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Too much television?: Does watching political ads influence if and how people vote?

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Too Much Television?: Does Watching Political Ads Influence If and How People Vote?

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to examine the impact of negative political advertising on a young voters' emotions and his/her decision to vote in the next election. This was done through the lens of the theory of cultivation analysis. The theory stated that the more television a person watches, the more likely he/she is to believe what he/she sees is reality. Using a cross-sectional survey, 324 participants viewed one of four political ads or a control group ad. Although no significant evidence found that negative political ads would stop people from voting, some significant evidence suggested that negative ads demobilize voters and evoke negative emotions, which could affect their desire to vote in the next election.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cultivation Analysis and Negative Political Advertising

Every year in the United States, people from different backgrounds make the decision to run for public office. Whether at the federal, state, or local level, each of these types of elections requires getting the word out and trying to convince people to vote one way or another. Needless to say this is not cheap. In fact, on average, a primetime slot for a 30-second advertisement can range from $50,000 to $150,000 dollars (Mahapatra, 2013).Television advertising is expensive, and political campaigns are not an exception.

One of the major costs of campaigning is employing others to develop an effective campaign strategy designed to get people out to vote for the individual candidate. A strategy can include anything that a candidate might do to try and win an election such as marketing plans and personal platforms all presented in a 30-second television advertisement. Often times, politicians or their campaigns use comparative advertising (negative ads) because they are effective in changing consumer's or the voter's attitudes. (Barton 2016) Strategies matter and can often make the difference in an election between who wins and who loses (Strömbäck, Grandien, & Falasca, 2013). The question then remains, what type of strategy will work the best.

Political advertising, used by most anyone that campaigns for public office is a form of mass communication that uses cultivation theory to develop its schemes to capture the attention of the viewing public (Gerbner 1969). Gerbner (1969) stated that broadcasting is a highly concentrated and normalized method of information distribution. He claimed that television is the most widely utilized method of distribution and has influence (Gerbner, 1969). In a Pew Research Center analysis, while 44% of respondents got their news via social networking sites, emails, or automatic updates several times a week. This still leaves a great number of people that

use the traditional press to learn about the news. many. The major television news networks have created and maintain online new sources that are a 24-hour extension of their news shows. (Nan, 2011).

Gerbner (1998) described cultivation as the pervasiveness of television in our society and how it contributes to society's perceptions of social reality   If television has this much influence, then it should be used by candidates looking for a successful election campaign . Candidates today have utilized this idea and have saturated television markets with their advertising, the most common of which are negative ads (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1999), with airings of election ads nearing three million times over the course of the 2012 federal elections (Fowler, Franz, & Ridout, 2016). With elections getting more competitive and expensive, the number of times political ads are aired is likely to increase in future elections (Fowler et al., 2016). Earlier studies have shown that although negative ads appear most during campaigns, they do not work (Ansolabehere et al., 1999). For example, negative ads might decrease voter turnout thus limiting the mobilizing effect intended for political ads. There could also be varying levels of participation across consumers of advertisements that can extend to vote choice, the persuasive goal of advertising, beyond just mobilization (Ansolabahere et al., 1999).). Barton et al found that negative versus positive politic ads were no different in soliciting candidate donations. The researchers thought that since negative ads seem to motivate voters then it would also increase financial donations. This was not the case.

The goal of this study is to examine George Gerbner's cultivation theory and apply it to political advertising. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature in the subjects of cultivation analysis, persuasive advertising, the history of political advertising, and negative political advertising.

Chapters 3 and 4 outline the survey that was conducted to test the hypotheses proposed in

chapter 2 and then explain the results. Chapter 5 then discusses the results of the hypothesis tests

as well as presents some limitations and suggestions for future research and offer some

concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Cultivation Analysis

According to theory creator George Gerbner (1998), the primary assumption of cultivation analysis is the more time people spend engaged in the world portrayed on television, the more they are likely to perceive that reality as reality. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) made note of how the creation of a homogenous view of society caused by heavy television viewing can change how a person perceives reality. . This is still evident as television continues to be a prevalent medium of information dissemination more pervasive in our society (Potter, 2014) than it was when Gerbner (1969) wrote his theory. Today, people have access to social media, the internet, and You Tube that can further alter a person's view of reality.

