

News Coverage of Negative Political Campaigns

An Experiment of Negative Campaign Effects on Turnout and Candidate Preference

Young Min

The present experiment examines the effects of negative campaigns on voting participation and preference over which previous studies have provided inconsistent findings. This study focuses on the impact of negative campaigns covered in the news rather than those delivered in political advertising. Findings do not support an across-the-board “negativity-demobilization” hypothesis but demonstrate that the focus of campaign (i.e., policy- versus personality-focused) moderates the impact of campaign attacks on the likelihood of turning out to vote. While policy-based attacks covered in the news slightly stimulate voter turnout, personality attacks significantly depress one’s participatory intention. The data also indicate that negative strategies generally do not benefit the sponsoring candidates, and it is even more so when attacks concern personal matters. In general, voters appear to prefer a policy-appealing candidate over a personality-appealing one.

Keywords: *negative campaign effects; turnout; candidate preference; news media*

Democracy is a political system that is presumed to represent correctly people’s interests, preferences, and needs based primarily on the institution of election and on the majority rule as the decision-making principle. Democracy is based upon the assumption that citizens have largely equal abilities to make an informed decision and, more important, are willing to participate in the political process, especially in elections at different levels. Declining turnout rates, in this sense, have been labeled a threat to democracy, since low turnout may diminish the representativeness of a democratic polity.

While such psychological factors as declining political interest and efficacy and such electoral institutions as the voluntary voter registration laws in the United States have been blamed for depressing citizens' participation in the electoral process, some researchers have suggested that increasing negativity in political campaigns has diminished citizens' interest in voting. Most notably, Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) claimed that political advertising is the worst cancer in American society since a predominant portion of campaign advertisements convey nasty and personal attacks and, in so doing, keep voters away from the polling places. Studies investigating the effects of negative campaigns, especially on turnout, however, have provided inconsistent findings (Lau and Sigelman 2000); while Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) and Ansolabehere et al. (1994, 1999) have demonstrated the demobilizing effects of attack ads in a series of laboratory experiments and in the secondary analyses of aggregate election data, others have disputed their demobilization theory (Finkel and Geer 1998; Wattenberg and Briens 1999).

According to Bruce Buchanan (1996: 95), candidates and their campaign consultants believe that negative campaigning serves them "most often by reducing turnout among the opponent's supporters," and this may be partly why attack strategies have become more predominant in recent elections. Findings about whether negative campaigns benefit the sponsors, however, have also shown inconsistency; sometimes the ratings of the targeted candidates go down while those of the attackers remain stable, but at other times negative campaigning hurts the attackers' ratings.

The impact of negative campaigning on individuals' participatory intention and vote choice remains controversial, thus calling for further investigation. This study aims primarily at testing this controversial relationship between candidates' attack strategies and voters' behavioral decisions—whether they vote and, if they vote, for whom?—in a controlled experimental setting.

Kahn and Kenney (1999), meanwhile, demonstrate that negative campaigning may either increase or decrease aggregate voter turnout, depending on the type of the negativity (i.e., whether the negative message relies on legitimate criticisms or unsubstantiated and shrill attacks). Buchanan (1996: 99) also points out that attack strategies may "both discredit the target and fuel suspicion of the attacker." Negative campaigns, as such, may not have a uniform effect. The present study, in this sense, further intends to identify which variables moderate the effects of negative campaign messages.

Most of the previous research on negative campaign effects has focused on political ads that are perfectly controlled by candidates. As Finkel and Geer (1998) point out, however, in contemporary election campaigns, negative discourse prevails beyond political advertising. Many scholars agree that negativity is a commanding attribute of political journalism (Jamieson 1992; Patterson 1993; Patterson and McClure 1976). Some go as far as to say that American

journalism is “dysfunctional.” For example, Patterson (1993) contends that campaign coverage, governed by a deeply cynical view of politics and politicians, threatens the media’s ability to make a constructive contribution to the electoral dialogue.

To avoid negative coverage (or to get positive coverage) and to manage their portrayals in the news, candidates stage a variety of media events. It is probably because most of them believe that bad press leads to more negative opinions among readers and viewers (Burden 2000). At the same time, candidates often employ attack strategies because they believe that negative campaigns are more likely to attract free coverage (Buchanan 1996).

