by contrast,

portrays them as better by magnifying the person, rather than the situation (Lauter, 1964).

Poetics I and Richard Janko's (1984) reconstruction of Poetics II contain outlines of Aristotle's six constituent parts of comedy, parallel to those in tragedy: plot, characters, thought, diction, song-making and spectacle.

The following review of literature introduces prominent issues related to the parts of comedy as outlined by Aristotle. These issues underpin the theoretical framework for this analysis. First, the constituent parts of humor are applied to the modern context of the humorous political advertisement. Then those elements are discussed at length in order to lay the foundation for the hypotheses and research questions, which will be analyzed through this study.

The Six Constituent Parts of Humor

Plot involves "what is structured around the laughable events" (Janko, 1984, p. 96). In a modern

sense, plot includes characteristics of the campaign, itself.

Characters are "those who are in error in some way" including buffoons, ironics, and boasters who are worthy of reproach because they have deviated from the Golden Mean of moderation in all things (Janko, 1984, p. 97). The characters in a modern political ad, in the strictest sense, are those who are attacked in humorous negative advertisements. This analysis will also look at the characters who sponsor the ads and their characteristics (incumbent/challenger, male/female)

Thought, defined by Aristotle as "the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances" is the most rhetorically significant of these parts. "In the case of the oratory," he continues, "this is the function of the political art and of the art of rhetoric" (Lauter, 1922, p. 16). Aristotle speaks of a similar principle in the *Rhetoric,* which he calls "dianoia". He uses this term to refer to "the point at which rhetoric impinges upon

comedy; it is the means of intellectual expression and cognition" (Janko, 1984, p. 218). Thought is the message or the purpose of the ad's humor (image vs. issue).

Diction regards verbal expression, and Aristotle advises that the comic "must endue his characters with their own native idiom and use the local idiom himself" (p. 97). The diction of a modern political ad applies to the strategy or appeal which drives the content or message within the ad in order to achieve audience understanding, affect and persuasion. Thought and Diction work together to create an image- or issue-focus for the ad, as well as various types of appeals (fear, logos/ethos/pathos)

Song includes speech, rhythm and melody and Spectacle speaks of scenery and costuming (p. 98). These two constituent parts of comedy relate to an advertisement's creative aspects, which may include dramatizations, songs, cartoons and other audio or visual non-content (although possibly content-supportive) elements. These elements may be used in

ways which affect audience reactions to the sponsoring candidate or his or her opponent. Such tactics sometimes abuse modern audio and video technology.

The research presented in this segment will discuss the ethical abuses of technology research of scholars such as Lynda Lee Kaid (1993) and others who have analyzed and examined the various ways in which computer and audio/video technologies have been used to produce ethically suspect political commercials.

The Plot: Political Campaigns, Humor and Political Advertising

The roots of political advertising can be traced at least as far back in history as Aristotle, who said that rhetoric's purpose was "to promote one person's point of view over another person's" (Golden, et. al., 1989).

> Political advertising and political propaganda are undoubtedly as old as communication itself . . . .Classical studies from the time of Plato and Aristotle

were interested in communication as it affected the political and legal institutions of the day (Kaid, 1996, p. 1).

As a field of modern academic study, however, it is a relatively new area of scholarly inquiry and discussion. The modern definition of the political ad has been most thoroughly stated by Kaid, (1981, p. 250) who defined it as "the process by which a source (usually a political candidate or party) purchases the opportunity to expose receivers through mass channels to political messages with the intended affect of influencing their political attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviors." Kaid has revised her definition to include new ads and promotions which do not require purchase or mass channel distribution (e.g., direct mailed video taped ads), and ads which are purchased by expenditures independent from the party or candidate they promote. Perhaps future investigations can compare humor in traditionally defined advertising with that in these newer forms, but for the means and purposes of this

study, the more traditional definition is most applicable.

Humor As a Rhetorical Tool

Informed understanding of the uses of political humor requires in depth investigation of its nature. In Attitudes Toward History, rhetorical scholar Kenneth Burke (1961) described humorous tactics as a means by which people "prepare for battle," (1961, p. 20) that battle being human interaction--life. The essence of political communication lies in the notion that social order is constructed by distributing social power as a result of a particular method with which conflict is dealt. Humor can give people an active means by which to handle the conflict that necessarily occurs when a challenge such as an election campaign arises, or, as Burke calls it, a "frame" by which to accept or reject the current hierarchy. Burke discusses several frames of acceptance and rejection which people use to justify or change the parts they play within the "drama" of life, which, of course, is inclusive of political

matters. The frames provide people with "something to cue in on." He explains:

> 'Acceptance' and 'rejection' start [when] one constructs his (sic) notion of the universe or history, and shapes attitudes in keeping. Be he poet or scientist, one defines the 'human situation,' then, with this definition in mind, he singles out certain functions or relationships as either friendly or unfriendly. If they are deemed friendly, he prepares himself to welcome them; if they are deemed unfriendly, he weighs objective resistances against his own resources, to decide how far he can go in combating them. (Burke, 1961, p. 3).

Many incongruities exist in politics and in every day life. Perhaps the largest political incongruity is the rhetorical question, "What gives one person power over another in a 'democratic' society?" Candidates for political office must either overcome or utilize these incongruities. Burke asserts that humor is one way in which they might do so. This

analysis attempts to discover how each candidate in each examined ad attempted to "frame" the campaign in the eye of the voter through the use of humor.

Burke discusses "frames" which help a populace accept their candidates or leaders, and which are utilized in times of political flux in order to usher in a new regime. A third type of frame, the transitional frame, provides for attitudes during the transition between two leaders. Three frames--the epic, tragedy, and comedy (which includes that for ridicule as well as that for catharsis)--tend to emphasize the positive, toward acceptance. The second three--elegy, satire, and burlesque--move toward the negative, or rejection. Grotesque, and didactic, the final two frames, Burke calls transitional, meaning they are in effect when the current regime is in the process of changing. Two of these frames, satire and burlesque, will become highly useful in this analysis and are, therefore, described in greater detail below.

Kenneth Burke's definition of humor as "the opposite of the heroic" (1960, p. 43) strongly

correlates with Aristotle's definition of humor as "an imitation of characters of a lower type, but only the ludicrous, a subdivision of the ugly or base" (Lauter, 1962, p. 14). Humor magnifies the character, but "dwarfs" the situation. Freud agrees that "jokes are especially suited for ridiculing people in high places who we would otherwise fear to attack because of inner or outer inhibitions" (Hodgart, 1969, p. 110).

Satire provides a highly relevant frame for this analysis because, as is common in humor involving political opponents, "the satirist attacks in others the weaknesses and temptations that are really within himself " (p. 49). Burke charts the satiric projection as follows:

> A and B have a private vice in common (both are cleptomaniacs (sic), homosexuals, sadists, social climbers, or the like, in varying degrees of latency or patency). At the same time, on some platform of the public arena they are opponents (they belong to clashing forensic factions). A is a satirist. In excoriating B for his political

views, A draws upon the imagery of the secret vice shared by both. A thereby gratifies and punishes the vice within himself. Is he whipped by his own lash? He is. (Burke, 1961, p. 49)

The burlesque, like the satirical, places heavy emphasis upon victimage. The burlesque frame, however, is unique in that it "converts a manner into a mannerism" (Burke, 1961, p.55). In other words, burlesque reduces the victim's actions "to absurdity" by eliminating his or her circumstantial discriminations, only to look at the surface act itself.

The purpose of satire and burlesque is to move the audience to action with emotions from rage to ridicule. The viewers must be persuaded enough to overcome any unwillingness to criticize the victim.

The modern manifestation of this principle lies mainly with the media and political ads, but political figures throughout history have successfully utilized witty criticisms against opponents to usurp votes or in some way further their own causes.

Political Humor

While the televised medium of political humor, including that found in humorous political advertisements, is a relatively recent phenomenon, the origins of political humor are literally ancient.

One of the earliest recorded accounts of humor as political persuasion occurred in Rome, 56 B.C. (Volpe, 1977). Marcus Aurelius Cicero was commissioned to defend a young man, Marcus Caelius Rufus, accused of several crimes including attempting to poison his former lover, Clodia Metellus, then queen of Roman society. Clodia, the thwarted lover, had initiated the trial, apparently motivated by th prospect of revenge. Although these charges were not historically significant, the method by which Cicero utilized conventional oratorical elements through an unconventional strategy is profoundly significant. Cicero's strategy revolved around his recognition of humor's persuasive force. Cicero's four-part defense included an attempt to polarize the jury from the beginning by directly calling Clodia a "meretrix," the

equivalent of a prostitute and by identifying her young attorney as Caelius' equal. The second stage of his arguments honed in on Caelius' character as a "regular Roman guy." Next he diverted attention away from Caelius by directly attacking the defendant, Clodia, revealing her "true colors" as a sordid, lustful, contemptible, "unRoman" woman who committed incest with her brother and poisoned her late husband. Finally, Cicero returned to his assessment of Caelius as a decent young "Roman" to reaffirm the jury's acquittal (Volpe, 1977).

Although these arguments may not appear to be humorous, recorded accounts merely show the content and relate the fact that Cicero utilized several of the comedic strategies Burke defines.

Cicero used humorous attacks to exploit Clodia's questionable character, and thereby secure an acquittal for his client, Caelius. His attacks can be viewed through what Burke calls a satirical frame because he accused her of being "unRoman," a label one could have as easily give Caelius. Satire provides a highly

relevant frame for this analysis because "the satirist attacks in others the weaknesses and temptations that are really within himself " (p. 49), or, in this case, within his client. Cicero used satire to direct the jury's attention away from Caelius' own character flaws. Poisoning one's lover (if he indeed did) would not have been perceived as the act of a good "Roman" citizen.

Cicero's arguments (or avoidance thereof) also exemplify the humorous technique Burke calls burlesque, or "convert[ing] a manner into a mannerism (Burke, 1961, p. 55). Clodia may not have had a spotless reputation, but Cicero convinced the jury through humorous attacks that she was indeed a whore rather than simply a woman who occasionally had a sexual affair. He also used propaganda, a part of the didactic frame, to set up a dichotomy whereby the jury had to label Clodia as evil in order to label Caelius good and therefore acquit him.

This example provides great insight into the political humor used in earlier history. The stakes are

much higher in modern usage of this humor, however, due to the greater number of people potentially affected since the advent of television.

Humor in Modern American Politics

Not only has television "upped the ante" in the political game; the nature of the modern political system has made humor a virtual "ace in the hole." Pollster Patrick Cadell posits that "We are developing a political system in which substance means very little. In such an atmosphere, humor becomes a very serious matter" (Gardner, 1986, p. 12).

It follows that humor has become a more dominant political force since the advent of the television age. Pfau, Parrott, and Lindquist (1992) report that television as the predominant force in political advertising has brought about two other important changes during the past decade. First, the spot has become the most frequently utilized communication modality, and second, the attack strategy increasingly "is viewed as an integral feature of candidate spot advertising" (p. 236). For these reasons, this modern

analysis of victimizing political humor will focus upon political ads. A modern example of a successful political campaign which used more than one humorous ad is the 1984 Kentucky Senate race.

Challenger Mitch McConnell ran two funny ads which victimized incumbent Dee Huddleston. The ads showed a man dressed as a hunter who was on a mission to find the Senator because he had missed several important votes. In the first ad, the hunter looks in several remote locations from a beach resort, where the Senator had purportedly spent taxpayers' money while missing votes, to a remote forest. In the second ad, the hunter catches up with Huddleston, taunting him with his voting record. After chasing him through unusual scenes like a restaurant and a meadow, the hunter, finally "trees" the senator saying "gotcha now, Dee Huddleston." In this instance, Huddleston may be victimized because of his own mistake--missing votes. McConnell, however, as a challenger, had no previous Senate record to compare. He could only promise or lead the voters to believe he would act differently.

McConnell won the election. Did he win because he used humorous ads? Maybe, maybe not, but the ads certainly did not appear to hurt.

This example shows political satire according to Burke's definition, because McConnell had no previous record to compare to Huddleston's record, so as far as the public knew, he might miss as many votes or more. These ads also exemplify the burlesque; the mannerism of missing votes attributed to Huddleston was more likely a manner. McConnell converted Huddleston's character downward. He magnified his opponent toward the perfect imperfect Senator.

The Cost of Comedy

Despite such profound examples of humor's success as a persuasive strategy, humor is not universally agreed upon as a useful rhetorical tool. "Funny" strategies have their drawbacks as well as their benefits. Some of the drawbacks cited in scholarly literature as well as trade publications include candidate's fears of not being taken as seriously,

paired with the high costs of political advertising which is prohibitive of uncertain strategies.

"You feel like you've got this one chance and there's no time for joking around. You don't want to create the impression that you're taking this lightly", says Representative Fran Marini (Boit, 1998, p. 7). That is why political scholar Gregory Payne, professor of political communication at Emerson College in Boston, states that most humorous advertisements utilized by well-financed candidates are merely one segment of a larger campaign which includes traditional, straightforward ads (Boit , 1998).

A candidate can utilize ads that are too funny for his or her own good. Ratings of friendliness and believability may fall as levels of humor reach higher levels of perceived "funniness" (Larson & Barbee, 1994; Baltes & Ramsey, 1992). Although humor creates a way to attack an opponent without the possible repercussions of a straightforward attack, "it also can reduce any significance of what they say into meaningless laughter" (Baltes & Ramsey, 1992, p. 1).

One of the perceived drawbacks of humorous strategies is that, according to such as Huizenga (1970) humor is only for means of catharsis or "play"--merely tangential to rhetorical goals and functions. Some political practitioners say that the high cost of political advertising makes it unwise to use humorous ad strategies unless one's campaign is wealthy. "With ads costing up to $20,000 to produce and tens of thousands more for television time to get them on the air, local candidates with less money tend to play it safe." (Boit, 1998, p. 7).

The ancient Greek rhetor Gorgias also saw the risk of humorous attacks, but he spoke with more concern toward humor's audience than its user. He spoke of humor's power like that of a double-edged sword, carrying risks for as well as benefits. This principle is evidenced by Gorgias' advice to a rhetor using humor to "kill your opponent's jest with your earnestness and his earnestness with your jest." When the seriousness of a campaign is killed by jest, the

issues are diminished and the voters' understanding of campaign issues may suffer.

Despite these caveats, many scholars have discussed the numerous benefits of humorous strategies (Larson & Barbee, 1994; Orwell, 1968; Duncan, 1968; Keller, 1996; Melcher, 1996; Baltes & Ramsey, 1992; Pfau, Parrott & Lindquist, 1992). Hugh Duncan states that, "Comedy is never simply an 'escape valve' or a way of 'blowing off steam,' but a form in which we bring into consciousness the many incongruities between ends and the means employed to achieve them" (Duncan, 1968, p. 60).

In fact, George Orwell states that "every joke is a tiny revolution" (1968, vol 4., p. 36). If that position is accurate, a humorous ad can bring a political candidate well on his or her way toward the "revolution" required to defeat a political opponent or oust an incumbent. The benefits of political humor in advertising include alleviating possible voter "backlash," positively violating voter expectations,

overcoming selective exposure, and defending or inoculating against attacks.

Humor's potential for shielding an attacker from the repercussions of rhetorical battle provides another relatively new body of research in the communication field. In light of this potential, political scholars have inquired just how many attack ads utilize humor, and how many humorous ads are for the purpose of waging a safe attack against a political opponent. Content analysis has shown that the number of negative ads using a humorous or ridiculing strategy outnumber positive ads utilizing that strategy by about two-and-one-half times (Kaid, et. al., 1992). Larson's (1995) pilot study of humorous ad content confirmed this finding, showing that the study's sample of humorous ads contained 78% which were coded as negative in focus (Larson, 1995).

Another recent pilot study by Larson and Barbee (1994) provides some empirical basis for encouraging political agents to make moderate use of humor in their attack spots. The study found that higher degrees of

perceived humor in negative ads can enhance a viewer's attitudes toward the sponsoring candidate, as well as the viewer's likelihood of voting for that candidate. They found that humorous ad strategies using moderate levels of humor could not only raise voter perceptions of a candidate, but even cure the ills of what Roddy and Garramone (1989) have dubbed "voter backlash" against the sponsoring candidate of a negative ad. This investigation predicts similar results with the large sample study in order to assess what proportion of humorous political ads are negative in focus.