Before an analysis of cultivation theory can progress, it is important to differentiate it from other media effects theories such as agenda setting, priming, and framing. Smith (2012) described agenda-setting theory as the way that media tells us what to think about, not necessarily how to think. Also according to Smith (2012), media sets the stage for what the important issues are by how often the media presents a story, a phenomenon referred to as priming. Priming does not make mention for media telling viewers how to think about certain issues, that is the job of framing. When media frames an issue, it gives receivers a context for which to talk about certain issues, which can influence how people see this issue. (Smith, 2012). Cultivation theory is a type of synthesis of the three theories previously presented. Gerbner et al. (1980) presented the idea that persistent exposure to different media stories can cause changes in receiver's perceptions of reality to the point where media is telling people both what to think, and how to think about it.

Gerbner (1998) said that cultivation examines media in traditional ways but also includes other functions than just changing existing belief systems regarding reality.   However, he also stated that commercial mass media is merely an integral aspect of an ever changing system that creates multiple publics with distinct identities (Gerbner et al., 1980). More recently, Potter (2014)) found that media only creates and enforces the dominant views of society.   If nothing else, mass media merely contributes to perceptions of social reality (Gerbner et al., 1980) and can give a skewed version of what reality really is (Potter 2014). In a more modern sense, Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli (2015) offer that new recording technologies allow people to watch more of the same messages, potentially amplifying cultivation. People who record more television might be more open to new messages even as people who watch very little can be more selective, limiting the effects of new messages (Morgan et al., 2015).

In drafting the original theory, Gerbner (1998) was concerned with the contexts in which a message is disseminated and how different individuals and groups of people perceive that message. Cultivation theory is all about responses to messages (Gerbner, 1998). One of the first terms of the theory that was very important to Gerbner (1969) was public. He defined a public as, "the basic units of self-government" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 177), groups of people that share common interests and to which symbols share common meaning..Collective action is possible when beliefs are known to many. (Gerbner, 1998).

Advertising deals with messages, designed to get the viewers attention. Ads may promote a product, an idea, or a service.   In the cultivation theory, Gerbner (1969) offers four questions to evaluate messages: What is the subject of the message?, What is important?, What is right (ethics)?, and What is related to what? Danciu (2014) discussed how advertising agencies manipulate these questions in order sell their product. Danciu's (2014) study pointed out how

consumers are lead to believe that they want the product in the add because it is new and will make their life better. Oftentimes, the consumer doesn't need it. Most realize that the ad pulls them inbut some do not. Advertisers often walk a fine line between what is ethical and what is not when designing. In addition to the four questions, Gerbner (1969) named four key concepts in the process of cultivation. The first one is attention, which is how we give concentration to particular pieces of information in the media and how they bring about perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1969). The second concept is relevance, which defines priorities in issues to determine what is important. Measures of this can relevance size, stress, and frequency of a particular product or idea and the different factors associated with them (Gerbner et al., 1980).

In terms of politics, ads run similar to what Gerbner was trying to describe with television and film. Morgan and Shanahan (2010) pointed out that although technology has advanced since the time Gerbner wrote the theory, the message is still the same. Cultivation is all about the institutions that create messages, the message itself, and the audience(s) that receive the message (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). What makes political ads different is that partisan tendencies come into play. Weber (2013) added that when negative, or potentially positive, ads target partisan beliefs, party bias can potentially lead to distorted perceptions of reality based on the message of the ads.

While television and film often do not have a message to attempt to persuade or mobilize people, political ads do. According to cultivation analysis, media is capable of giving people a new way of seeing the world (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Political ads have many goals such as convincing people to vote, convincing people who do vote to vote for a particular candidate, and other mobilizing actions such as donating and volunteering for campaigns. Barton, Castillo, and Petrie (2016) tested both negative and positive mailers to see how mobilizing ads can be. In

this case, having people vote or donate indicates creating a new sense of reality. Results of the Barton et al. (2016) survey found that people who received negative over positive ads were just as likely to donate but more likely to vote. One problem of the Barton et al. (2016) study, which will be discussed in detail later in this paper, is the measurement of likelihood to vote. Barton et al. (2016) as people how likely they were to vote which is suppository and not the most accurate way of measuring voter turnout, demonstrating how difficult it is to measure ad exposure and effectiveness in a cultivation analysis study.