Those two common assumptions (i.e., that negative press is bad and that negative campaigns attract more coverage) are, however, contradictory to each other because it is unlikely for the media to present attack campaigns in a positive manner. Most previous studies have supported the second assumption. For instance, negative campaign spots attract more news coverage than positive ones (Jamieson 1992; Kendall 2000; Min 2002; West 2001). Specifically, Jamieson (1992) found that the ads appearing in network news were nearly twelve times more often oppositional than self-promotional. The print media were six times more likely to mention a negative ad than a positive spot. As discussed above, however, previous findings are inconsistent about the first assumption. For instance, according to Burden (2000), negative coverage can even be functional for candidates simply by raising name recognition, especially in low-information elections such as congressional primaries.

As Brody (1991) pointed out, media scholars have had little success demonstrating the effects of news media’s emphases on negative information. The impact of negativity in news stories, in this sense, deserves more attention from researchers. Against this backdrop, this study will investigate the impact of news coverage, especially the electoral reportage of negative campaigns, on people’s important behavioral decisions in an election.

Effects of Negative Campaigns on Turnout and Candidate Preference

As politics gets more and more personalized in a media-centered election campaign, discrediting an opponent has become a more popular technique to attract votes (Buchanan 1996). According to Allen and Burrell (2002), negative strategies may be effective because the introduction of negative information about a figure increases the attribution of responsibility for that individual and because people usually view negative information as more persuasive and more risky.

Since 1976, negative political ads, especially presidential television spots, have continually increased (Finkel and Geer 1998), which some scholars have correlated with the steadily decreasing turnout rates. In *Going Negative*, Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) argue that negative political advertising demo-

bilizes citizens, especially nonpartisan independents, by making them antipathetic toward politicians and the political process and by weakening their sense of political efficacy. Negative campaigns, consequently, have transformed politics into a “sport” and have reduced citizens to mere spectators, which is why Ansolabehere and Iyengar assert that negative ads pose a serious antidemocratic threat.

Finkel and Geer (1998), however, argue that it is premature to accept this negativity-demobilization hypothesis, noting that negative messages containing important and relevant information may rather contribute to stimulating political interest and, in turn, to enhancing political participation. Their analysis of the relationship between the proportion of negative forms among presidential campaign ads and aggregate turnout levels from 1960 to 1992 actually shows little support for the demobilization hypothesis. Drawing on a new source of comprehensive ad-tracking information, Goldstein and Freedman (2002) find that campaign attacks actually stimulate voter turnout regardless of partisanship and attention to the campaign: an across-the-board stimulating effect of negative advertising.

Wattenberg and Briens (1999) dispute the generalizability of the demobilizing effects of negative campaigns outside the experimental setting. They argue that the intent of negative campaigns is usually to change voters’ minds, rather than to demobilize the supporters of the opponent, by “focusing on an issue for which the sponsoring candidate has credibility in handling” (p. 891). Several experimental analyses, meanwhile, also have reported no differences in participatory intentions between subjects exposed to negative ads and those exposed to positive ads (Garramone et al. 1990; Rahn and Hirshorn 1999; Thorson et al. 1991).

To settle this disagreement, further investigations on whether and how the tone of campaigning (i.e., negative versus positive) produces a difference in voters’ participatory attitudes are essential. Finkel and Geer (1988: 592), furthermore, urged future research to examine “the potentially differential effects of press coverage and campaign advertisements on . . . turnout.” In this sense, this study formulates the following question, which focuses on the effects of negative campaigns covered in the news:

Research Question 1: Does a negative or positive news media campaign influence individuals’ likelihood of turning out to vote in an election?

Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), meanwhile, also argue that negative campaigns can meaningfully influence the direction of voting choice. They indicate that negative campaigns generally benefit the attacking candidates because negative ads are effective both in reinforcing partisans’ partisan voting and in persuading independents to vote for the attacking candidates. This argument,

however, is somewhat contradictory to their demobilization theory; if negative campaigns drive away voters, especially nonpartisans, from the polling places by activating negative feelings about politicians and politics, how can the cynical voters cast their ballots for the aversive attackers?

Thorson et al.'s (1991) experiment, in contrast, reports that positive advertising is more likely to increase positive attitudes toward the sponsoring candidate than is its negative counterpart. In their meta-analysis of negativity effects in political advertising, Allen and Burrell (2002) maintain that a negative campaign may have no net effects because it reduces the desirability of both the target and the sponsor of the campaign.