Humor can also gain audience and media attention by positively violating voter expectations of candidate behavior (Pfau, Parrott, & Lindquist, 1992). Senator Paul Wellstones' 1990 campaign exemplified this valuable use for the humorous strategy. According to Pfau, Parrot and Lindquist (1992) his use of funny ads positively violated the expectations of voters, thus earning him national media attention and higher name-recognition and ratings than his originally planned

"grass roots only" campaign would have, or than "straight" ads.

Overcoming selective exposure is another benefit of humorous political strategies. "Political junkies have a phrase for it: 'Breaking through the clutter.' And humor is often the age-old tool that does the breaking" (Boit, 1998, p. 7).

A final benefit of political humor comes from the age-old wisdom that "the best offense is a good defense". Burke states that humor allows transcendence over incongruity. Ergo, the powers that be in political hierarchies have historically used humor as not only an offensive weapon, but a defensive one, as well. Gardner's (1986) book All the President's Wits traces the use of humor by United States presidents from Kennedy through Reagan. He finds that at times presidential humor has provided a preemptive strategy against the threat of attack against obvious, readily criticizable issue stances, character flaws, or even physical characteristics. He cites the example of Ronald Reagan's subversion of attacks against his age

during the 1984 presidential campaign. In the second 1984 presidential debate against Democratic challenger Walter Mondale, Republican incumbent president Reagan used humor to put to rest many voters' fears about his age. "I will not make age an issue in this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth an inexperience" (Gardner,1986, p. 17). Reagan's immortal words display his great talent for subverting or preempting attacks through humor.

Humor is an effective rhetorical tool because laughter distracts the audience from the purpose of the attacker (Larson, 1995). It provides a safe arena in which people can freely criticize their peers, and those above them in the social hierarchy, as occurs when a challenging candidate uses humor in an attack against an incumbent candidate. The attacker can hide behind the mask of humor, safe from retaliation (Charney, 1978). Exercising humor also helps an attacker to feel less vicious than if he or she were to simply instigate a straightforward attack. Gardner states that "If we are able to laugh at ourselves as

we go for the jugular, the process loses some of its malice" (1988, p.12).

"Comedy is the most civilized form of art" (Burke, 1961, p. 39). It requires transcendence to see through all other strategies and find the irony between the different parts of a particular rhetorical act. Burke's notion of humor as a frame of acceptance discusses the nature of political humor. The word humor throughout the remainder of this study, unless otherwise noted, will refer to Webster's definition: "something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing" (1981, p. 552).

Examination of this question warrants further discussion of negative advertisements, in general. First, however, a detailed account of televised political advertising is warranted. The stakes are much higher in modern usage of political humor than they had historically been due to the greater number of people affected since the advent of television.

Televised Political Ads

Television literally leaped into the lives of the American populace in the 1950's, drastically altering the nature of political campaigns. Although less than one percent of American homes owned television sets in 1947, that figure had risen to nine percent by 1950, and reached 65 percent within the following five years (Ranney, 1983). Today, nearly all American households have at least one television receiver, and "with television sets in 98 percent of American homes, the impact of political spots is potentially huge," (Wendel, 1998, p. 18).

As a result, political scientists began to study mass media as central to the political process, and communication scholars took note of the radical transformation of society brought about by the television invasion. As Sig Mickelson (1989) noted,

> It [television] was out front. It was in the living rooms, the dens, and the bedrooms of increasing numbers of American voters. It was the device that caught the attention of candidates and

> their managers, and led to a dramatic transformation in the way they managed their campaigns. It was the center of attention; if not the sole cause for change, at least the excuse. And the change has been profound. (Mickelson, 1989, p. 153).

Mikkelson's assertion regarding the importance of television as a political medium is supported by communication researchers such as Holtz-Bacha, Kaid, and Johnston (1992). These authors state that "Throughout the world, television has become an important part of the way in which political candidates present their messages to voters during election campaigns" (p. 67). This notion becomes profoundly important in campaigns at the national level because, in these cases, voters rarely experience personal contact with the candidates.

Watching television is the most commonly shared experience in American life. It is often said that we are a nation that gathers, communes, grieves, and celebrates in front of the TV. Television viewing

tends to be an effortless activity that usually does not involve "conscious, selective, or effortful attention" (Krugman, 1986, p. 80). It has also been depicted as low-involvement by Zillman (1984), who indicates that most audience members use TV as a means of relaxation.

While relaxation may be a common motive for television viewing, however, it may not be television's only effect. Advertising is an essential part of television in the United States and has been since TV's inception. Commercials finance the medium's output, obviously in the hopes of persuading an audience to purchase, think, act, or even vote in the manner the advertisers support. Today, television commercials play a major role in electing government officials, and, thus, provide a common medium for political communication study.

Additionally, the vast majority of citizens have limited knowledge and understanding of political ideas (Sniderman & Teltlock, 1986). Rather, voters experience the limited view of the political system and

of the candidates, themselves, provided by the media, and their voting decisions must rely upon the images presented by television, radio, and print. In fact, Chaffee (1981) asserts that television is the only source of political information for many viewers.

Lynda Lee Kaid, director of the Political Communication Center at the University of Oklahoma, asserts that televised political ads, in particular, are the preferred medium because they give the candidate more control over the image he or she conveys to the voter than do television news or debates (1981).

This control is apparently beneficial, according to studies by Kaid (1991) and Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (1993) which document that "television spots . . . are responsible for alterations in voter perceptions of candidate images and in voter recollections about issues and candidate characteristics" (Holtz-Bacha, Kaid, and Johnston, 1992, p. 68). These alterations are also due, in part, to the finding that televised ads have the unique ability to overcome selective exposure, which impedes many other forms of political

messages from being heard by those with opposing views or party identification (Atkin, 1973).

"Political science and communication research suggest a powerful match between television as a vehicle for emotional persuasion, and the levels of low information and involvement typical of people most likely to be watching" (Newhagen & Reeves, 1991, p. 201). Chaffee (1981) asserts that television is the only source of political information for many viewers. As a result, TV's potential for influence is enormous.

Negative Political Ads

Pfau, Parrott, and Lindquist (1992) report that television as the prevailing medium of political advertising has brought about two important changes during the past decade. First, the spot has become the most frequently utilized communication modality, and second, the attack strategy increasingly "is viewed as an integral feature of candidate spot advertising" (p. 236). Negative strategies, in fact, have increased dramatically in recent campaigns (Merritt, 1984), and have been estimated to comprise more than one-third of.

all political spots (Sabato, 1981). Kaid and Johnston supported this finding, reporting that, since the 1970s, the number of negative political ads had increased to a level which reached a plateau at just over one-third during the three presidential campaigns prior to their 1991 study. Their continued study, however, showed that negative ads accounted for 38% of presidential campaign ads from 1952 to 1996, and for over half of the advertising for both major party candidates in the 1992 and 1996 presidential races (Kaid, 1994, 1998; Kaid & Johnston, in press).

Research of political advertising is characterized by its diverse methodological approaches used in examining various aspects of the ads. One focus of such studies concerns the effects of political ads on public audiences (i.e., voters). In the early days of research in this field, investigators compared the effects of political ads with both news programs and political debates. Since the 1980s, researchers have begun to extensively investigate the effects of negative political ads.

Research methods used in these studies include survey interview, experimental approach, content analysis, rhetorical analysis, and case study. In these studies, political ads are usually examined in a dichotomous dimension or a combination of several such dichotomous dimensions, such as positive vs. negative, issue vs. image, and male candidate vs. female candidate. Using these criteria, political ads can be classified by these dimensions in a relatively objective way. Negative ads are distinguished from positive ads in that "Negative ads focus on criticisms of the opponent, while positive ads focus on the 'good' characteristics, accomplishments, or issue positions of the sponsoring candidate" (Kaid & Johnston, 1991). Pfau and Burgoon, (1986), further this definition, stating that attack ads call attention to failings of an opponent's character or issue positions.

The most famous negative political advertisement, the "Daisy Girl" ad by Tony Schwartz for the Johnson for President Campaign, gave many a distasteful view of negative ads. Negative advertising, however, despite

what people say about their dislike for it, is effective (Jamieson, 1992; Joslysn, 1980; Kaid, 1991; Merrit, 1984). In fact, Kaid and Wadsworth (1991) found that negative advertising was better at helping voters recall issue and image information than positive advertising, and the same authors (Kaid & Johnston, 1991) found that negative ads actually contained greater amounts of issue information than did positvely focused ads.

Later, scholars Newhagen and Reeves (1992) discovered that negative ads were more easily recognized and recalled than positive ads. These scholars best sum up this notion of negative advertising's effectiveness, arguing that, "If negative advertising does not work, its increasing use across the American political landscape would be difficult to explain" (1991, p. 197). Yet political communication scholars and campaign professionals state conflicting views regarding whether or not negative ads are an effective medium through which to launch attacks toward a political opponent. "Negative advertisements are

rated as 'effective' because the message itself is remembered, but 'ineffective' because the candidate sponsoring the ad itself is harmed" (Basil, Schooler, & Reeves, 1991, p. 246). Some scholars posit that the effects of an attack spot are negative, not only for the opposing candidate, but for the sponsoring candidate, as well. Merritt (1984), for example, reports that "effects of negative political advertising ... which seeks to degrade perceptions of the opponent ... evokes negative effect toward both the targeted opponent and sponsor" (p. 27). This principle, known as viewer "backlash", is supported by other research which cites self-reports from the general populace, who claim to greatly dislike negative ads (Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton, & Cole, 1990). It would appear that the public dislikes looking on as one candidate "victimizes" another through negatively- skewed advertisements.

As much of the aforementioned theory suggests, however, laughter may be the best medicine to cure the ills of voter backlash. Larson and Barbee (1994)

encourage political agents to make moderate use of humor in their attack spots, due to their findings that higher degrees of perceived humor in negative ads can enhance a viewer's attitudes toward the sponsoring candidate, as well as the viewer's likelihood of voting for that candidate. The risk involved, however, occurs when levels of humor are perceived as too high.

Yes, a candidate can utilize ads that are too funny for his or her own good. Ratings of friendliness and believability may fall as levels of humor reach higher levels of perceived "funniness." The latter result is also supported by Baltes and Ramsey (1992), who posit that, although humor creates a way to attack an opponent without the possible repercussions of a straightforward attack, "it also can reduce any significance of what they say into meaningless laughter." This threat of lessening the possibility of persuasion through use of overly humorous appeals can be highly valuable knowledge to both political researchers and politicians. In short, humor can be a useful tool, but more is not necessarily better.

Further analysis of the content of existing humorous political ads will provide additional insight into the delicate balance of humor's use therein.

The Characters: Incumbent/Challenger and Candidate Gender

Incumbent Versus Challenger

It may seem counterintuitive for a challenger's advertising campaign to put him or her at risk of appearing hostile or vicious. Yet challengers are more likely to call for change through attack ads than are incumbents (Kaid and Davidson, 1986; Kaid & Johnston, 1991; Trent and Friedenberg, 1983). This finding is no longer perplexing in view of the different strategies, humor included, which can "soften the blow" of an attack. Larson's (1995) findings that humorous ads were overwhelmingly challenger-sponsored (59%) is explained by her assertion that challengers cannot risk losing votes to backlash. Thus, humor provides a potentially winning strategy, especially for the

challenger who wishes to attack without the overt appearance of doing so. Examining the humorous strategy in comparison between the levels of incumbent-use and challenger-use provides the third hypothesis for this analysis.

Findings regarding trends in the strategies utilized by challenging candidates conclude that challengers are more likely than their incumbent opponents to "use more logical appeals" (Holtz-Bacha, et. al., p. 68).

Women and Ethnic Diversity in Political Advertising

The first woman was elected to U.S. Congress in 1917. Jeannette Rankin took her oath of office as America's first female member of Congress on April 2, 1917. One of the few members to vote AGAINST the first World War, however, Rankin lost her seat in the next election. It seems that when women first entered the U.S. political scene, it was imperative that their communication "blend" with that of the male politicians and refrain from controversial issues or strategies. One might logically assume that in the post-modern era

of feminism and political correctness, this need would have changed. According to the findings of Hunter's (1999) content and rhetorical analysis *Wit and the Woman: Is the joke on us?*, however, it has not changed entirely. The initial goal of this research was to study the strategies used by women in humorous political ads via the methodology of content analysis. Upon analyzing descriptive data from 811 randomly sampled ads (the entire universe) from the Political Communication Archive in Norman Oklahoma[1], this analysis found that only 26 of the sampled ads were sponsored by female candidates for office. This finding supports the results of a 1995 pilot study by Larson which found that of a convenience sample of the "25 funniest televised political ads" chosen by Campaigns & Elections magazine, none featured female candidates.

Hunter (1999) chose to focus analysis on two analytical questions: 1) why women have by and large avoided humorous strategies and 2) whether or not such

strategies are desirable for female candidates to begin utilizing.

History of Women in American Electoral Politics

In the early nineteenth century women had to carve out a political niche of their own, which they found in the politics of altruism. This type of politics, while running parallel to traditional male politics, was less of a threat to men, (Paget, Witt, and Matthews, 1995). In 1920, women won the right to vote, but this victory still did not symbolize an increase in political clout for female candidates. For the next twenty years over two-thirds of the women who held office were those completing the terms of their late husbands.

In 1944, former actress Helen Gahagan Douglas was elected to Congress and was the only one of the handful of women in Congress by this time to campaign and serve "as a woman." Her most famous speech, "The Market Basket Speech" involved her carrying her own groceries to the house floor to prove the necessity of price controls. Although Douglas was reelected in 1946 and

1948, however, in her 1950 campaign for U.S. Senate she was easily defeated by Richard M. Nixon. Nixon's campaign capitalized upon the "Red Scare", stating that Douglas was "pink right down to her underwear"—not a critique of her gender, but a strong implication connecting her to communism. Ironically, it was not her femininity, but implications about her political leanings which led to her political defeat (Mitchell, 1998).

Between Douglas serving as Congress's first "female woman" and 1992's historical label as "the Year of the Woman", the US saw wars and major conflicts which allowed women to show their leadership skills at home and at war. We also saw discussion arise of the "Feminine mystique" and the ERA. These societal breakthroughs led to 1992's "banner headlines" extolling "the success of women candidates running for elective office [in that year]" (Matthews, 1995). In 1992, an unprecedented forty-seven women represented the US in Congress--up from the previous record of twenty-nine, and female senators jumped in number from

two to six. Then in 1994, while the number of women elected made no leaps and bounds, more women ran for high office, many for challenging seats, the most difficult seats to win.

In fact, a 1994 study by the National Women's Political Caucus found that when women actually run, they are now almost equally likely to get elected as males are. Women's and men's fundraising has also balanced out. Women are nowhere near parity in political office, but their numbers are growing, and they are running very highly funded campaigns and earning formidable reputations as candidates. Women in office or running for office today, however, seem to be going back to their roots and running as candidates rather than as women. Matthews praises their choice, stating that

> to know that a woman has been elected to office in the mid-1990's is to be less able to predict anything else about her than at any previous point in history. This development can only be healthy for American

> democracy. After all, to know that a politician is male is to be able to predict very little about him. (Paget, et al., 1995, p. 2).

Since women are running more and more parallel with men, and humorous political ads are working effectively for men, why, then, have women avoided the humorous strategies which have worked so effectively for many male candidates? Hunter's (1999) finding is, in some ways, inconsistent with research regarding male versus female campaigning strategies. The existing body of research regarding gender and politics suggests that female candidates are actually more likely to use strategies such as humor in their negative ads, perhaps in attempting to soften their attacks (Proctor, Schenck-Hamlin, & Haase, 1991). Other research, however, might explain this phenomenon. Research of just a decade ago reported that women were less likely to stress their strength and more likely to emphasize their compassion (Benze & Declerq, 1985). Humorous attacks, having been shown as mainly negative, do not

provide a logical arena in which to present one's "compassionate side." This idea spawns a more intuitive explanation for the lack of female candidates in this sample: Newer and less well-represented on the political scene, women, in general, may fear utilizing anything other than the traditional approaches to political advertising and attack. Their lack of representation in this sample may also be explained by the fact that there have simply been fewer women running for political office over the past forty years than there have been men. Women are, however, continually raising the glass ceiling on political inclusion, and there is little doubt that the question as to women's more widespread use of humorous attack strategies in the future is not a question of "if?" but a question of "when?" This analysis will predict a consistent trend of lack of female representation in the larger sample of ads.