The third concept in cultivation is tendency (Gerbner, 1969). While the first two concepts of cultivation: attention and relevance (Gerbner, 1969) may cause people to have differing perceptions, the concepts of attention and relevance do not make mention of the placement of a message. In the case of political ads, this would refer to when during the election cycle and ad is run. . Tendency describes the actual viewpoint of a message that could influence perceptions of reality (Gerbner et al., 1980). The final term that Gerbner (1969) defined is structure, which is the relationship between the components of the message and the view expressed. The political speech is a good example of these concepts.   For example, in June of 2013 Senator John McCain (R-AZ) appeared on CBS's *Face the Nation*. He first brought attention to the fact that the civil war in Syria could have effects on the United States (US) (CBS, June 3, 2013). Second, he increased the relevance of it by being yet another person to talk about it. Third, he expressed tendency by taking the stance that the US needed to send aid to the Syrian rebels fighting the Assad regime (CBS, June 3, 2013). Lastly, he structured his argument in a way that tied evidence of Assad getting help from Russia, preventing a fundamentalist Islamic regime from taking over, and what the Assad regime was doing to its people (CBS, June 3, 2013). McCain's speech showed how cultivation can be applied in a political setting. If the

ideas of attention, using specifics of what Assad was doing to his people, relevancy, bringing attention to how doing nothing could affect the U.S., and tendency, trying to persuade people to his point of view can be used in a speech, it stands to reason that cultivation analysis can be applied to political advertising.

The term cultivation was originally divided into first and second order cultivation effects, also called levels (Gerbner, 1969). First order levels are general beliefs about the world, while second-order levels are attitudes that take a little longer to form than first-order levels and are thus more resistant to change (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). Some cultivation research did suggest that first-order beliefs are more easily influenced. A study by Chong, Teng, Siew, & Skoric (2012) found that playing video games does alter peoples' perceptions and beliefs on how likely they are to be a victim of a crime, violent or non-violent. However, despite previous research suggesting that violent media (e.g., TV and video games) can affect our attitudes, the researchers only found limited evidence to support the idea of second-order cultivation effects (Chong et al., 2012).

Cultivation Analysis and Politics. In a study by Gerbner, Gross, and Morgan (1982), data indicated evidence to support the notion of cultivation beyond merely issue relevance to include persuasion toward different viewpoints. The study of 756 participants indicated support for the notion that people who watch copious amounts of television would be more likely to view themselves as independent (Gerbner et al., 1982). Further, Gerbner and colleagues (1982) indicated an attempt to cultivate a relatively homogenous population with middle of the road viewpoints, thus demonstrating another aspect of cultivation analysis, which is mainstreaming. Gerbner et al. (1980) defined mainstreaming as the coming together of different ideas from

different groups of people who share little in common outside of television to develop a new way of thinking.

What makes cultivation theory unique and useful is how Gerbner (1998) attempted to stray from the idea of instant change (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). Specifically, Gerbner (1998) did not mean for attitudes and/or beliefs to be changed with one message, but receiving the same or multiple similar messages over a long period of time. A study by Igartua, Barrios, and Ortega (2010) indicated that the concept of cultivation, works in general television as well. The study supports that through viewing of television programs, peoples' perceptions of immigrants' lives matched what was portrayed in television in contrast to what immigrants perceived . Television shows did one of two things; portrayed immigrants in a negative manner or rarely included them at all. People's perceptions of immigrants were a result of viewing television program serious. More often than not, immigrants were not happy with how they were portrayed.(Igartua et al., 2010).

Campaign developers also need to take into account third-party effects (Jeffres et al., 2008). Simply stated, when people (campaign developers) perceive the effect of an advertisement or other form of media based on how they think it has affected others on is most the developer is underestimation the perceived effect (Gerbner et al., 1980). This makes third-party effects somewhat of a mediating variable and can very possibly limit the intended effects of an ad campaign (Jeffres et al., 2008). Third party effects could cause people not to vote or vote for the other candidate. People could perceive political ads in a way they may not usually perceive things based on what other people think and how they may react to a different attitude. One should then consider whether people think the effects of long-term media attention are greater on themselves or others (Northup, 2010). This then reinforced the idea that the more

people view a particular message, particularly a negative one, the higher the likelihood of people exhibiting negative emotions (Lett et al., 2004).

While many studies (see Jeffres et al., 2008; Painter, 2015) examined advertising in national elections and how issues are impacted at the national level, cultivation also applies to local issues. McKay-Semmler, Semmler, & Kim (2014) looked at local news coverage of immigrants living in the town of "Plainstown," a fictional name for a real town, and their perceptions and perceived hostilities toward non-Plainstown residents. McKay-Semmler and colleagues, (2014) found that although local newspaper and television coverage was optimistic, persistent negative regional and national newspaper and television news used in the study created or reinforced negative attitudes toward non-Plainstown residents. Although local news showed immigrants in a positive manner, many people continued to base their beliefs about the immigrants on negative regional and national news stories. Similar studies have had the same results that coverage of a certain political issue, in this case, immigrants, can cultivate a point of view (Lett et al., 2004; Northup, 2010). News can be different at the national, regional, and local levels making for conflicting messages, and potentially conflicting viewpoints.