As such, whether attack or support strategies are more effective to get votes still remains a controversial issue, which deserves further investigation. Along this line, the second research question is formulated as follows:

Research Question 2: Does a negative or positive news media campaign influence individuals' candidate preference in an election?

Variables Conditioning the Effects of Negative Campaigns

The previous inconsistency in the literature of negative campaign effects could also be because there are conditioning factors by which individuals' responses to negative campaigns vary. For instance, candidate gender could be a factor affecting the effectiveness of attack strategies. In general, it is assumed that female candidates would encounter stronger voter backlash by using negative ads because it defies gender stereotypes. Gordon et al. (2003), however, found that negative campaigns can be more advantageous for female candidates if they attack their male opponents based upon some male issues.

Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) suggest party affiliation as a variable moderating the impact of negative campaigns; independent centrists exposed to negative messages are more likely to stay at home on election day than are partisans of either party exposed to the same negative material.

In their analysis of aggregate data in the 1990 National Election Studies Senate Election Study, Kahn and Kenney (1999) report that negative information may mobilize or demobilize citizens' participation in an election depending on its usefulness and relevance to the election and the manner in which it is presented.

Using the political/personal dichotomy, Johnson and Copeland contend that political attack is more effective than personal attack since the former is perceived as more fair and legitimate than the latter (cited in Roddy and Garramone 1988). Similarly, Thorson et al. (1991) categorize political advertising into issue ad and image ad and argue that the former produces greater voting intent and more positive attitudes toward the sponsoring candidate. They defined issue advertising as "that referring only to general topics of political concern" and image advertising as "the sum of the personal characteristics and professional

abilities of the candidate” (p. 467). Roddy and Garramone’s (1988) study also demonstrates that issue advertising is more likely to result in a more favorable candidate evaluation and greater intention to vote for the sponsoring candidate than image advertising.

Finkel and Geer’s (1998) study, however, reported a different finding; issue negativity has a slightly demobilizing effect on voters while trait negativity slightly energizes them. These researchers conclude that, if there are any demobilizing effects of negative campaigns, “they are primarily due to issue attacks, which tend to be . . . counterbalanced by a stimulating effect of trait negativity” (p. 590).

As such, personal attacks can intuitively be alleged to have greater, negative effects on voters’ participatory attitudes or the ratings of the attacking candidates, yet the findings are not consistent; and this inconsistency calls for further explorations of how the focus of campaigning (e.g., issue-focused versus image-focused) moderates the impact of campaign attacks.

Instead of using the issue (or political) versus image (or trait) dichotomy, this study will employ the distinction of policy versus personality. This is simply because both issue and image are difficult to define clearly, and sometimes the distinction between the two is not unambiguous. Against this background, the third research question is formulated as follows:

Research Question 3: Does the focus of campaigning (i.e., policy-focused or personality-focused) moderate the impact of negative campaigns on individuals’ likelihood of turning out to vote and their candidate preference?

A final inquiry is added to examine the independent role of the focus of campaigning:

Research Question 4: Does whether the news media emphasize policy-focused or personality-focused campaigns influence individuals’ likelihood of turning out to vote and their candidate preference?

Method

Participants and Design

The participants in this experiment were 113 students of voting age enrolled in an undergraduate marketing course at a large university in the southwestern United States. In a posttest only 2×2 factorial design, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions and read one article each. The treatment booklets were randomized in advance and distributed to participants according to the order in which they were randomized. The four groups in this experiment were equivalent in terms of gender, ethnicity, and partisan compositions.¹

Before participating in the experiment, students signed a consent form informing them that they would each read a local newspaper article and fill out a questionnaire asking how they feel about the article, their general political orientations, and their attitudes toward the upcoming congressional election. After filling out the questionnaire, participants were debriefed about the nature of the experiment. They were, especially, informed that the news article they had read was not a real story but one created by the researcher and that the two congressional candidates reported in the article were fictitious figures.

Experimental Stimuli

Each article consisted of a brief introduction of two fictitious candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives election for District 10 (the same in every condition) and descriptions of their campaign conduct (different, depending on the conditions). In every treatment message, a fictitious Democratic candidate named Larry Rodgers was presented as either the attacking or the self-promoting candidate holding a press conference. A brief reference to another fictitious candidate, the Republican opponent named Alfred Harrison, was made in the concluding paragraph (for more details, see Appendix A).