A parallel discussion could be waged regarding the race of these candidates. Every single candidate shown in Larson's (1995) pilot study appeared European-

American in descent. Perhaps ethnically diverse candidates, too, are afraid to vary from traditional approaches to advertising, or perhaps there is simply such small representation of different races that those selecting the 25 funniest ads could not find enough diversity to choose from. It is interesting, however, that the selectors of these ads could make them diverse in time period, level of race, state, and party, but not even choose a single "token" ad for gender or race representation. After all, some of these advertisements were really not all that funny. The Stevenson ad, for example was obviously to ad diversity of level (President) and year (1952)--it merely portrayed a woman singing a jingle about the candidate. True, humor is in the eye of the beholder, but, then again, so is diversity. This analysis predicts that the majority of sponsoring candidates of humorous political ads will be Caucasian in race.

The Thought: Image Versus Issue

Negative political advertisements offer vastly greater persuasive potential than simply that of "slinging mud" at one's opponent. These ads have become a predominant force, not only in disseminating information to the voting public, but also in creating a forum of sorts, through which opposing candidates may communicate. Kaid and Johnston posit that the great audience-reaching ability of the television medium has "elevated negative advertisements to the level of mediated argumentation whereby candidates exchange positions and views through their campaign ads" (1991, p. 53).

Pollster Patrick Cadell laments that "We are developing a political system in which substance means very little. In such an atmosphere, humor becomes a very serious matter" (Gardner, 1986, p. 12). It follows that humor has become a dominant political force in this television age. But does the use of humor truly decrease the substantial information given in a campaign, or do humorous ads actually impart factual, issue-based information? If humorous attacks

follow the trend of negative advertising in general, the latter will be found true.

Various definitions of the terms "image" and issue" content have lead to slightly disparate findings regarding the proportions of each type of content imparted by political ads. The general consensus among scholars, however, is that issues are, indeed, more prevalent in televised political spots, especially negative spots, than is generally believed. Some studies have shown that issue content is even more prevalent than it is in positively-focused ads. Kaid and Johnston, for example, report that 79 percent of negative ads contain political issue content, as opposed to only 67 percent of positive ads (1991)--not surprising in light of reports that negative ads are more successful when attacking issue-stances rather than image. Issue attacks appear less vicious and, therefore, more easily legitimized than personal ones (Roddy and Garramone, 1988), Despite these findings, this study posits that the ads sampled will be mainly image-based. The reasoning behind this prediction is

based upon Larson's (1995) finding that 59% of humorous ads sampled were image-based. Perhaps the humor is utilized in order to veil the lack of substance in an attack.

The Diction:

Fear appeals and Aristotelian Appeals

Fear Appeals

Some scholars assert that negative ads rely heavily upon fear appeals (Kern, 1989). Fear appeals have been defined by Kaid and Johnston as those appeals "designed to make the voter fear that some negative consequence would occur if the candidate were not elected or if his or her opponent were elected (1991, p. 56). Their study found that 32 percent of all negative ads used fear appeals--a significantly higher percentage of fear appeals than were found in positive spots. In fact, more than 75 percent of the negative ads used by George Bush and Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential race contained fear appeals (Kaid & Johnston, 1991). Therefore, if the sampled ads are

found to be mainly negative, it would seem to logically follow that several of them may use fear appeals. Findings from the pilot study, however, showed a lack of fear appeals in 92.5% of the sampled humorous advertisements (Larson, 1995). While counter to the literature supporting fear appeals as highly common in negative ads, this finding is not surprising when considering the fact that these ads already employ a different strategy, that of humor. This study, therefore, hypothesizes that a similar lack of fear appeals will be found in the broader sample of humorous ads.

Aristotelian Appeals

Logical proofs are merely one of the three categories of artistic proofs outlined by Aristotle's The Rhetoric. The other two categories are emotional appeals and ethical appeals. Each of these proofs, Aristotle noted, provides a means toward achieving persuasion. A logical proof, as the term implies, is one that relies upon reasoned argument; emotional appeals are grounded in visceral reactions; and ethical

appeals attempt to establish source credibility through such means as gaining audience trust or creating identification with one's audience (Parman, 1994).

Identifying whether one of these principles dominates political advertising has been the object of several content analytic studies. A recent study by Miller, Parman, and Wiley (1993) found that ethical, or source credibility, appeals were dominant, followed by logical, then emotional appeals. Earlier studies by Johnston-Wadsworth (1986) and Kaid and Johnston (1991), however, showed the exact reversal of these results. This disparity may have been due to the different levels of candidate races assessed in these studies; Miller, et. al. sampled lower level races, while the studies by Johnston and Kaid and Johnston-Wadsworth sampled only presidential commercials (Parman, 1993).

The pilot study results were inconclusive regarding a dominant Aristotelean appeal. In fact, all three forms of artistic proof were found in over two-thirds of the sampled ads (Larson, 1995). Past research has found one appeal or another as dominant, .

but that research has sampled ads from one level of race or another. Perhaps this failure to reach a conclusion arises from the fact that the sample was so small and selected due to convenience, or that the sampled ads for the pilot study dipped into every level of campaign, from civic to national. While this study found a significant majority of these ads to be from national level races (Senate, Congress, President), the fact that all levels were represented may have skewed the data away from finding a dominant appeal. The study at hand will, again, attempt to answer the question as to whether a dominant appeal is present in humorous ads, and, if so, which appeal is dominant?

The Song and the Spectacle:
Ethical abuses of technology

Knowledge of the power of humor can be traced to the ancient Greeks. Aristotle, espousing the use of any and all "available means of persuasion," noted not

only the persuasive viability of humor, but also its important cathartic functions (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 1989). Today, it is the televised political commercial that forms the nucleus of candidate-voter communication. Theories regarding the use of technology and of humor in political advertisements appear to merge upon one central point. They attempt to persuade voters while shielding candidates from negative reactions and may even increase the possibility of persuasion.

Since political commercials came onto the political scene in 1952, their value and motives have been questioned. Constituents and scholars lament that political commercials "cloud the issues" of political campaigns. Current questions involve the technology involved in producing political ads. Computerized graphics and audio and visual technology can create what are considered "ethically suspect" messages. If, as Sniderman and Tetlock (1986) state, the vast majority of citizens have only limited knowledge and

understanding of political ideas and details, ethical abuses of technology should be of concern to scholars.

The political commercial, as with any segment of videotape, can be broken into distinct entities: specific words or sounds, verbal statements, nonverbal gestures, static images, colors, and visual presentations. Each of these is expected to generate certain meanings in the minds of voters. Every aspect of a TV spot has been included for a definite purpose.

Since 1952, questions about television advertising's value and suspicions of its motives have emerged with every election. Central, to this often repeated debate, is the argument that political commercials reduce the importance of campaign issues, precluding thoughtful discussion and voting. More recently, other questions have arisen that focus attention on the technology involved in producing political ads. These ads can be ethically problematic because they combine audio and video technologies.

"Concerns about ethical abuses in televised political advertising have grown substantially as a

result of developing video technology" (Kaid, 1993). Kaid (1993) and others have analyzed and examined the various ways in which computer and audio/video technologies have been used to produce ethically suspect political commercials. The rise of these new technologies provides campaigns with powerful tools for influencing the electorate.

Larson, O'Geary, and Lin (1996) found that 67% of the humorous ads sampled in their study contained some form of ethical abuse of technology, as opposed to 15% of ads in general, according to Kaid (1993). This finding, while attained through a small convenience sample, provides reason to predict that a great number of humorous ads contain such abuses. Larson, O'Geary, & Lin's (1996) pilot investigation examined the extent to which humor and ethical abuses of audio and video technology were linked in political advertisements. A convenience sample of 27 humorous political advertisements from the videotape of Campaigns & Elections magazine's "25 Funniest Political Ads" were content analyzed in order to determine whether any

abuses existed in each ad's editing techniques, camera angles, computerized or special effects, or dramatizations. Although they are few in number, these ads are representative because they span the entire history of the televised political commercial from its inception in 1952 through the Senate races of 1992. They also incorporated all levels of political activity, from city office (mayor) to the office of the United States presidency.

Of the 27 ads in this convenience sample, 18 were found to contain such ethical abuses. Compared with an approximate 15% of political advertisements in general found to contain ethical abuses of technology, this 67% abuse rate in humorous ads provides a strong incentive to further study the link between these two concepts. This finding alone provides a reasonable basis for continued study in this area. It would appear that humor and ethical abuses of technology "go hand-in-hand."

Particular abuses and uses of these abuses were found to be highly prevalent among the ads sampled.

The most common abuse (15 of 18) utilized staged events or happenings, and the most common usage (17 of 18) was "Audio or video technology that is used to ridicule an opponent in an unjustified or irrelevant way." Perhaps these uses will provide interesting findings for future study, as well.

These findings concur with theories regarding television as a visual medium as discussed in the following statement by Rod Hart (1994):

> Television does better with emotions than with ideas, the former being more visual than the latter. In addition, personality politics is attractive to the electronic media for rhetorical reasons. Television specializes in narrative and is therefore always story hungry. Since narrative requires skillfully drawn characters and since political affairs have a colorful supply of same, a match is made. (Hart, 1994, p. 17).

Due to the visual nature of television and the "colorful" nature of politics, the finding of this

study regarding the high number of dramatizations in humorous political advertisements is understandable. The ridiculing nature of the technological abuses is also not surprising in light of research by Holtz-Bacha et al., (1992) who found that the number of negative ads using a humorous or ridiculing strategy was about two-and-a-half times the number of positive ads utilizing that strategy.

The Larson, O'Geary and Lin (1996) content analytic study was an attempt to provide insight for future effects studies. Using content analysis, these scholars sought to examine the pattern of ethical abuse of technology in humorous political ads.

Due to the nature of the Larson, O'Geary and Lin (1996) pilot investigation and to the small convenience sample, no supported conclusions regarding the effects of these ads utilizing humor and ethical technology abuses could be drawn. Perhaps these particular ads were seen as humorous by those who deemed them "funniest" at Campaigns & Elections magazine partially due to the technological abuses they display. For this

reason, further investigation is warranted. A larger, randomly selected sample of ads such as that provided in the current study is needed to ensure that no spurious reason may be causing the high incidence of ethical abuses found in the pilot study.

While ethical abuses of audio and video technology in political ads is a relatively new area of political communication study, it has provided a foundation for several branches of research including the use of such distortions in humorous advertisements. The pilot study provided a basis for further investigation of the effects of technological distortions in humorous political ads through its finding that 67% of the 27 ads sampled contained such ethical abuses, as opposed to 15% of ads in general (Kaid, 1993). Further study may prove not only interesting to political communication scholars, but to the political communicators themselves--both candidates and voters--who seek knowledge regarding methods of persuasion.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Historical implications of humor and current market perspectives provide a forefront worthy of study for modern communication scholars who wish to fully understand the implications of political humor in modern society. Santayana's caveat that "Those who ignore the lessons of history are destined to repeat it" is certainly wise in any facet of political communication. In the arena of humor, the inverse is also true. Those who do know history potentially possess the unique ability to recreate it, if they so choose. A modern spindoctor, political consultant, or politician can better learn how to successfully use humor as a rhetorical tool by looking at past situations in which political actors have utilized such humorous attacks successfully. By studying situations in which such attacks failed to bring the desired result, these scholars can better learn which techniques to avoid and in which particular situations to avoid them. Communication scholars, as well, stand

to benefit from this analysis through finding greater understandings of persuasion theory as a whole.

H1: Televised humorous political ads are mainly negative in focus.

H2: Humorous ads are sponsored primarily by white male candidates.

H3: Televised humorous political ads are mainly challenger-centered ads.

H4: Televised humorous political ads are mainly image-as opposed to issue-based.

H5: Fear appeals are not a common part of the humorous political ad strategy.

H6: Humorous ads contain a higher percentage of ethical abuses of technology than political commercials in general.

Q1: Which type of Aristotelian appeal (logical, ethical, or emotional), if any, is the dominant appeal used in the sampled ads?

Q2: What are the general characteristics of humorous political advertisements?

The following chapter discusses the specific methods employed in testing the above hypotheses and research questions. It is followed by a report of the results of this analysis, and a discussion of those findings and their implications.

Chapter III

Methodology

To examine the nature and content of humorous political ads in relation to the posed hypotheses and research questions, the researcher selected a sample of ads from the Political Commercial Archive of the Political Communication Center at the University of Oklahoma.

The Political Communication Center contains an archive of over 66,000 political advertisements—the largest and most comprehensive collection of political commercials in the United States. The archive is recognized worldwide as a resource for political advertising research. "Many of the items in the collection are the only known, existing video or audio recordings of these particular political commercials" (Kaid, Haynes, & Rand, 1996, p. 1). The archives advertisments range all levels of campaigns, from civic to presidential, and every year from 1952 to 1996. Ads in the archive are gathered through various means and

catalogued based upon several objective and a few somewhat subjective categories of data, including humor.

Of the 47,109 ads that have been cataloged by the archive to date, 811 ads were coded as humorous by the Center. From those 811 ads, a representative stratified random sample of 379 was chosen in order to span the entire history of the televised political ad from its inception in 1952 up until races as recent as 1996. These ads delve into all levels of political activity, from civic office to the office of the United States presidency. Videotapes containing these ads were provided by the Political Commercial Archive at the University of Oklahoma.

A list of the 811 humorous ads was drawn, and from it, a random starting point was chosen and every 2nd ad was added to the sample. During the sampling and coding procedure, several ads were found to be duplicates, radio spots, or otherwise unavailable. Such ads were replaced systematically by revisiting the sampling frame and again, drawing every 2nd ad which

remained. This process was necessary twice before the desired sample of approximately one-half the available universe was achieved.

Because the list was grouped by date, the resultant sample was approximately stratified by year, with the number of ads chosen for the sample within each year being equally represented. This stratification makes generalizations about trends in humor's use possible.

Content analysis, as defined by Krippendorf, is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (1980, p. 21). This analysis was objective and systematic, following the stated definitions of each construct and tallying their occurrences as present or dominant in each ad, as was done in the pilot study analyzing many of these aspect of humorous political ads (Larson, 1995). Therefore, this analysis will be replicable and valid, in its method of utilizing a pre-chosen, pre-defined set of categories in a consistent way outlined by a codebook. The categories have been based upon those

used in past studies by Kaid and Wadsworth (1991), and the questions from codesheets used by Larson (1995) and Larson, O'Geary, and Lin (1996) to discuss humorous ads' content and to assess whether ethical abuses exist, and, if so, which ones are utilized.

The unit of analysis for this study is each political spot, while the unit of enumeration varies with each specific category. To investigate the posed hypotheses and questions and to search out other useful information regarding this sample, this study also assessed basic information regarding election year, party affiliation of sponsoring candidate and whether he or she is incumbent or challenger, level of race, race and gender of candidate, whether or not the candidate appears in the ad, and whether the race was won or lost. Deeper analysis involved the positive or negative orientation of the ad and who makes the attacks; whether the ad is image- or issue-based; which, if any, Aristotelian appeals or fear appeals are used; and which, if any, ethical abuses of technology are found. These categories are laid out in the

codesheet in Appendix A and explained for coding purposes in Appendix B.

The coding materials and process were tested on a group of three communication graduate students, and initial reliability concerns led to improvements in the coding and training procedures.