Manipulations varied in terms of the tone of campaigning (i.e., negative versus positive) and the focus of campaigning (i.e., policy-focused versus personality-focused). The treatment message combinations, therefore, were as follows: negative-policy ($n = 20$), positive-policy ($n = 30$), negative-personality ($n = 30$), positive-personality ($n = 33$).

As suggested by Buchanan (1996: 95), in this study, negative campaigning was understood as “all comments on an opponent’s personal traits, character, record, and policy positions.” Similarly, positive campaigning was all self-promoting comments on personal traits, character, record, and policy positions made by the candidate himself.

Policy-focused campaigning, meanwhile, was operationalized as that referring to the targeted candidate’s or the sponsoring candidate’s positions on two relatively uncontroversial issues, such as education and the environment. Personality-focused campaigning was manipulated as that highlighting the corruption of the targeted candidate or the integrity of the sponsoring candidate himself. As Kioussis et al. (1999) point out, the level of corruption is one of the key attribute dimensions of candidate personality.

Dependent Measures

Likelihood of turning out to vote. Participants were asked, “If you were eligible to vote in this congressional election, how likely would you be to vote?” and indicated their likelihood of voting on a 7-point scale. The scales were coded such that a 1 indicates *not at all likely* and a 7 indicates *very likely*.

Candidate preference. Candidate preference was operationalized as an individual's "relative" likelihood of voting for the sponsoring candidate. Participants were asked, "In the absence of other information, how likely would you be to vote for Larry Rodgers (or Alfred Harrison, in another question)?" and indicated their willingness to vote for each candidate on a 7-point scale with a 1 meaning *not at all likely* and a 7 indicating *very likely*. Finally, the indicator of voting intention was created by subtracting each participant's voting preference measure for the opposing candidate Alfred Harrison from that for the sponsoring candidate Larry Rodgers.

Other Measures

Party identification. As maintained by Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), the effects of negative campaigns can be modified by party affiliation; whether people identify with a negatively appealing candidate in terms of partisan attachment influences their likelihood of voting in the election and their vote choice. To investigate this moderating role of partisanship, party identification was assessed by asking, "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?"

Demographic and other measures. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked to assess the information in the news article they had read with six 7-point, bipolar adjective pairs. The pairs included "informative versus uninformative," "useful versus useless," "biased versus unbiased," "positive versus negative," "pleasant versus unpleasant," and "believable versus unbelievable." The measures of the negativity of the information in the treatment messages, especially, were used to examine whether the experimental stimuli were validly manipulated. At the end of the questionnaire, participants' demographic characteristics, such as gender and ethnicity, were measured (see Appendix B).

Results

Participants were found to assess the news stories reporting on an attack campaign, whether policy-focused or personality-focused, as more negative and more biased than those about a self-promoting campaign (all p values less than .001), and this finding indicates that the tone of campaigning (i.e., negative or positive) was properly manipulated in the treatment stimuli. The treatment articles reporting on campaign attacks were also perceived as less informative ($p < .05$), less useful ($p < .05$), and less pleasant ($p < .001$) than were those about positive campaigns. Policy-focused-campaign news, meanwhile, was rated as more useful than was personality-focused-campaign news ($p < .05$).

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the participants exposed to the news stories of an attacking candidate and those exposed to the news stories of a self-promoting

Table 1
The likelihood of turning out to vote by campaign tone and focus

Source	Sum of Squares		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Significance
Main effects					
Tone	1.774		1	0.468	.495
Focus	0.968		1	0.256	.614
Interaction	27.506		1	7.258	.008
	Negative			Positive	
	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>
Policy	3.95	20		3.20	30
Personality	3.13	30		4.39	33

Note: *N* = 113. Higher numbers indicate higher levels of voting intention.

Table 2
Likelihood of voting for the sponsoring candidate by campaign tone and focus

Source	Sum of Square		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Significance
Main effects					
Tone	1.491		1	0.179	.681
Focus	50.778		1	5.769	.018
Interaction	4.015		1	0.456	.501
	Negative			Positive	
	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>
Policy	0.95	20		0.80	30
Personality	-0.80	30		-0.18	33

Note: *N* = 113. Higher numbers indicate higher levels of voting preference for the sponsoring candidate.

candidate did not significantly differ in their likelihood of turning out to vote and in their candidate preference. In other words, whether the news media focus on negative or positive campaigns did not produce any significant differences in citizens' important behavioral decisions in an election.

There was, however, a significant interaction between campaign tone and focus in determining citizens' interest in voting ($p < .01$). Whereas policy-attack campaigns were slightly more effective in stimulating voters' participation in the electoral process than were policy-promoting campaigns, personality-attack campaigns significantly reduced individuals' intention to vote, compared with personality-promoting campaigns ($t = -2.672, p = .01$). In summary, policy negativity slightly energized voters while personality

negativity had a significant demobilizing effect on them, contrary to Finkel and Geer's (1998) study, which suggested a mobilizing effect for trait negativity. For the relative likelihood of voting for the sponsoring candidate, however, there was no interaction between campaign tone and focus.

Although whether the news media focused on policy appeals or personality appeals by candidates did not meaningfully influence people's participatory attitudes, the focus of campaigning was found to have a statistically significant effect on people's candidate preference, as shown in Table 2. That is, people who read a candidate's policy-relevant messages in the news were more likely to vote for that candidate than were those exposed to his policy-irrelevant messages.

Participants in both personality conditions, interestingly, were found to prefer the opposing candidate, who had been almost invisible in the treatment news stories, over the sponsoring candidate. This tendency was stronger among the participants in the negative-personality condition, which indicates that negative campaigning does not benefit the attacker's ratings, especially when the attack concerns the targeted candidate's personal attributes.

According to Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), the more strongly people identify with negatively appealing candidates in terms of partisanship, the more likely they are to participate in an election and vote for the attacking candidates. Our Democratic participants, who might have more strongly identified with the fictitious sponsoring candidate manipulated as a Democrat in the news stories, however, did not show any significant differences in their participatory likelihood from Republican and independent participants ($F = 0.056, p = .814$).

Regarding their candidate preference, meanwhile, partisan participants showed a consistent pattern, as illustrated in Figure 1; their partisan voting was weakened when they read negative campaigns in the news, regardless of whether the negatively appealing candidate was from their own party or from their rival party. This tendency was more evident among those participants whose party affiliation was identical with the attacking candidate's (i.e., the Democratic respondents). Those participants with no partisan commitment also exhibited a similar pattern; their voting intention for the sponsoring candidate was decreased when they were exposed to campaign attacks via the news.

In summary, the findings reported in Figure 1 show little support for Ansolabehere and Iyengar's (1995) argument that negative campaigns are generally more effective both in reinforcing partisans' partisan voting and in persuading independents to vote for the sponsoring candidates than are positive campaigns.

Discussion and Conclusion

This experimental analysis has demonstrated that the news media as one of the most important outlets of campaign communication have the potential to

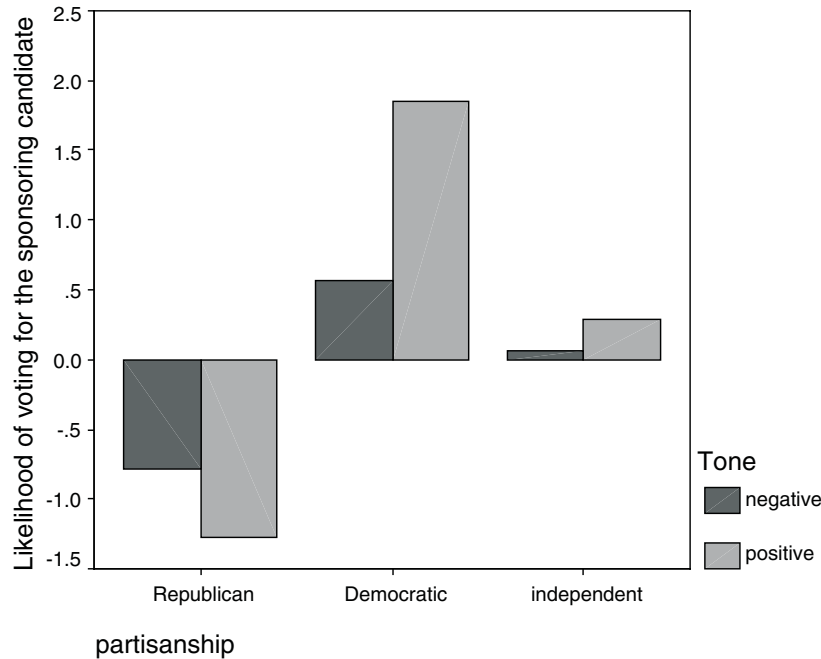


Figure 1
Likelihood of Voting for the Sponsoring Candidate by Partisanship and Campaign Tone

mobilize and persuade the voters in an election by selectively emphasizing certain aspects of campaign discourse.