Four communication graduate student and faculty coders were then trained to perform the coding for this study. Prior to beginning their coding, each of these coders received approximately two hours of training followed by an initial reliablity check of five ads. With slight retraining for the variables of Aristotelian appeal and ethical abuse of technology, the coders then completed reliability checks on 35 more ads, resulting in a 10% reliability sample. Due to their already present knowledge of many of the categories assessed, the faculty and graduate student coders maintained a high level of intercoder reliability across the categories. Reliability was assessed based upon percentage of agreement (See Table 1). Party, race and gender resulted in 100% intercoder

reliability, and level and status achieved 97.56% and 98.17%, respectively. Questions regarding ad focus and ad attack resulted in 91.46% and 97.56% reliability. The person or entity who wages the attack, and whether or not the candidate appears or is vocally present in the ad were agreed upon in 94.38%, 95%, and 99.38% of the coders' assessments, respectively. Coders agreed on Image in 90.85% of the ads and Issue in 90.85%; Dominant image/issue 92.07; Logical, Emotional, and Ethical appeals 82.3%, 80.49% and 79.27%, respectively. Coders agreed about fear appeals 93.29% of the time, ethical abuse of technology 85.98% and whether the abuse was integral to humor and to attack 90.85% and 87.80% of the time.

Intercoder reliability of 88.21% was achieved overall in the categories of abusive techniques utilized. Regarding the specific abusive techniques employed, the following intercoder agreements were achieved: Editing Techniques 84.38, Visual Imagery 86.25, Computerized Alterations 92.5%, Special Effects

86.88%, Special Audio Techniques 85.6%, Dramatizations 85.63%, and Audio or Video Mismatch 96.25%.

The ways in which the technology was used to abuse ethics were agreed upon by coders 89.49% of the time. The following reliability scores measure the coders' agreement regarding the specific uses of technology in abusive ads: to alter actual features on the screen 92.5%; subliminal persuasion 96.2%; cutting or re-positioning to create a false impression 86.2%; juxtaposition of mis-matched pictures and/or audio 88.13%; misuse of scale or balance 95.62%; other editing or special effects to distort or mislead 84.38%; pseudo-neutrality or pseudo-actuality 81.88%; irrelevant or unjustified emotional response 79.38%; unjustified or irrelevant ridicule 80%; to condemn or criticize based on race, religion, ethnic origin or gender 100%; and to create intentional ambiguity 100%.

The following chapter discusses the findings of this content analytic study.

Chapter IV

Results

The results of this investigation provide statistically significant support in identifying many characteristics of humorous political advertisements. Due to the nominal level of the data assessed, data analysis was performed with basic frequency distributions and one-way Chi Square goodness of fit measures to determine the significance of differences among groups. Where appropriate, one-sample t-tests were also computed, in order to assess significance of findings regarding humorous content in comparison with prior analyses of ad content, in general.

Focus of Humorous Ads

The first hypothesis predicted that the sampled ads would be mainly negative. This hypothesis provided the major thrust of investigation for this study, and was supported. Basic frequencies showed that 259 of the 379 ads, or 68.3% of the sample, were negative in

focus. This difference was statistically significant at the .0001 level [$\chi 2$ (2, N = 379) = 261.8839, p =.000] (See Table 2).

When the mean of 48.5% is compared with past findings that at least one-third of all ads are negative (Kaid & Johnston, 1991; Sabato, 1981), a one-sample t-test showed significance at the .0001 level, as well (See Figure 1 and Table 3). This finding suggests that humorous advertisements are three times more likely to contain attacks than ads, in general.

Further analysis of this hypothesis was achieved assessing a "focus" measure, which found that 223 ads (58.8%) were negative or opposition focused, 118 (31.1%) were positive or sponsor candidate focused, and 38 ads (10%) were comparative in nature, focusing equally on the two candidates (See Table 2 and Figure 2). These results were statistically significant at the .00001 level [$\chi 2$ (2, N = 379) = 136.2797, p =.00001], further supporting the above hypothesis.

In the ads which were negative in focus, basic frequencies also showed that the candidate appeared

actively in 41.7% of the ads sampled, and in photographic/inactive form in 40.6% of the ads. The candidate was vocally present in only 104 of the ads, or 27.4%, however. The candidate was shown to have acted as the attacker in only 12.2% of the ads, while a surrogate appearing within the ad acted as the attacker in 19.6% of the ads. A completely anonymous announcer was the most common form of attacker appearing in 68.2% of the ads sampled. These results suggest that, while the candidate is unlikely to wage the attack verbally, he or she is not unlikely to be associated visually with the attacking ad.

Humorous Ads and Candidate Race and Gender

The second hypothesis predicted that humorous ads would be sponsored primarily by white male candidates. This hypothesis was also supported. Racial representation descriptive statistics showed that, of the 379 ads, 340 (89.7%) had sponsors who were Caucasian, 2 (.5%) Black, 1 (.3%) Native American, zero (0%) Asian, Hispanic, or other, and 36 (9.5%) were not

discernable by the ads' content or coders' prior knowledge. [$\chi 2$ (2, N = 379) = 854.7837, p =.000]. (See Table 2 and Figure 3).

Similar findings were true of gender representation. Descriptive statistics showed that 346 (91.3%) of the ads' sponsoring candidates were male, 26 (6.9%) were female, and 7 (1.8%) were not discernable by the ads' content or the coders' prior knowledge of the candidate. This finding was significant at the .0001 level, as well [$\chi 2$ (2, N = 379) = 574.3588, p =.000] (See Table 2 and Figure 4).

Humorous Ads and Candidate Status

The frequency of incumbent versus challenger-sponsored ads was the subject of Hypothesis Three. One hundred of the ads were sponsored by incumbents (26.4%), while 215 (56.8%) were challenger sponsored (64 were indeterminable by the coders). This analysis showed significant support that humorous ads are more frequently utilized as an attack strategy by

challenging candidates than by incumbents [$\chi 2$ (1, N = 379) = 253.1161, p = .0000] (See Table 2 and Figure 5).

Image Emphasis in Humorous Ads

Results for Hypothesis 4 suggested that humorous political ads are slightly more image-based. Frequency of ads containing an image-basis was 311 (82.1%), as opposed to 287 (75.7%) issue-based ads (these categories were not mutually exclusive). (See Table 2 and Figure 6).

Fear Appeals in Humorous Ads

The fifth hypothesis predicted that fear appeals would not be a common part of the humorous political ad strategy. A statistically significant 356 (93.9%) of the ads used no fear appeal, as opposed to 26 ads (6.9%) that used fear appeals. [$\chi 2$ (1, N = 379) = 622.7546, p <.0001] (See Table 2 and Figure 7).

Ethical Abuses of Technology in Humorous Ads

The sixth hypothesis predicted that humorous ads would contain a higher percentage of ethical abuses of technology than political commercials in general. This hypothesis was supported through a one-tailed t-test. The abuse measure was first recoded into a percentage, whose mean (48.5%) could then be compared with the 15% of general political ads coded as abusive (Kaid, 1993). Findings were significantly different than the prior study's, with significance at the .000 level, and a t-value of 13.05. (See Table 2, Table 3, and Figure 8).

The ads were also assessed based upon whether or not the existing abuses were integral to the attack [$\chi 2$ (1, N=183)= 159.7869, $p<.0000$] (and to the humor [$\chi 2$ (1, N=181)= 38.0608] within each ad. These findings were also significant at the .0000 level.

Of the 183 ads coded as containing ethically abusive technology, 69 (37.7%) contained technological distortions in the form of Editing, 44 (24%) in visual imagery, 48 (26.2%) computerized alterations, 40 (21.8%) special effects, 58 (31.7%) special audio

techniques, 104 (56.8%) dramatizations, and 19 (10.4%) audio or video mismatch.

The ways in which the technology was used to abuse ethics were as follows: to alter actual features on the screen 24 (13.1%); subliminal persuasion 16 (9%); cutting or re-positioning to create a false impression 50 (27.3%); juxtaposition of mis-matched pictures and/or audio 51 (27.9%); misuse of scale or balance 14 (7.7%); other editing or special effects to distort or mislead 100 (54.6%); pseudo-neutrality or pseudo-actuality 66 (36.1%); irrelevant or unjustified emotional response 81 (44.3%); unjustified or irrelevant ridicule 71 (38.8%); to condemn or criticize based on race, religion, ethnic origin or gender 0 (0%); and to create intentional ambiguity 1 (.5%) (See Table 5).

Aristotelian Appeals in Humorous Ads

The first of two research questions asked which type of Aristotelian appeal (logical, ethical, or emotional), if any, would be the dominant appeal used in the sampled ads. Because intercoder reliability in

the category of dominant appeal was not high enough to perform inferential statistics, only descriptive statistics will be reported in answering this question. Basic frequencies showed 269 (70.8%) of the ads as having used logical appeals, 224 (59.1%) as using source credibility, and 271 (71.5%) and using emotional appeals (See Table 2 and figure 9).

General Characteristics of Humorous Ads

A final research question asked, simply, "What are the general characteristics of humorous political advertisements?" Some of the general characteristics which were assessed include the level of race, party of sponsoring candidate, and year of ad. The ads sampled were mainly at the state and congressional level (35.6% at the state level and 41.4% at the congressional level), while 15.6% were sponsored by presidential candidates and 4.2% by candidates for civic, county or district office.

More of these ads were sponsored by Democratic candidates (32.7%) than by Republican candidates (23.7%) or members of other parties (2.1%).

The incidence of humorous advertising increased by decades, with 1994, having the highest number of ads at 86 (22.7%), and 1988 with the second highest at 39 (10.3%) (See Table 2, Table 5 and Figures 10 and 11).

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The present study was designed to elucidate the role and nature of humor in political advertisements in order to bridge the gap between the conventional wisdom of political practitioners and the systematic findings of political communication scholars. Through a content analysis of 379 ads, catalogued as humorous in the University of Oklahoma Political Communication Center, this study sought to avoid some of the methodological problems that arose in earlier pilot studies of this subject matter. The current research design employed a stratified random sample much larger than the convenience samples of 27 ads utilized in the pilot studies. Thus, this study was designed to confirm and expand upon the findings of those early studies in order to better explain humorous ads' content and to make inferences about the goals of the candidates who sponsor them.

The findings of this investigation are particularly engaging when considered in light of other relevant research findings. The following section discusses the implications and theoretical importance of these findings and then addresses the limitations of the present study. Finally, several questions for future research raised by this investigation are discussed.

General Discussion

This investigation examined humorous political ad content based upon six hypotheses and two research questions. The findings of this study provide compelling support for those of two pilot studies by Larson (1995) and Larson, O'Geary and Lin (1996). The results of this inquiry show that humorous political tactics are most often used in negative political advertisements by challenging white male candidates, and that they contain very few fear appeals, but a great percentage of ethical abuses of technology.

Negative Ads

This study, first and foremost, strongly suggests that humorous ads are, by their very nature and purpose, generally negative in focus. In fact, humorous ads were found to be three times more likely to contain an attack against an opponent than were ads from a general sample of ads like that utilized in past content analysis (Kaid, 1993). The implications of this finding are two-fold.

First, this finding provides empirical support for an implicit theory questioned by political consultants in the field for years: that humorous ads might soften the blow of an attack. The fact that this attempt can be successful in reducing the effects of voter backlash was discussed in the literature review (Larson & Barbee, 1994). Curing the ills of voter backlash is vital to candidates who want to harness the proven power of negative advertisements discussed by scholars and practitioners of political advertising (Jamieson, 1992; Joslyn, 1980; Kaid, 1991: Merrit, 1984). Negative ads work, and are recalled more easily

than positive ads, but the danger of backlash may frighten candidates from utilizing them fully. Thus, in an advertisement on a low involvement medium like television (Zillman, 1984), a witty criticism may be less likely to be noticed as "mudslinging" by viewers, and more likely viewed as jest. An interesting question remains, however: Does the type of humor affect whether or not backlash effects are curtailed? In the current study, no measure of type or level of humor was employed, thus all types were viewed as the same, excepting for their comparison based on positive or negative ad. Some ads, such as those by 1990 Wisconsin Democratic Senate hopeful (now Senator) Russ Feingold, simply poke fun at their opponents. One Feingold ad, for instance, depicted the candidate visiting the home of his opponent, then Senator Bob Kasten (R-WI) and ringing the doorbell of Kasten's large mansion. The doorbell sounded a "live dog" alarm each time it was rung, which was a part of the mild, fun humor used in Feingold's advertising. Other ads, however, utilize much deeper and more sarcastic forms

of humor. One such ad is the famous "Laughing out Loud" ad, which merely shows a TV screen emblazoned with the words "President Agnew" on it, with a voice over of a man laughing loudly and shrewdly. Such an undercut, presumably, was much more harmful to the political image of then Vice Presidential Candidate Agnew than Feingold's light-hearted attacks on Kasten. Perhaps some humor is utilized in backlash relief, while other humorous ads were never intended to be taken as jokes.

Nevertheless, the finding that humorous negative ads only contain a voice-over or speech by the sponsoring candidate 12 percent of the time, while the candidate appears either actively or in a still photograph in over 80 percent of the ads supports this study's initial premise. Candidates who utilize humorous ads want the positive effects associated with a humorous ad, but want to be dissociated from the attack.

Secondly, however, this and related findings, if brought into the public eye, may create further

distrust on the part of the voting populace toward political candidates. Humorous ads are fun, and they can create a sense of identification between candidate and voter--the voter is "in on the joke." If a voter begins to view humorous ads as simply another method of manipulation to gain votes, however, he or she may not feel so much "in on" the joke as "the butt" of it.

Neil Postman (1984), in his critique of political advertising, Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business, argues that "the fundamental metaphor for political discourse in America is the television commercial" (p. 49). He contends that political discourse has been fatally undermined because television discourages viewer skepticism, and critical and historical thinking.

According to Postman, all political spots trivialize political discourse, which was previously print-based.

> My argument is limited to saying that a major new medium changes the structure of discourse; it does so by encouraging certain uses of the

> intellect, but favoring certain definitions of intelligence and wisdom, and by demanding a certain kind of content—in a phrase, by creating new forms of truth-telling. I will say once again that I am no relativist in this matter, and that I believe the epistemology created by television not only is inferior to print-based epistemology but is dangerous and absurdist. (Postman, 1984, p. 27)

Scholars such as Tippin (1993) believe that Postman's views are exaggerated and that he underestimates the ways television audiences construct their own meanings and criticize the media. Well-known political communication scholars Diamond and Bates (1992) further assert:

> Political television does not manipulate the electorate in a new, pernicious way; it mainly spreads the candidate's message more widely and more efficiently. The message still must travel past watchful eyes -- the press's, the

opposition's, and the voters'. (Diamond and Bates, 1992, p. 395)

One cannot help but wonder, however, how Postman's concerns might be exacerbated were he to consider the rising tide of humorous political ads attempting to subtly overpower political opponents by making jokes of them, thereby undermining their credibility at levels of viewer consciousness which may be too deep to measure.

A powerful counterargument to Postman's concerns, however, is that television, unlike any prior media channel, offers a unique opportunity for almost immediate refutation, and even inoculation (Pfau, 1991) against political attack advertisements. Humor's potential as a means to refute present attacks and even protect one's image with voters against possible future attacks by an opponent remain vastly under-examined. Along with examining levels and types of humor, future scholarship might explore how much of humorous advertising serves as refutation, or even inoculation.

Women and Ethnically Diverse Candidates in Humorous Political Advertising

The finding that females lack representation in the field of humorous political advertisements is, in some ways, inconsistent with research regarding male versus female campaigning strategies. The existing body of research regarding gender and politics suggests that female candidates should actually be more likely to use strategies such as humor in their negative ads, perhaps in attempting to soften their attacks (Proctor, Schenck-Hamlin, & Haase, 1991). Other research, however, might explain this phenomenon. Research of just a decade ago reported that women were less likely to stress their strength and more likely to emphasize their compassion (Benze & Declerq, 1985). Humorous ads, having been shown by this analysis to be overwhelmingly negative, do not provide a logical arena in which to present one's "compassionate side."