This study did not confirm an across-the-board negativity-demobilization hypothesis; rather, it demonstrates that the impact of negative campaigning on citizens' electoral involvement is moderated by the focus of campaigning, in other words, the type of negativity. When policy negativity was the focus of a news story, voters were slightly mobilized, rather than discouraged, to go to the polling places. On the contrary, when personality attacks were delivered by the news media, such electoral coverage significantly depressed citizens so that they would be more likely to stay home. This result indicates that the dysfunction of attack campaigns in a democratic political system may be magnified or mitigated depending on the importance and relevance of the negative campaign information, as pointed out by Finkel and Geer (1998).

Media-centered campaigns in contemporary elections, however, have forced many candidates to focus on sensational and personal attacks since negative image appeals are more likely to get free coverage. If a significant portion of the electoral coverage of negative campaigns concerns personal attacks containing

no substantial information, negative campaigning may pose a serious threat to the electoral system as a democratic decision-making institution, just as Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) and Ansolabehere et al. (1994, 1999) have warned. In other words, repetitive exposure to policy-irrelevant attacks between candidates via the news media has the potential to seriously harm the democratic citizenship by driving voters away from the polling places.

To counteract these antidemocratic ill effects of negative campaigns, candidates and their campaign consultants should realize that negative appeals often do not benefit the sponsoring candidates, especially when they concern personality attacks, as shown in the present study. Noting that voters prefer a policy-appealing candidate over a personality-appealing candidate, combining negativity with substantiality, if necessary, would be a better strategy for candidates.

Previous studies, which have focused mainly on the impact of advertising tone on turnout rates, have presented inconsistent evidence about the demobilizing effects of negative campaigns. By focusing instead on the mobilizing and persuading effects of campaign attacks covered in the news, this study reported an interaction effect between the tone and focus of political campaigns. Since people may expect that the news media convey more useful information in a significantly less biased way than does political advertising, the news media's emphasis on negativity, coupled with a focus on personality, may depress citizens' democratic attitudes more than does the advertising media's emphasis on such matters. Whether these two major sources of campaign information have different effects in mobilizing and persuading the audiences, however, needs further systematic investigations. In other words, whether the type of medium—television, print, or the Internet—conditions the impact of negative messages differently is another issue worth investigating.

In this laboratory experiment, it was not clear whether negativity, whether in political commercials or in news coverage, functions advantageously overall for the candidates by raising the public awareness of them, especially in low-involvement elections, as claimed by Burden (2000). How negative campaigns delivered by the unpaid or the paid media influences the overall salience of the attacking or targeted candidates in the voters' minds can also be another interesting question.

Subsequent experimental replications of this kind with more rigorous research designs are necessary to enhance the internal and external validity of the findings from this particular experiment, such as a longitudinal design or field research. A complementary correlational analysis would also be useful to increase the generalizability of the insights from this study.

Appendix A

Newspaper Articles for Experimental Stimuli

HEADLINE: Voters' guide 2000; U.S. House of Representatives; District 10 Austin & Travis County; Democrat Larry Rodgers held news conference

BYLINE: Harvey Rice, Staff

BODY:

Two candidates running for the District 10 seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, Larry Rodgers, the Democratic nominee, and Alfred Harrison, the Republican nominee, are both laying out campaign strategies for the November general election.

Treatment 1: The Negative-Policy Condition

Rodgers took the initiative today, launching his campaign for the election with a press conference at the Austin Convention Center. He began his first press conference this year, stating "Mr. Harrison is anti-public education and anti-environment. Texas cannot afford him in the U.S. House of Representatives."

"During his eight years in the Texas State Senate," Rodgers said, "Mr. Harrison has done nothing to improve our public education and secure funds for public schools." He added that Harrison would support taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers to send children to private schools.

Rodgers asserted that Harrison would not fight against big-monied special interests that push for anti-environmental policies in Congress. "When the automobile industry wanted to weaken pollution controls in major cities in Texas," Rodgers stated, "Mr. Harrison said yes. He refuses to preserve the green spaces where families can enjoy life."