This idea spawns a more intuitive explanation for the lack of female candidates in this sample: Newer and

less well-represented on the political scene, women may fear utilizing anything other than the traditional approaches to political advertising and attack. Their lack of representation in this sample may also be explained by the fact that there have simply been fewer women running for political office over the past forty years than there have been men. Women are, however, continually raising the glass ceiling on political inclusion, and there is little doubt that the question as to women's more widespread use of humorous attack strategies in the future is not a question of "if?" but a question of "when?"

Are such strategies desirable for female candidates to begin using? Trent and Freidenberg (1983) warned women against using traditionally "male" approaches to political campaigning -- those of incumbents or of challengers -- because "their employment would violate still dominant public norms and expectations regarding appropriate behavior" (p. 114). They stated that most women have to run as challengers, but cannot employ three of the most

effective challenging strategies. First, "attacks may make women appear unfeminine, shrill, vicious, nagging or (as one candidate put it) a 'superbitch'" (p. 114). Second, taking the offensive position on issues important in the campaign, women must avoid the "dumb female" stereotype, but when they offer detailed solutions, they lose the valuable offensive position. And third, women cannot effectively employ the challenging strategy of speaking to traditional values because candidacy is a contradiction to traditional values. These suggestions have been called into question in more recent scholarship, however, Trent and Friedenberg's 1995 edition of the same text contains similar caveats regarding "violating the rules" (p. 137) of traditionally feminine communication styles for female candidates.

Some of the obstacles facing women candidates may be eroding (Carroll, 1994; Rogers, 1993), but voters still do not see women the same as men (Newman, 1994). Kahn (1992) argued that while women using "female strategies" gain short-term benefits, in the long run

such strategies may disadvantage them by continuing the cycle of gender stereotypes. In other words, for today, women are going to be viewed as women and gain the benefits which go along with a "kinder, gentler" image whether they campaign on those qualities or not, so they may as well take advantage of the masculine strategies which have been proven to work. Even if those strategies are ineffective for the current campaign, making use of them will help in overcoming gender-based stereotypes for future campaigns.

Although sound in its procedures and theoretical foundation, this portion of the current investigation carries with it some limitations, as well. The major limiting factor may be the sample size. Three-hundred seventy-nine ads represents a healthy portion of ads in general--one-half of the universe of ads in the world's largest archive of televised political ads. In view of the entire population of political advertisements, however, it may not be enough to obtain a large enough sample of humorous advertisements for female candidates to obtain results that are generalizable to the

universe of political ads. In order to further develop findings about the difference between genders in their use of humorous strategies, perhaps a convenience sample obtained by requesting ads from female campaigners might serve more useful.

Female candidates were not the only noticably underrepresented group in the ads studied for the current analysis. Ethnically diverse candidates were extremely underrepresented, as well. A discussion of candidate race could be outlined which quite nearly parallel the above discussion of female candidate's unlikelihood of employing humorous advertising strategies. The sampled ads depicted a single Native American candidate, two black candidates, and 36 whose ethnicity was not discernable based upon the content of the advertisements. Perhaps ethnically diverse candidates, too, are afraid to vary far from the traditional approaches to advertising. This finding may also be due simply to the smaller representation of people of different races who run and advertise for political office. It is interesting to note that,

while the sample of ads utilized in this study achieved such diversity of campaign level and year, it was unable to represent female and non-white candidates.

Candidate Status: Incumbent vs. Challenger

In relation to the third hypothesis of this analysis, these humorous advertisements were found to be significantly challenger-sponsored (over 56%). Support for this finding is well-grounded in the literature as well. Challengers more often call for change through attack than do incumbents (Trent & Friedenberg, 1983; Kaid & Davidson, 1986; Kaid & Johnston, 1991), and yet, they cannot take unnecessary risks of losing votes to backlash. Thus, humor provides a potentially winning strategy, especially for the challenger who wishes to attack without the overt appearance of doing so.

Challengers also suffer from media bias which focuses the majority of news media attention toward incumbents. The free press given to incumbent candidates as a result of the trappings of their currently held offices results in a lack of

representation in the media for most challenging candidates. Humorous ads, as previously discussed, can assist in gaining not only the attention of the voters who view them, but of the media, as well, as in the case of the recent phenomenon of the adwatch.

Image/Issue

The fourth hypothesis, which addressed the image- or issue-basis of these ads, showed that image-based ads (82.1%) are slightly, although not significantly, prevalent to issue ads (75.7%) in this particular sample of humorous political advertisements. What is interesting, however, is the fact that this finding supports past scholarship which has shown a great deal of issue information to be imparted by political advertisements. Despite the fact that one might question the issue or knowledge value of humor, such questions might be worth revisiting considering the high percentage of these ads which contain specific issue mentions, and the past research which lauds humor's recall value (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992; Keller,

1996; Wendell, 1998). Not only can ads teach voters about candidate issue stances, but humor can bolster the likelihood that the voters will retain that infomation.

In light of other scholarship which supports the theory that candidates sponsoring issue-based advertisements are less susceptible to voter backlash effects (Roddy & Garramone, 1988), the finding that the ads are slightly more image-based may actually seem a bit counter-intuitive, considering the large number of negative ads in the sample. However, in consideration of the backlash-reducing potential of humorous strategies, a humorous political ad might be a safer environment from which to cast the image-based rhetorical stone.

Fear appeals

Fear appeals are the focus for hypothesis number five. Findings showed a significant lack of fear appeals in these humorous advertisements (only 6%). While contrary to the literature supporting fear

appeals as highly common in negative ads, this finding is not surprising when considering the fact that these ads already employ a different strategy, that of humor. A few of the ads actually did attempt to merge the two strategies, and did so, seemingly, with a measure of success. One ad warns of a Tyler, Texas, State Senator who has "belly-landed" his private plane twice, stating that, "If he can't get his wheels on the ground in Tyler, how's he gonna (sic) get his feet on the ground in Austin?" Presumably, voters are expected to fear this bumbling character as an inadequate political figure, as well as an inadequate pilot. Other fear appeals utilized include "warnings" to voters about a candidate's failure to budget soundly in past positions held, and their stances on big business or the environment. These fear appeals, however, are likely to be tempered by the jocular nature of their presentation formats, and therefore less effective than straightforward fear appeals.

Conversely, humor may be just the remedy for some of the problems associated with the use of free-

standing fear appeals. According to Johnston (1994), fear appeals must be approached with care for two reasons. First, moderate level fear appeals are often short-lived. Johnston (1994) cites one study which reports that "fear levels decreased only ten minutes after exposure to a fearful message" (p. 131). Second, she states that "a high level of fear is too frightening for the receiver to confront, so the receiver consequently rejects it as unbelievable or unlikely" (p. 129). Considering the research which has shown fear appeals to lack receiver retention and effect, perhaps a strategy which mixes humor with fear appeals would be an intelligent choice for a candidate who wishes to utilize appeals to fear. Using humor's ability to aid audience recall along with a moderately strong fear appeal may increase recall. Further, if humor is utilized in conjunction with a very strong fear appeal which may have otherwise caused viewers to ignore the message, the humor may lighten the level of fear produced within the viewers, perhaps making them less likely to "tune-out" the frightening message it

contains. While an, as yet, unstudied phenomenon, the effectiveness of a dual strategy employing both humorous appeals and fear appeals provides an interesting future direction for study.

Aristotelian appeal

No dominant Aristotelian appeal was found in this investigation. In fact, all three forms of artistic proof were found in over one-half of the sampled ads, but ethical appeals (those to source credibility) were utilized about 20% less than logical and emotional appeals. Past research has found one appeal or another as dominant, but that research has sampled ads from one level of race or another. While this study found a significant majority of these ads to be from national level races (Senate, Congress, President), the fact that all levels were represented may have skewed the data away from finding a dominant appeal.

Regardless, it is interesting to note that, while humor is utilized to impart issue knowledge as stated above (which would correlate highly with a logical

appeal), and to arouse emotions, it is less likely to be utilized to gain sponsor credibility. Traditional political practitioners' concerns about the likelihood of humorous ads harming a candidate's chances of "being taken seriously" (Wendel, 1996) might keep some candidates from utilizing humor all together, and keep others from wishing to associate a matter as vital as their own credibility with a less serious ad. It is also interesting to note, however, that the coders were trained to view ethical appeals as those attacking the source credibility of an opponent as well as those bolstering the credibility of the sponsoring candidate. This finding, too, can be reconciled with current scholarship, which has found that issue attacks are less likely to cause viewer backlash than are attacks on a candidate's image, of which his or her credibility is an integral part. Attacking via logical or emotional channels, even under the veil of humor, might be viewed as a safer strategy.

Ethical abuses of technology

Tests of hypothesis number six supported the finding that ethical abuses of technology are a far more common occurrence in humorous ads than in a sample of general political advertisements found in content analysis by Kaid (1991). Kaid's sample found that about fifteen percent of political ads distorted meaning through abuses of audio or video technology, while the current study showed that almost fifty percent of humorous ads contained such abuses. The dramatization was, overwhelmingly, the most common type of ethical distortion. Many humorous ads use cartoons or actors portraying real characters in order to plant negative or ridiculous visions of opposing candidates in the minds of viewers.

The potential persuasive effects of such dramatizations might be greatly affected by a phenomenon known as the "sleeper effect". Carl Hovland and his team of researchers (1951) were the first to document this phenomenon, based upon their research findings that "the impact of source characteristics on persuasion varies over time" (Johnston, 1994, p. 162).

Put simply, a viewer tends to remember messages, but forget the sources of those messages after a period of time, especially in cases of messages by low credibility sources. The sleeper effect provides one explanation why dramatizations may be highly effective rhetorical tools. The picture of the candidate in an unflattering position or with undesirable characters like Fidel Castro or (to some) Tip O'Neil, is more or less permanently burned into the consciousness of the viewer, who may or may not remember that he or she saw it in a mere dramatization, rather than a real life scenario.

The most common strategy utilized was that of distorting meaning or misleading the audience via special effects, music, morphing and animation. Such techniques go hand-in-hand with the use of dramatizations. Findings of a body of Political Science and Communication research led by Lynda Kaid suggest that such abuses may alter voter decision processes through less than ethical means. Technological distortions may also affect voter turnout

by adding to a growing voter cynicism created by the media horserace view of political campaigns and by "dirty tricks" used by the campaigners themselves.

Considering the insidious nature of the humorous attack, when paired with the subtle distortions of technology, such ad strategies might be extremely effective, but doubly harmful to the political process and voter attitudes toward it.

Other Findings

It is interesting to note the difference in party sponsorship of humorous advertisements, with 32.7% of the ads sponsored by Democrats and only 23.7% by Republicans. Even more interesting, however, is the high number of ads (157 of 379; 41.4%) which contained no mention of party identification. While party identification is widely known in the communication discipline to have lost much of its effect on voters within the past several decades, the high number of candidates who chose to allow their party identification to remain anonymous furthers that

distinction of modern electoral politics from that of years past.

Another interesting result of the general analysis of these ads is the finding that the ads sampled were mainly at the state (35.6%) and congressional levels (41.4%), while only 15.6% were sponsored by presidential candidates. Perhaps these findings indicate that, at a certain level, humor becomes inappropriate, "undignified" or "unpresidential."

The trend which showed that the number of humorous ads increased with each decade is also an interesting one to discuss. This finding may merely indicate that the Political Communication Center has had the opportunity to obtain a greater number of ads since it initially purchased the collection in 1985, leading to a higher number of humorous ads in later years, due to a higher number of overall ads in those years. It might, however, be indicative of a growing trend toward humor merging into the "safe zone" of candidate strategies. Recent humorous ad campaigns

such as Wellstone's (D-MN) successful 1990 Sentate bid provide fodder for reconsideration of those traditional notions that humor is a strategy only for the very rich or very risk-taking candidate. Wellstone's use of humor, in fact, gained him national media notoriety because of its apparent novelty. This attention helped Wellstone to overcome the news media glut created for most challenging candidates in that year by the U.S. Invasion of Kuwait in October of 1990. Humorous strategies may, indeed, be the wave of the future for a growing number of political candidates. Political ads are still far less likely to utilize humorous strategies than product ads, however. As much as 24.3% of advertising in the U.S. has been estimated to use attempts at humor (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992), while only 811 (1.2%) of the 66,000 political ads archived at the University of Oklahoma Political Communication Center utilized humorous strategies. Even product advertisers have had to adapt their views regarding the use of humor. In 1923, the conventional wisdom was that "People do not buy from clowns"; whereas by 1982

advertising practitioners began to realize that "humor can sell" (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992, p. 35).

If political ads go the way of the rest of the advertising world, voters may be able to look forward to a number of very entertaining political ads. In light of this study's findings regarding negative advertisements and ethical abuses of technology, however, they should be watchful of what those ads are really trying to accomplish.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is characteristic of the topic in general. As Bob Squier of the 1976 Carter Campaign observed, "the very best people in this business probably understand only about five to seven percent of what it is that they do that works. The rest is out there in the unknown" (Diamond and Bates, 1992, p. 353-4).

Robert Goodman of George Bush, Sr.'s 1980 campaign echoes Squier's sentiments. "The crime in our business is that we never know why the candidates win

or lose... I would say the best spots we've ever done are equally divided between those who lost and those who won" (Diamond and Bates, 1992, 353-4).

Even some of the most well-respected media advisors and political consultants in electoral politics admit that there is no magic key into a voter's mind. The current study provides no magical answers either, but merely attempts to contribute to the sparse basis of actual knowledge about the content and uses of humor in political advertising.

Content analytic methods are, by their very nature, limited in their predictive ability. The strength they achieve as an unobtrusive method is sometimes offset by this lack. They are, however, only intended to go so far as making inferences from the data to apply to the contexts in which they are found. Future studies might further the research into humor's effects, utilizing what this study offers about humorous content.

This study might have also been limited by its use of a foreign student coder. This coder initially

had difficulty assessing emotional appeals and was retrained to look for their attempts, rather than their effects. While reliability on the Aristotelian appeal categories was sound, perhaps a group of coders all from the same cultural background would have had higher reliability on the dominant appeal measure.

Yet another vital consideration is the fact that humor is in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps coding all humorous ads as a single category, rather than separating sarcasm and wit from other types of humor, skewed the study's findings toward a higher percentage of negative and ethically abusive ads than would be found in ads that were subjectively evaluated as funny by a group of coders. One coder also observed that she believed her party identification might have affected her coding one party's attacks as less harmful than the other's, because she found her own party's ads funny and the opposing party's ads offensive. This observation might also provide fodder for future research.

Future Directions

In addition to utilizing this study in conjunction with effects studies, future scholarship in this field might assess various types of humorous strategies. Several of the coders in this study commented that they did not find all of the ads funny, and that those which contained witty comments and sarcasm should be considered separately from those which are truly funny. Burkian frame analysis was assessed in the Larson (1995) pilot study in a qualitative manner and overwhelmingly, humor (ridicule) was found to be the most popular of all frames for this sample of ads. Future analyses might focus on such frames, or find other typologies of humor in order to assess further information about humorous political persuasion. In the qualitative analysis of Larson's (1995) pilot study, the humorous or ridiculing strategy was found to be the dominant way through which candidates in these advertisements chose to frame their opponents. This finding corresponds with research by Kaid and Johnston (1991), cited in the literature review, which finds that this strategy is used in 62

percent of negative ads. The logic of this finding is in the fact that some of these frames are more suited to political advertising and to attack than are others. The ode, for example, a frame used to celebrate the good qualities of a leader, is much too light-hearted for most political advertisements, and, if an ad contains an attack of any kind, it cannot be labeled an ode. Burlesque (making a manner appear like a mannerism), on the other hand, is such a common occurrence in political advertisements that it becomes difficult to recognize. In the "Clark for Congress" advertisement, for example, the visual images and the song to the tune of Old McDonald playing in the background (...with a bounced check here and a bounced check there...) make Newt Gingrich, who bounced one check, look like a habitual check bouncer.

Studies in the future could also look into emerging communication technology such as content analyses of political webpages, or look to international comparisons of humorous political ads.

Conclusion

Scholars, consultants, and members of the media know that humorous attacks can, and often do, make the difference in a campaign.

After analyzing the sample based upon questions gleaned from the existing literature regarding humor and political ads, this dissertation has attempted to establish the nature of the political humor in these ads within a frame or frames of reference. This information has great potential for practical application as well as scholarly inquiry. Its true contribution lies in the potential for a richer understanding of the practical mechanics involved in successfully utilizing the initial premise of this undertaking, a principle which even Aristotle could have told us: "Political humor is no laughing matter."

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FOOTNOTES

[1]Special thanks is given to Dr. Lynda Lee Kaid of the University of Oklahoma Political Communication Center for providing the sample for this study.

APPENDIX I
CODESHEET

Candidate name:_____NAME space in upper right corner

1. Coder number:
   (1)
   (2)
   (3)
   (4)

2. Ad number: (---)_____

3. Last two digits of election year:_____

4. Party affiliation of sponsor or candidate:
   (1) Republican
   (2) Democrat
   (3) Other
   (4) Unknown

5. Level of campaign
   (1) Civic or county
   (2) State
   (3) Congress/Senate
   (4) President
   (5) Other
   (6) Unknown

6. Manifestations of humor in ad:
   Verbal
      (1) Present
      (0) Absent
   Visual
      (1) Present
      (0) Absent
   Interaction between verbal and visual
      (1) Present
      (0) Absent

7. Code for the dominant manifestation of humor:
   (1) Verbal
   (2) Visual
   (3) Interaction

8. Candidate election campaign: Candidate status
   (1) Incumbent candidate
   (2) Challenging candidate
   (0) Unknown

9. Candidate appear
   (1) Yes--active visual
   (2) Yes--not active visual
   (0) No

10. Candidate vocally present
   (1) Yes
   (0) No
   (9) Can't tell

11. Race of sponsoring candidate:
   (1) Caucasian
   (2) Black
   (3) Asian
   (4) Native American
   (5) Hispanic
   (9) Other
   (0) Not applicable/discernible

12. Gender of candidate
   (1) Male
   (2) Female
   (0) Not discernible

13. Sponsoring candidate/issue focused/opposition focused:
   (1) Candidate/issue-positive focused:
   (2) Opponent-negative focused:
   (0) Cannot determine

14. Negative attack in ad (If No, skip to 21)
    (1) Yes
    (0) No

••••••

18. Code for the attacks's dominant purpose:
(1) Attack on personal Characteristics of opponent
(2) Attack on issue stands/consistency of opponent
(3) Attack on candidate's group affiliations/associations
(4) Attack on opponent's background/qualifications
(5) Attack on opponent's performance in past offices/positions

19. What strategies are used in making the negative attack?

Ridicule
(1) Present
(0) Absent

Negative association
(1) Present
(0) Absent

Name-Calling
(1) Present
(0) Absent

Guilt by association
(1) Present
(0) Absent

20. Code for the dominant strategy in this ad:
(1) Ridicule
(2) Negative association
(3) Name-Calling
(4) Guilt by association

RESUME

21. Image-/Issue-based

Image
(1) Present
(0) Absent

Issue
(1) Present
(0) Absent

22. Dominant: Image or Issue?
(1) Image
(2) Issue

23. Types of appeals used in ads:
Logical appeals (use of evidence in ads)
(1) Present
(0) Absent
Emotional appeals
(1) Present
(0) Absent
Source credibility/ethos appeals (appealing to qualifications of candidate)
(1) Present
(0) Absent

24. Code for the dominant appeal in this ad
(1) Logical
(2) Emotional
(3) Ethical

25. Are fear appeals used in the ad?
(1) Yes
(0) No

26. Are technologically abusive audio/visual techniques employed? (If No, stop here)
(1) Yes
(2) No

••••••

27. Which of the following techniques are employed? (Code for presence or absence of all which apply).

Editing techniques editing to cut or rearrange message, edit rhythm or pace, reverse or double-action cutting, inserts, cutaways, or parallel action

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Visual Imagery camera angle, movement (pan, zoom,tilt, etc.) or shot (closeup/long shot), focus (soft/sharp) or optical distortion

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Computerized Alterations pixillation or animation, computerized graphics or titles, computer alteration or morphing

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Special Effects superimposition, freeze frame, camera speed (fast/slow motion)

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Specialized Audio Techniques added sound effects, sound distortion or enhancing, voice acceleration or slow down, music used for effect

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Dramatizations staged events or happenings, actors representing real figures

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or Video Mismatch conflicting audio and/or video

(1) Present
(0) Absent

28. How the technology is used to abuse ethics

Use of video or audio technology to alter the actual features or characteristics on the screen.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Any type of subliminal persuasion audio or video means.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Video or audio editing techniques in which cutting or re-positioning is used to create a false or misleading impression.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Video/audio techniques that juxtapose mis-matched pictures and/or audio to create a false or misleading.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Misuse of scale (or balance), use of specialized lighting techniques to create untrue or misleading light or dark meanings.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Any other editing or special effects techniques to distort or mislead, including morphing, animation, sound effects or music, slow or fast motion, etc.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology used in a spot to create "pseudo-neutrality" or "pseudo-actuality".

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology used in a spot to evoke an irrelevant or unjustified emotional response.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology that is used to ridicule an opponent or idea in an unjustified or irrelevant way.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology that is used to condemn or criticize any opponent, group or idea based on race, religion, ethnic origin, or gender.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology that is used to create intentional ambiguity.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

29. Is the abusive technology integral to the humor in this ad?

(1) Yes
(2) No

30. To the attack?

(1) Yes
(2) No

YOU ARE FINISHED CODING THIS AD. THANK YOU.

APPENDIX B

CODEBOOK

Thank you for your assistance with this study. Please give each ad careful consideration on all of the questions asked and record your answers on the scansheets provided.

Candidate/ Issue name:
NAME space in upper right corner
Record name given for candidate or issue stance sponsoring the ad (this information can be ascertained from the bottom of the screen at the beginning of each commercial. Other questions which can be answered in this way will be indicated by the words "on screen").

1. Coder number:
   (1) Alisa Coleman
   (2) Pia Staunstrup
   (3) Kara Cordry
   (4) David Lorenz

Record the coder number assigned to your name.

2. Ad number: (001-400) _____
Number will be preassigned. C&E tape will have 001-027.

3. Last two digits of election year:_____
Record the last 2 digits of the year in which the election occurred (on screen).

4. Party affiliation of sponsor or candidate:
   (1) Republican
   (2) Democrat
   (3) Other
   (0) Unknown

Record the assigned number for the political party of the candidate as indicated above (on screen or from lother sources).

5. Level of campaign
   (1) Civic
   (2) State
   (3) Congress/Senate
   (4) President
   (5) Other
   (0) Unknown

Record the level of the campaign in question, or (0) for other or if level cannot be discerned.

6. Manifestations of humor in ad:

Verbal

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Does the humor depend at all on what you hear. The humor deals with the dialogue or music of character/s or announcer. May be related to the actual words spoken (e.g., humorous dialogue) or the ways in which they are spoken (e.g., distortion of voice)

Visual

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Does the humor depend at all on what you see onscreen? (e.g., a cartoon character, morphing, special costumes, incongruent or funny actions, etc.) The humor deals with the appearance of the ad--its character/s, scenes, etc. May also be related to camera action, special editing techniques, etc.

Interaction between verbal and visual

(1) Present
(0) Absent

The humor deals with an interacting combination of verbal and visual aspects The seen and heard messages MUST interact, rather than simply acting side-by-side or alone? Does the "sight gag" depend on the "sound gag and/or vice-versa?" (e.g., computer graphics or

titles that are incongruent with what is being said, a cartoon character with a funny voice, etc.)

7. Code for the dominant manifestation of humor:
   (1) Verbal
   (2) Visual
   (3) Interaction

Based upon above desriptions, code for the appeal most relevant to the "gag"

8. Candidate status
   (1) Incumbent candidate
   (2) Challenging candidate
   (0) Unknown

Record the appropriate response depending upon whether the ad in question is in support of an incumbent candidate (1), a challenging candidate (2), or the answer cannot be determined (0).

9. Candidate appear
   (1) Yes--active visual
   (2) Yes--not active visual
   (0) No

Record (1) if the sponsoring candidate actually appears and does something in the ad. Record (2) if only a still photo of the candidate is shown. Record (0) if the candidate is not shown at all in the ad.

10. Candidate vocally present
   (1) Yes--active visual
   (0) No
   (9) Can't tell

Record (1) if the sponsoring candidate actually speaks or is recognized in voice over in the ad. Record (0) if he or she does not speak or do voice over. Record (9) if this information is undiscernable.

11. Race of Sponsoring Candidate:
   (1) Caucasian
   (2) Black
   (3) Asian

(4) Native American
(5) Hispanic
(9) Other
(0) Not applicable/discernible

Refers to the racial characteristic of the sponsoring candidate. Record (0) if not applicable or discernible.

12. Gender of candidate
(1) Male
(2) Female
(0) Not discernable

Refers to the gender of the sponsoring candidate. Record (0) if this question cannot be discerned from the ad's contents, the candidate's name (e.g., Pat or Terry), or other sources.

13. Sponsoring candidate/issue focused/ opposition focused:
(1) Candidate/issue-positive focused:

Emphasizes the virtues and good qualities of the candidate and/or what he/she stands for. Not an explicit attack on the opponent.

(2) Opponent-negative focused:

Emphasizes the negative qualities of the opponent. Explicit attack on opponent's record, character, campaign, etc. Record for the DOMINANT focus.

14. Negative attack in ad (If No, skip to 21)
(1) Yes
(0) No

Record (1) if an attack is made in the ad, and (0) if no attack is made.

••••••

(1) Simple attack ad

Appears to be "straight" attack (e.g. "My opponent is evil"). Not a response.

(2) Rebuttal or refutation of prior attack by opponent

It is apparent that this ad is in response to the opponent's attack (e.g., "My opponent has said that I am eveil, but he . . .).

(3) Comparison ad

Weighs the similarities and/or differences of the two or more candidates (e.g. "I am good; he is evil") in an EXPLICIT manner. Do not code (3) if comparison is simply implied by the existence of the ad, itself. It must be comparison as opposed to "straight" attack in order to record (3).

16. Who makes the attack?

(1) Candidate attacks opponent

(2) Surrogate attacks opponent

(3) Anonymous announcer attacks opponent

Record the appropriate response

17. What is the purpose of the attack?

These purposes can be conveyed by words , images or both , which are present in the MANIFEST (not latent) content of the ad.

<u>Attack on personal characteristics of opponent</u>

(1) Present

(0) Absent

An attack on the personality characteristics of the opponent; use of negative words denoting <u>flaws in character</u> of opponent. (e.g., "He is too weak and indecisive to serve the public well.")

<u>Attack on issue stands/consistency of opponent</u>

(1) Present

(0) Absent

Criticizes the <u>issue or policy stances</u> of the opponent; criticizes the opponent's inability to "make up his/her mind' where he/she stands on an issue; may use

quotations from opponent to show him/her switching a position. (e.g., Anti-Clinton 'blue dot' commercial ; "This candidate says he is for _____--This candidate says he is against it, etc. . . . but they are the same candidate) .

Attack on candidate's group affiliations/ associations

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Attacks the opponent's ties to certain groups which have undesirable characteristics, members, philosophies. (e.g., "He gave money to the Contras")

Attack on opponent's background/qualifications

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Attacks opponent's lack of experience or qualifications for the office sought or criticizes the candidate's personal history (family, etc.) (e.g., "She has limited foreign policy experience")

Attack on opponent's performance in past offices/positions

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Emphasizes poor or unethical performance in the past positions held by the opponent. (e.g., "He missed several important votes")

Record all that apply as present (1), and all that do not as absent (0)

18. Code for the attacks's dominant purpose:
(1) Attack on personal characteristics of opponent
(2) Attack on issue stands/consistency of opponent
(3) Attack on candidate's group affiliations/associations

(4) Attack on opponent's background/qualifications

(5) Attack on opponent's performance in past offices/positions

Choose the one answer which best applies to this ad.

19. What strategies are used in making the negative attack?

Ridicule

(1) Present

(0) Absent

Making fun of the opponent by laughing, ridiculing things he/she has said, or what he/she stands for. (e.g., An ad which shows a character made up to look like the opponent or an ad which mocks a policy or decision of the opponent's)

Negative association

(1) Present

(0) Absent

Associating negative images or phrases with the opponent. (e.g., an ad might show a picture of a horse's rear end with the opponent's name across the bottom of the screen)

Name-Calling

(1) Present

(0) Absent

Using negative labels or unflattering labels for the opponent. (i.e., this type of ad would actually call the opponent a horse's rear end.")

Guilt by association

(1) Present

(0) Absent

Showing the opponent with undesirable groups or individuals. Implying that the opponent associates with these groups or people. (e.g., an ad of this type will mention or represent different parties like the communists, groups like Hollywood liberals, or people

like Saddam Hussein and actually say or insinuate a connection between them and the opponent)
Record all that apply as present (1), and all that do not as absent (0)

20. Code for the dominant strategy in this ad:
    (1) Ridicule
    (2) Negative association
    (3) Name-Calling
    (4) Guilt by association

Choose the one answer which best applies to this ad.

RESUME if you have skipped the "attack" categories

21. Image-/Issue-based
    Image
    (1) Present
    (0) Absent
    Issue
    (1) Present
    (2) Absent

Record appropriate response based upon the definition that "Issue ads emphasize specific policy positions or express the candidate's concerns about particular matters of public concern, such as an ad indicating that a candidate favored Medicare. Image ads, on the other hand, stress the candidate's characteristics, personality, human qualities, etc. Such ads might proclaim a candidate's honesty and integrity or suggest his or her 'caring, compassionate nature'. An ad could contain both types of information" (Kaid and Johnston, 1991, p. 56).

22. Dominant: Image-/Issue-based
    (1) Image
    (2) Issue

Based upon the above definitions, code for the dominant theme based upon to which theme the largest proportion of time in the ad is devoted.

23. Types of appeals used in ads:

Logical appeals (use of evidence in ads)

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Facts are presented in ad in order to persuade viewer that the evidence is overwhelming in favor of some position. This can be use of statistics, logical arguments, examples, etc.

Emotional appeals

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Appeals designed to invoke particular feelings or emotions in viewers (except fear). Could include happiness, good will, pride, patriotism, anger, etc.

Source credibility/ethos appeals (appealing to qualifications of candidate)

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Appeals made to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of candidate by telling all he/she's done, is capable of doing, how reliable he/she is (or his/her opponent is not).

Record all that apply as present (1), and all that do not as absent (0)

24. Code for the dominant appeal in this ad

(1) Logical
(2) Emotional
(3) Ethical

Choose the one answer which BEST applies to this ad.

25. Are fear appeals used in the ad?

(1) Yes
(0) No

Record (1) if fear appeals (those appeals which are meant to scare a viewer about possible consequences of some action) are used. Record (0) if such appeals are not used.

26. Are technologically abusive audio/visual techniques employed? (If No, stop here)

(1) Yes
(2) No

See categories in Question #29 to make this judgment. If you can answer yes to any of those categories without stretching their scope, then the ad abuses technology. The level of abuse is not important, nor is the amount of harm you think it will do. Simply ask yourself, "Does this ad contain "use of video or audio technology to alter the actual features or characteristics on the screen?", "any type of subliminal persuasion audio or video means", etc. The mere presence of graphics or music does not constitute unethical use of technology. Graphics which do not match vocals or overstate claims ("He cut medicare" Did HE cut medicare?--NO--he voted to cut Medicare) , or music which incites unfair emotional connections (the "Jaws theme" playing in the background of a candidate appearrance) however, does. An ad DOES NOT abuse technology merely because it contains technology. Your decision rule is based upon whether the ad's USE OF TECHNOLOGY distorts meaning. Code "Yes" if abuse occurs based on these criteria, "No" if it does not.