Harrison, meanwhile, has issued a new release on his voting record in the State Senate and announced a news conference tomorrow at the GOP Convention Hall in Austin.

Treatment 2: The Positive-Policy Condition

Rodgers took the initiative today, launching his campaign for the election with a press conference at the Austin Convention Center. He began his first press conference this year, stating "I am the pro-public education and pro-environment whom Texas needs in the U.S. House of Representatives."

"During my eight years in the Texas State Senate," Rodgers said, "I have done a lot to improve our public education and secure funds for public schools." He added that he would oppose taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers to send children to private schools.

Rodgers pledged that he would fight against any big-monied special interests that push for anti-environmental policies in Congress. "When the automobile industry wanted to weaken pollution controls in major cities in Texas," Rodgers stated, "I said no. I have tried to preserve the green spaces where families can enjoy life."

Harrison, meanwhile, has issued a new release on his voting record in the State Senate and announced a news conference tomorrow at the GOP Convention Hall in Austin.

Treatment 3: The Negative-Personality Condition

Rodgers took the initiative today, launching his campaign for the election with a press conference at the Austin Convention Center. He began his first press conference this year, stating "Mr. Harrison is not a dedicated family man. He is a corrupt politician, whom Texas cannot afford in the U.S. House of Representatives."

“Mr. Harrison took contributions from political action committees and lobbyists in his campaigns,” said Rodgers. He asserted that Harrison had quite a few soft-money donors to reward and grease.

“While serving in the Texas State Senate,” Rodgers also alleged, “Mr. Harrison accepted money from oil producers in Texas who wanted him to help repeal a drilling tax.”

Harrison, meanwhile, has issued a new release on his voting record in the State Senate and announced a news conference tomorrow at the GOP Convention Hall in Austin.

Treatment 4: The Positive-Personality Condition

Rodgers took the initiative today, launching his campaign for the election with a press conference at the Austin Convention Center. He began his first press conference this year, stating “I am a dedicated family man and a statesman of integrity, whom Texas needs in the U.S. House of Representatives.”

“I declined to take contributions from political action committees and lobbyists in my campaigns,” said Rodgers. He asserted that he did not have any soft-money donors to reward and grease.

“While serving in the Texas State Senate,” Rodgers stated, “I never accepted money from oil producers in Texas because they wanted me to help repeal a drilling tax.”

Harrison, meanwhile, has issued a new release on his voting record in the State Senate and announced a news conference tomorrow at the GOP Convention Hall in Austin.

Appendix B

Posttest Questionnaire PLEASE MAKE REFERENCE TO APP. B IN TEXT

*Below, You will be asked about the news story you have read and about your attitudes toward the coming congressional election in November. Please answer as honestly as you can.

PART I (1-6). Please indicate how you feel about the content (or information) of the news story you have read, on these 7-point scales, by circling the number that best corresponds to your opinion about the story. For example, in question number 1, a “1” would mean that content (or information) was very uninformative, while a “7” would mean it was very informative.

1. UNINFORMATIVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	INFORMATIVE
2. USELESS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	USEFUL
3. UNBIASED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	BIASED
4. NEGATIVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	POSITIVE
5. UNPLEASANT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	PLEASANT
6. UNBELIEVABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	BELIEVABLE

7. Which section of the newspaper do you think usually deals with this kind of story? ____

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| a. Domestic Politics | b. Editorial |
| c. Voter's Guide | d. Metro |
| e. Culture | f. Other |

PART II (8-11). The following items ask about your attitudes toward the U.S. House of Representatives election reported in the news story you have read. Please circle the number that best corresponds to your feelings or judgments regarding this particular election or these candidates.

8. *How interested* are you in the results of this particular election?
 Not at all Interested 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Interested

9. If you were eligible in this congressional election, *how likely* would you be to vote?
 Not at all Likely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

10. In the absence of other information, how likely would you be to vote for Larry Rodgers?
 Not at all Likely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

11. In the absence of other information, how likely would you be to vote for Alfred Harrison?
 Not at all Likely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

PART III (12-14). For the following questions, please mark the response that applies to you. Again, your response will be used for academic research purposes only.

12. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a _____
 a. Republican b. Democrat c. Independent d. Other

13. Gender _____ a. Female b. Male

14. Ethnicity _____
 a. African-American b. Hispanic c. Asian-American d. Native-American
 e. Caucasian f. Other

Note

1. More specifically, the differences between the negative and positive conditions were not statistically significant in terms of gender ($\chi^2 = 0.115, p = .734$), ethnicity ($\chi^2 = 8.148, p = .148$), and partisan compositions ($\chi^2 = 2.665, p = .446$). The policy and personality conditions were also statistically equivalent in terms of gender ($\chi^2 = 0.275, p = .600$), ethnicity ($\chi^2 = 2.931, p = .711$), and partisan compositions ($\chi^2 = 0.111, p = .991$).

References

- Allen, M., and N. Burrell. 2002. "The Negativity Effect in Political Advertising: A Meta-Analysis." In *The Persuasion Handbook: Developments in Theory and Practice*, ed. J. P. Dillard and M. Pfau. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ansolabehere, S. D., and S. Iyengar. 1995. *Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*. New York: Free Press.
- Ansolabehere, S. D., S. Iyengar, and A. Simon. 1999. "Replicating Experiments Using Aggregate and Survey Data." *American Political Science Review* 93:901–10.
- Ansolabehere, S. D., S. Iyengar, A. Simon, and N. Valentino. 1994. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American Political Science Review* 88(4):829–38.
- Brody, R. A. 1991. *Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Buchanan, B. 1996. *Renewing Presidential Politics: Campaigns, Media, and the Public Interest*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burden, B. C. 2002. "When Bad Press Is Good News: The Surprising Benefits of Negative Campaign Coverage." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 8(3):76–89.
- Finkel, S. E., and J. G. Geer. 1998. "A Spot Check: Casting Doubt on the Demobilizing Effect of Attack Advertising." *American Journal of Political Science* 42(2):573–95.
- Garramone, G. M., C. K. Atkin, B. E. Pinkleton, and R. T. Cole. 1990. "Effects of Negative Political Advertising on the Political Process." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 34(3):299–311.
- Goldstein, K., and P. Freedman. 2002. "Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect." *Journal of Politics* 64(3):721–40.
- Gordon, A., D. M. Shafie, and A. C. Crigler. 2003. "Is Negative Advertising Effective for Female Candidates? An Experiment in Voters' Uses of Gender Stereotypes." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 8(3):35–53.
- Jamieson, K. H. 1992. *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kahn, K. F., and P. J. Kenney. 1999. "Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation." *American Political Science Review* 93(4):877–89.
- Kendall, K. E. 2000. *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates in the Media, 1912–2000*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Kiousis, S., P. Bantimaroudis, and H. Ban. 1999. Candidate Image Attributes: Experiments on the Substantive Dimension of Second Level Agenda Setting. *Communication Research* 26(4):414–28.
- Lau, R. R., and L. Sigelman. 2000. "Effectiveness of Negative Political Advertising." In *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections*, ed. J. A. Thurber, C. J. Nelson, and D. A. Dulio, 10–43. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Min, Y. 2002. "Intertwining of Campaign News and Advertising: The Content and Electoral Effects of Newspaper Ad Watches." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 79(4):927–44.
- Patterson, T. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Patterson, T., and R. D. McClure. 1976. *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Politics*. New York: Putnam.
- Rahn, W. M., and R. M. Hirshorn. 1999. "Political Advertising and Public Mood: A Study of Children's Political Orientations." *Political Communication* 16(4):387–407.

- Roddy, B. L., and G. M. Garramone. 1988. "Appeals and Strategies of Negative Political Advertising." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 32(4):415–27.
- Thorson, E., W. G. Christ, and C. Caywood. 1991. "Effects of Issue-Image Strategies, Attack and Support Appeals, Music, and Visual Content in Political Commercials." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 35(4):465–86.
- Wattenberg, M. P., and C. L. Brians. 1999. "Negative Campaign Advertising: Demobilizer or Mobilizer?" *American Political Science Review* 93:891–900.
- West, D. M. 2001. *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-2000*. 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly.

Biographical Note

Young Min (Ph.D., University of Texas–Austin) is a tenure-track full-time lecturer in the School of Journalism and Communication at Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Korea. Her research interests include political communication, agenda setting, and mass media effects. Her recent work has been published in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* and the *Asian Journal of Communication*.

Address: School of Journalism and Communication, Kyung Hee University, 1 Hoegi-dong, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul 130-701, Korea; phone: 82-2-961-0987; e-mail: youngmin@khu.ac.kr.