••••••

cuts used to distort message by changing order or eliminating portions of message to alter meaning.

edit rhythm or pace

especially fast cuts, or cuts in sequence w/ music or sound effects used to play up certain aspects of audio or visual content.

reverse or double-action cutting

cutting showing scenes in reverse or multiple scenes simultaneously.

inserts, cutaways, or parallel action

additions to cutting which distort meaning.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Visual Imagery

camera angle, movement (pan, zoom,tilt, etc.) or shot (closeup/long shot)

high.low/left/right camera angles , movement or shots to distort scene or characters' appearrance.

focus (soft/sharp) or optical distortion

fuzzy or overly sharp focus OR elongation/squattiness imposed (like funhouse mirrors), or other such distortions.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Computerized Alterations

pixillation or animation

cartoons or claymation.

computerized graphics or titles

computer graphics or titles which distort message or meaning (e.g., incongruent with audio).

computer alteration or morphing

character/s or scenes changed through computer techniques to imply meaning (e.g., shows picture of candidate morphing into a horse's a--, or shows his pockets appearing to grow by being stuffed w/ money) This must be computerized, from what you can discern.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Special Effects

superimposition

one scene or element over another which distorts meaning.

freeze frame

single "still frame" used to distort meaning or message. A still photo alone does not distort meaning, but if it is a bad photo or if it is overly close-up to make candidate look gruesome, for instnace, it may be abusive technology.

camera speed (fast/slow motion)

fast or slow motion effects.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Specialized Audio Techniques

added sound effects

message enhancing or detracting sound effects.

sound distortion or enhancing

changing the sound (e.g., making one person's voice sound like another's or slowing down music to make it seem suddenly downtrodden)

voice acceleration or slow down

music used for effect

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Dramatizations

staged events or happenings

May be a cartoon or a "real" image, but must portray an event that is not real. (e.g. a "newcast" or "press conference" that was staged for the ad, or may be a staged "gaffe" by a character or animal used to represent the candidate. May also take the form of "man-on-the-street interviews" Anything that is staged) The event or happening does not need to be an

honest attempt to FOOL you into believeing it is real. It may be a complete spoof.
actors representing real figures

Shows an actor who is supposedly "Nixon" or "Clinton" or a non-candidate character to associate with or admonish the opposing or sponsoring candidate (e.g., "Hi, I'm Abraham Lincoln and I want you to vote for my good buddy Bob Dobson" or a character dressed as Hitler asking you to vote for Bob Dobson. Obviously these two ads would have opposite effects, but both contain actors representing real figures. The figures do not need to be believed/believeable, merely discernable.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

<u>Audio or Video Mismatch</u>

audio and/or video

Code as present if audio and video are incongruent (e.g., graphic says one thing, voice says another)

(1) Present
(0) Absent

28. How the technology is used to abuse ethics
Use of video or audio technology to alter the actual features or characteristics on the screen.
The technology must change the true features of characters, scenery, etc.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Any type of subliminal persuasion audio or video means. *This will be difficult to discern, but if you can discern such attempts, code present.*

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Video or audio editing techniques in which cutting or re-positioning is used to create a false or misleading impression.
Changes order of taping (e.g., splicing in questions before "responses" which are actually to different questions, or parts of a speech, or staged)

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Video/audio techniques that juxtapose mis-matched pictures and/or audio to create a false or misleading impression.
Two or more photos and/or audio clips or one or more of each which are incongruent in order to distort meaning. (e.g., a picture of Hitler next to a picture of the opposing candidate) Juxtapose simply means "To put side by side" (Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, 1996, p. 378)

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Misuse of scale (or balance), use of specialized lighting techniques to create untrue or misleading light or dark meanings.
This technique may show a picture of the opposing candidate that shrinks or is small in comparison to things that it should be the same size or larger than and/or one of the sponsoring candidate that grows or is too big, etc. It may also show someone with shadows on his/her face to imply "dark" meanings.
It may show a "shrinking" dollar or a giant one, for instance. It utilizes incorrect size or lighting to distort meaning.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Any other editing or special effects techniques to distort or mislead, including morphing, animation, sound effects or music, slow or fast motion, etc. *Remember, music is not always unethical, and some of these other characteristics may, at times, also be without abuse.*

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology used in a spot to create "pseudo-neutrality" or "pseudo-actuality". *Again, like the "newscast", or the Abraham Lincoln character., something made up in order to represent something real. This abuse does not need to create both "pseudo-neutrality" AND "pseudo-actuality" and does not have to be believed.*

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology used in a spot to evoke an irrelevant or unjustified emotional response. *This is also a difficult category. What you must look for here is irrelevant or unjustified based upon what you are given in the ad. All ads are likely to attempt to get an emotional repsonse, but the decision rule here is based upon how the technology is used to do so--and by technology, we are not simply talking about video, itself. Something cannot be coded as present for this category merely because it has emotional appeals and is on TV. Remeber, not all ads abuse technology. An example of an ad that does this is one that somehow uses technology to connect the candidate to a cultural emblem like the flag. The mere presence of a flag is not enough because it is not distortion. Perhaps the flag and majestic music swelling fade into or are superimposed upon a picture of the candidate. Now if Ithe ad simply states, "He's 100% American" that's merely a SLOGAN, not an abuse of technology.*

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology that is used to ridicule an opponent or idea in an unjustified or irrelevant way. *Simply stating "my opponent is a monkey" is not an abuse of technology because it is overt, direct. Showing a monkey in the opponent's chair is use of technology because it is completely technology dependent.*

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology that is used to condemn or criticize any opponent, group or idea based on race, religion, ethnic origin, or gender.
Again, mere statements are not abuses of technology. They may be abuses of the opponent, but still not be abuses of technology. This particular abuse must utilize audio or video techniques to make such criticisms in order for you to code presence on this category.

(1) Present
(0) Absent

Audio or video technology that is used to create intentional ambiguity.
Code presence for this category when the advertisement utilizes audio or video techniques in order to confuse the viewer or obfuscate meaning. (e.g., the earlier example of mismatched audio or video). Ambiguity simply means that the message is "liable to more than one interpretation" (Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, 1996, p. 23).

(1) Present
(0) Absent

29. Is the abusive technology integral to the humor in this ad?
Would the ad be "un-funny" without the technology used?

(1) Yes
(2) No

31. To the attack?
Would the attack be ineffective without the technology?

(1) Yes
(2) No

YOU ARE FINISHED CODING THIS AD. THANK YOU.

Appendix C

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Mean for positive ads and negative ads (n=379).

Figure 2. Means for comaparative ads, positive ads and attack ads (n=379).

Figure 3. Means for races of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

Figure 4. Means for genders of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

Figure 5. Means for incumbent/challenger status of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

Figure 6. Means for image and issue-focus of ads (n=379).

Figure 7. Means for fear appeal and no fear appeal in ad (n=379).

Figure 8. Means for ethical abuse and for no ethical abuse in ads (n=379)

Figure 9. Means for logical, ethical and emotional appeals in ads (n=379).

Figure 10. Means for levels of races of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

Figure 11. Means for parties of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

Table 1

Intercoder Reliability Measures Based Upon Percentage Agreement Among Coders

Category	Reliability
Candidate Name	100.0
Ad#	100.0
Year	100.0
Party	100.0
Level of Campaign	97.56
Candidate Status	98.17
Candidate Appear	95.00
Candidate Vocally Present	99.38
Race of Candidate	100.0
Gender of Candidate	100.0
Negative Attack Present	97.56
Focus	91.46
Person Making Attack	94.30
Image	90.85
Issue	90.85
Logical Appeal	82.30

(Table continues)

Category	Reliability
Emotional Appeal	80.49
Ethical Appeal	79.27
Fear Appeals	93.29
Ethical Abuse Presence	85.98
Editing Techniques	84.38
Visual Imagery	86.25
Computerized Alterations	92.50
Special Effects	86.88
Special Audio Techniques	85.60
Dramatizations	85.63
Audio or Video Mismatch	96.25
to alter actual features on the screen	92.50
subliminal persuasion	96.20
cutting or re-positioning to create a false impression	86.20
juxtaposition of mis-matched pictures and/or audio	88.13
misuse of scale or balance	95.62

(Table continues)

Category	Reliability
other editing or special effects to distort or mislead	84.38
pseudo-neutrality or pseudo-actuality	81.88
irrelevant or unjustified emotional response	79.38
unjustified or irrelevant ridicule	80.00
to condemn or criticize based on race, religion, ethnic origin or gender	100.0
to create intentional ambiguity	100.0

Table 2

Descriptive Data and Chi Square Goodness of Fit

Measures

Question	Freq.	Percent	df	χ^2
attack in ad				
attack	259	68.3	1	50.98**
no attack	120	31.7		
focus of ad				
comparative	38	10.0	1	136.28**
positive	118	31.1		
negative	223	58.8		
candidate status				
unknown	64	16.9	2	98.47**
incumbent	100	26.4		
challenger	215	56.7		
gender				
not discernable	7	1.8	2	574.36**
male	346	91.3		
female	26	6.9		
race				
not applicable/disce	36	9.5	2	854.37**
caucasian	340	89.7		
Black	2	.5		
Native American	1	.3		
image/issue				
image absent	68	17.9	1	155.80**
image present	311	82.1		

**p= . 0000

(table continues)

Question	Freq.	Percent	df	χ^2
issue				
issue absent	92	24.3	1	100.33**
issue present	287	75.7		
Fear appeals				
no	356	93.9	1	289.08**
yes	23	6.1		
logical appeal				
absent	109	28.8	1	67.72**
present	269	71.2		
emotional appeal				
absent	155	40.9	1	12.56*
present	224	59.1		(.0004)
ethical appeal				
absent	108	28.5	1	68.39**
present	271	71.5		
ethical abuse				
no	195	51.5	1	.3193
yes	183	48.5	(p = .5721)	
abuse integral to humor? (N=183)				
no	6	1.6	1	159.79**
yes	177	46.7		
abuse integral to attack (N=183)				
no	49		1	28.06**
yes	132			

N=379 (unless otherwise indicated)
**p = .0000
*p < .001

(table continues)

Question	Freq.	Percent	df	χ^2
level				
Unknown	9	2.4	5	360.33**
City, county or dist	16	4.2		
State	135	35.6		
Congress/Senate	157	41.4		
President	59	15.6		
Other	3	.8		
party				
Unknown	157	41.4	3	129.59**
Republican	90	23.7		
Democrat	124	32.7		
Other	8	2.1		

N=379
*p < .001
**p = .0000

Table 3

One-Sample t-test Comparisons of Sample Means to Specified Test Values From Kaid (1993) Comparison Data

Variable	Mean	Test Value	df	t-value
negative ads	68.60%	33%	378	14.73*
ethical abuses	48.54%	15%	378	13.05*

*2-tailed sig. $p<.000$

Table 4

Descriptive Data for Ethical Abuses of Technology

Type of abuse	Frequency	Percent
Editing Techniques	69	37.70
Visual Imagery	44	24.00
Computerized Alterations	48	26.20
Special Effects	40	21.80
Special Audio Techniques	58	31.70
Dramatizations	104	56.80
Audio or Video Mismatch	19	10.40
to alter actual features on the screen	21	13.10
subliminal persuasion	16	9.00
cutting or re-positioning to create a false impression	50	27.30
juxtaposition of mis-matched pictures and/or audio	51	27.90
misuse of scale or balance	14	7.70
other editing or special effects to distort or mislead	100	54.60

n=183

(Table Continues)

Type of abuse	Frequency	Percent
pseudo-neutrality or pseudo-actuality	66	36.10
irrelevant or unjustified emotional response	81	44.30
unjustified or irrelevant ridicule	71	38.80
to condemn or criticize based on race, religion, ethnic origin or gender	0	0.00
to create intentional ambiguity	0	0.00

n=183

Table 5

Breakdown of ad-by-year

year	frequency	percent
1952	6	1.6
1956	2	.5
1964	1	.3
1966	8	2.1
1967	1	.3
1968	9	2.4
1969	1	.3
1970	6	1.6
1971	1	.3
1972	11	2.9
1973	1	.3
1974	7	1.8
1976	4	1.1
1978	12	3.2
1980	17	4.5
1982	23	6.1
1983	5	1.3
1984	22	5.8
1986	32	8.4
1987	3	.8
1988	39	10.3
1989	1	.3
1990	36	9.5
1991	1	.3
1992	24	6.3
1993	1	.3
1994	86	22.7
1995	2	.5
1996	17	4.5

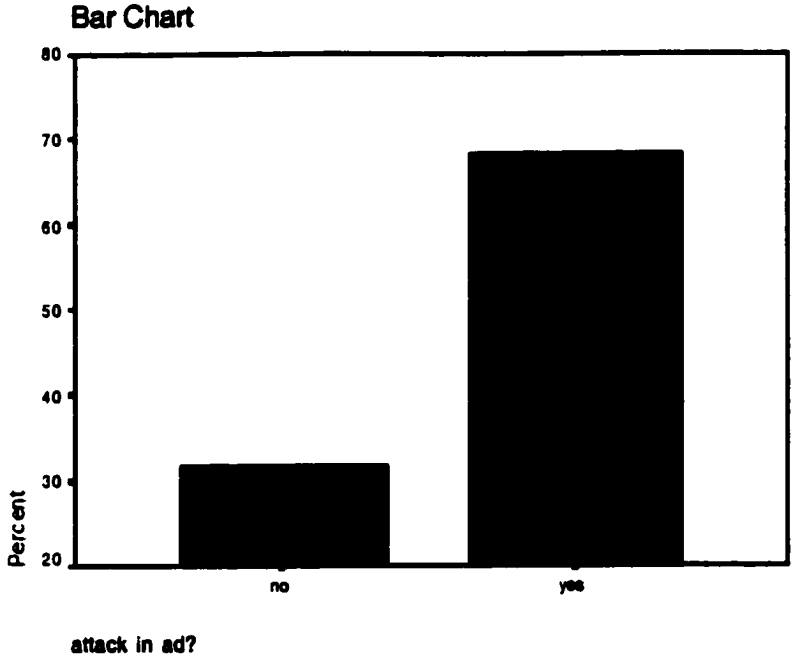


Figure 1. Mean for positive ads and negative ads (n=379).

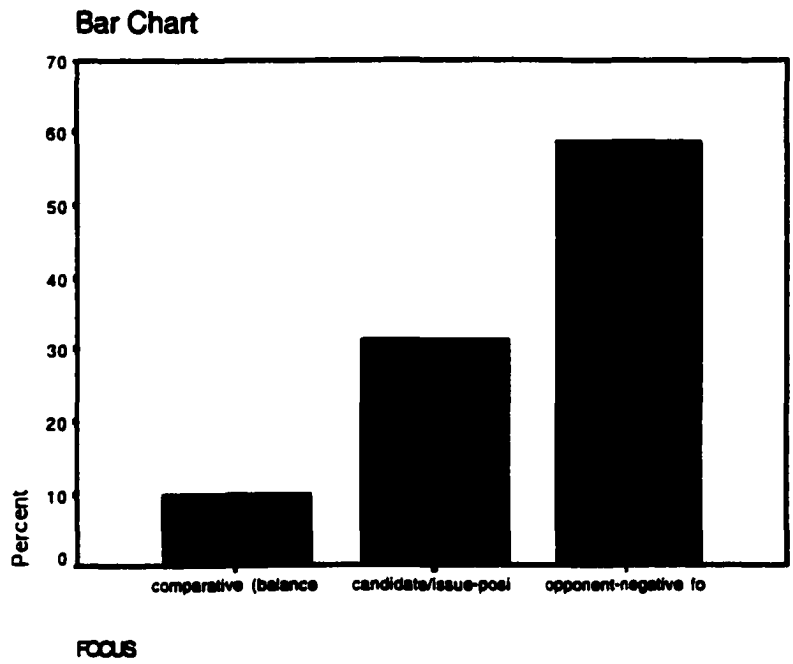


Figure 2. Means for comaparative ads, positive ads and attack ads (n=379).

(n=379).

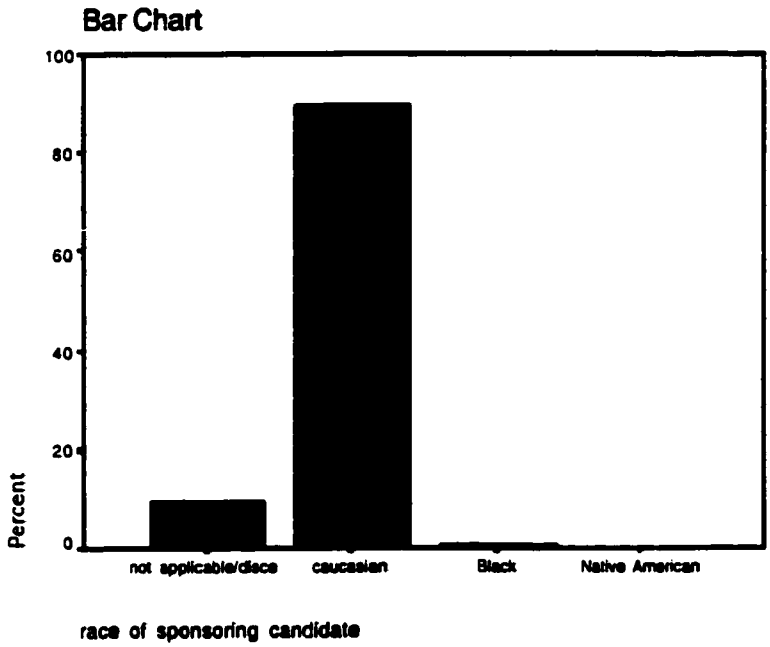


Figure 3. Means for races of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

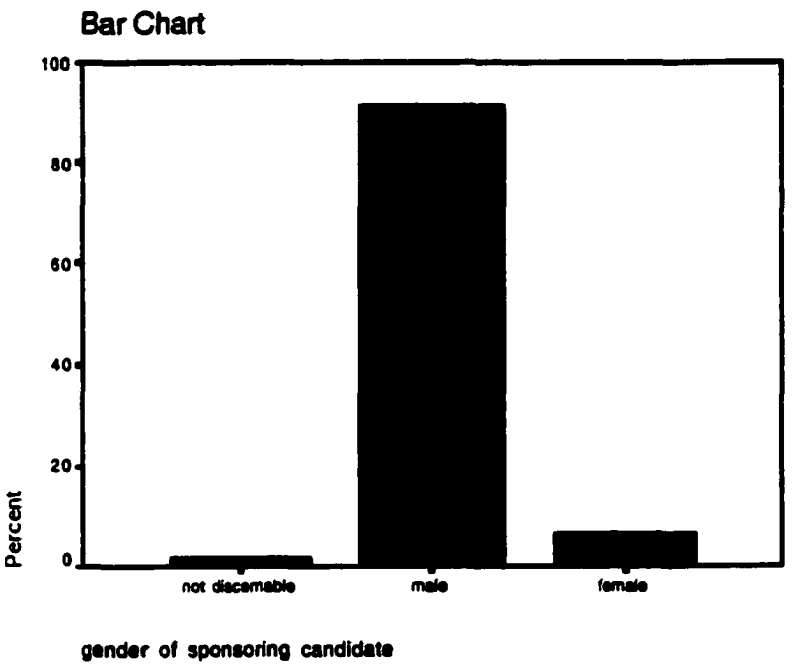


Figure 4. Means for genders of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

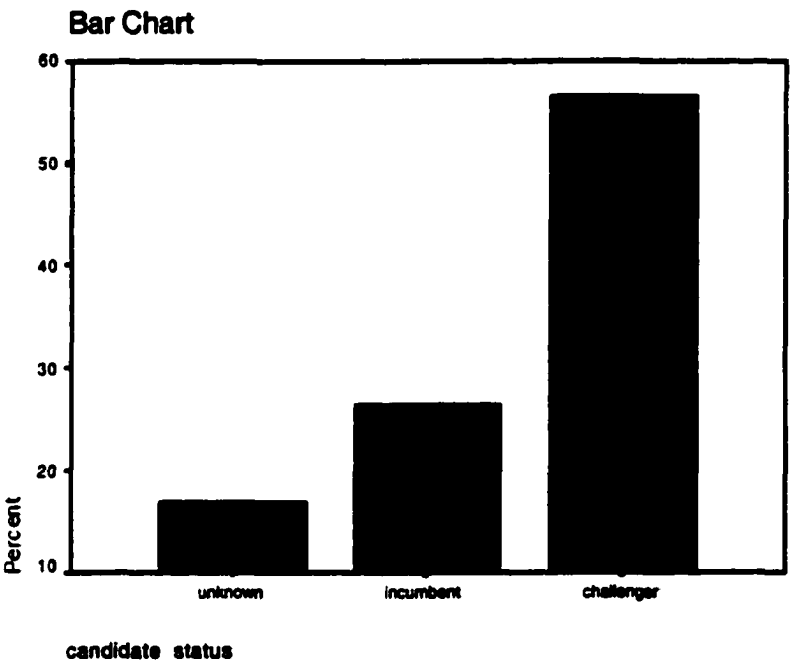


Figure 5. Means for incumbent/challenger status of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

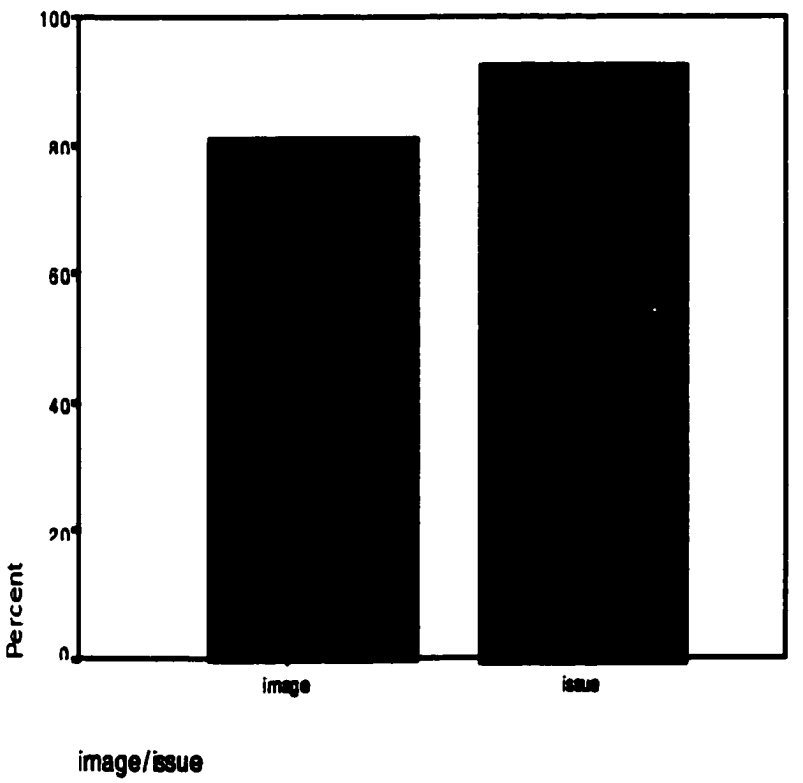


Figure 6. Means for image and issue-focus of ads (n=379).

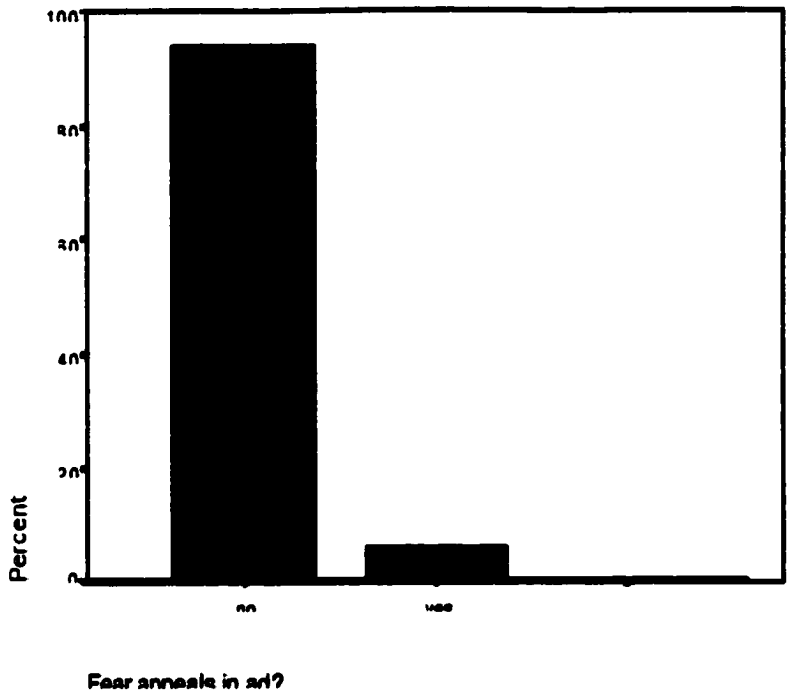


Figure 7. Means for fear appeal and no fear appeal in ad (n=379).

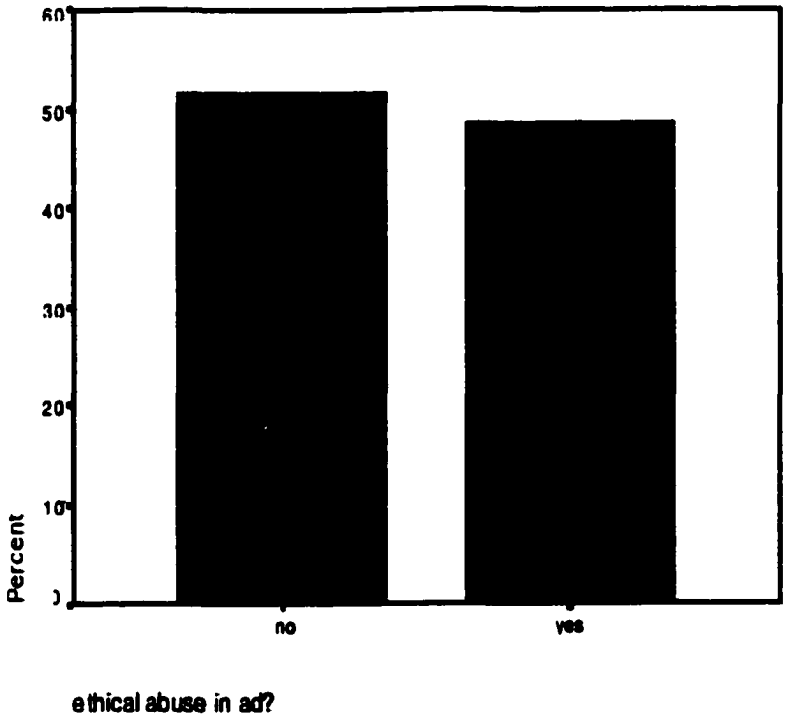


Figure 8. Means for ethical abuse and for no ethical abuse in ads (n=379).

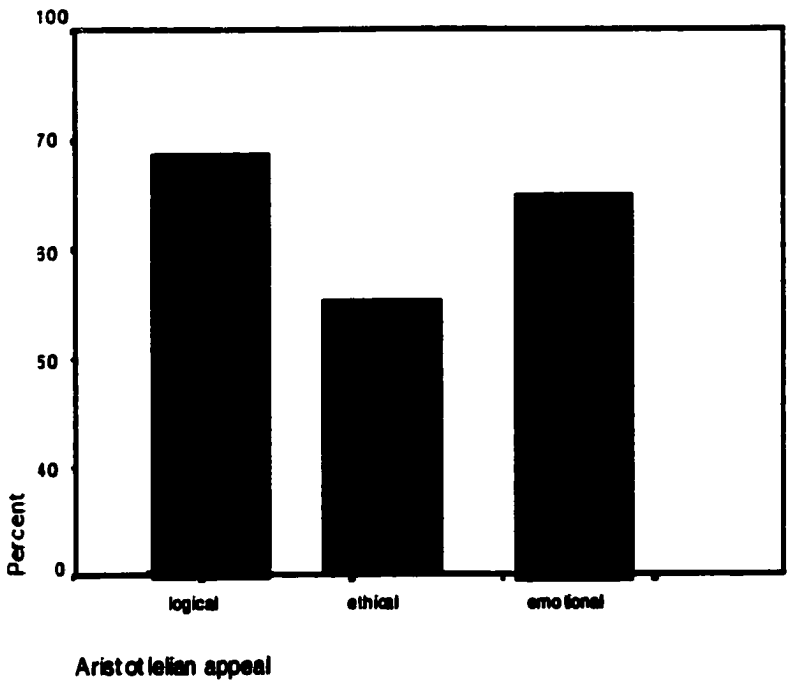


Figure 9. Means for logical, ethical and emotional appeals in ads (n=379).

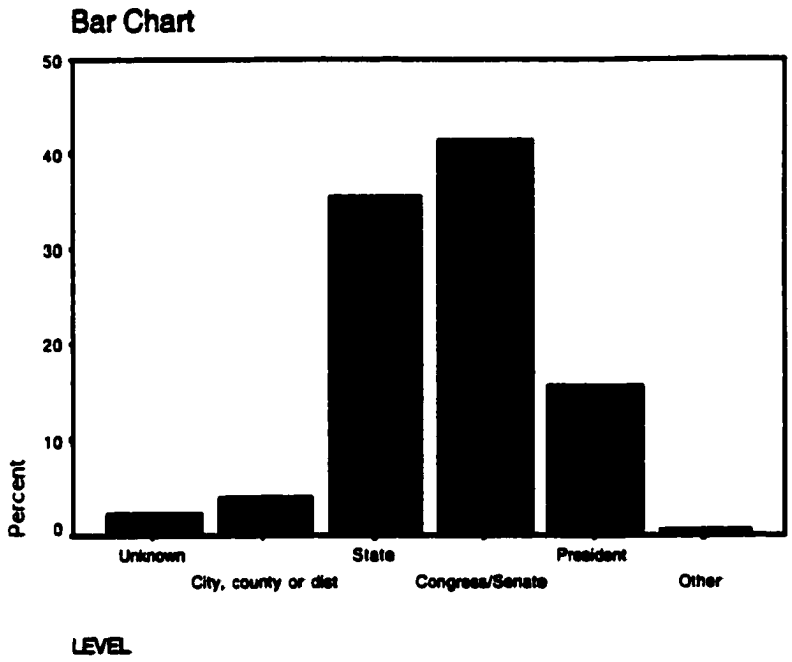


Figure 10. Means for levels of races of sponsoring candidates (n=379).

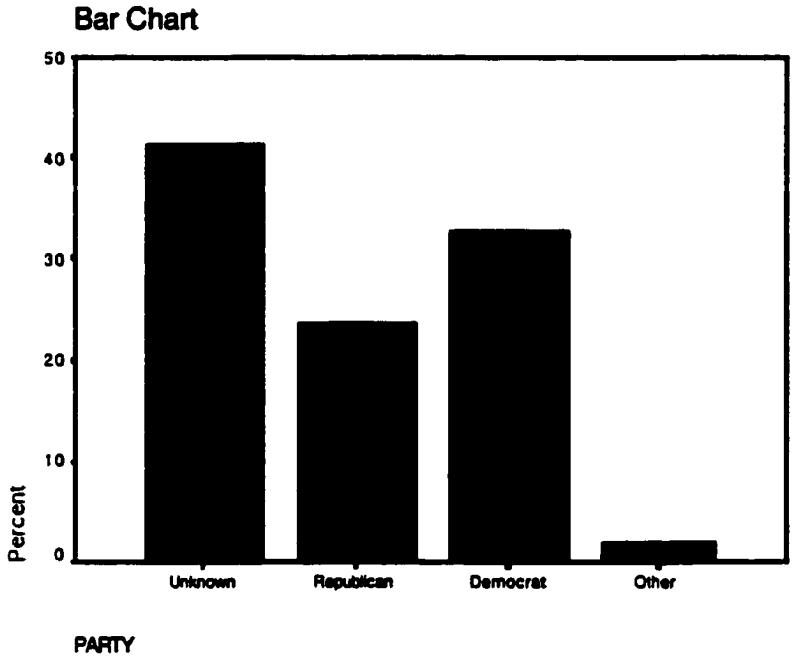


Figure 11. Means for parties of sponsoring candidates (n=379).