Cultivation Analysis and Social Issues. Politics is not the only area in which television can influence perceptions, take for example racial tensions in the U.S.. Northup (2010) found that heavy viewers of television, not only violent television, contributed to peoples' perceptions of African Americans. The results found that people who thought they might be victims of a violent crime, thought the perpetrator would most likely be African-American. The study also proposed the idea that when people view African Americans in the news as possible suspects of crime, people were more likely to view these people as guilty before hearing facts. In a different study, Hetsroni and Tukachinsky (2006), looked at the potential change in viewpoints with

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sudden changes in news regarding Iceland before and after its 2008 economic crisis. The authors found that long-term news imaging had more of an effect on people's views than just recency of messages. The views of those surveyed (n=304) reflected more positive perceptions of Iceland among participants as opposed to just the negative perceptions displayed at the onset of the crisis Igartua et al. (2010) also found that heavy television viewing of both programming and advertisements has the ability to alter perceptions of the real world as dictated in cultivation theory.According to cultivation analysis, one concern that can arise from is that heavy viewers of television begin to change their views in order to fit those of the television reality, which could be for the better or for the worse depending on the viewpoint and the individual (O'Guinn, Faber, & Curias, 1989).

Since the inception of television, most people have relied on this medium as their news source, in good times and in bad. Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson (2004) examined racism in the US by looking at perceptions of Muslims post September 11, 2001 (9/11). The study looked at news stories that were coming out after the attacks and found that many were portraying Muslims in a negative light saying all Muslims wanted to attack Americans (Lett et al., 2004). The study portion looked at college students and found that after the attacks of 9/11, those who were heavy viewers of television did have more negative perceptions of Muslims (Lett et al., 2004). This corroborates with the study by Northup (2010) showing just how powerful television can be in cultivating a particular viewpoint.

One important aspect of cultivation analysis that this experiment explored is single instance versus repeated exposure. Mirsa (2015) contributed to the idea that single instance exposure to a message can be just as effective in shaping viewpoints as repeated exposure to a message. Mirsa (2015) claimed that people have a basic nature to analogize parts of their long-

term memory with all aspects of people. For political advertising, man's desire to analogize could mean that even a single exposure to a negative ad could cause a person to not vote, or even vote for the sponsor of ad, not the target.

   Cultivation Analysis and Television. In television, long-term persistence of messages is what really shows evidence of cultivation. Although this current study dealt with the effects of advertising, cultivation also works in economic issues as well. Just as Lett et al. (2004) found about perceptions of race, Hetsroni (2010) found cultivation works in peoples' perception of standards of living. The Hetsroni (2010) study combined a content analysis of local media as well as opinion surveys to find that public opinion matched what was portrayed in the media. Specifically, long-term presentations of living conditions in Iceland could result in accurate perceptions of the culture, and could supersede short-term changes in the media. Hestroni (2010) found that television could alter the mere ways in which people see the world, which is evidence of first-order cultivation effects. It is this finding of first-order effects that sets the Hestroni (2010) apart from other studies (Igartua et al., 2010; Jeffers, Neuendorf, Brackin, & Atkin, 2008), which only found evidence of second order effects. Thus, television can impact peoples' perceptions of reality, in both the short and long terms.

   While cultivation works and stands the test of studies, it does not come without criticism. Harmon (2001) offered the criticism that cultivation is too broad. He claimed this type of view is too simplistic and that not all Americans get their perceptions of the world from television. He also claimed that for those who do get most of their perceptions from television, other mediums are available (Harmon, 2001). His study tested American materialism and though he noted television did portray the world as materialistic, he did not find a significant correlation indicating cultivation theory at work as expressed by Gerbner (Harmon, 2001).

Persuasive Advertising

Advertising is promoting a point of view. Persuasive advertising appeals to the consumer's emotions in order sell a product or idea as opposed to informative advertising that relies more on facts than persuasion to sell a product or idea. Persuasive advertising involves trying to persuade people to embrace a new viewpoint about a physical product or mental idea using paid messages distributed through some form of medium, typically mass media (Lee & Johnson, 2013). Since 2001, Internet advertising spending increased 20 percent, but television and radio advertising rose only 3 percent (Lee & Johnson, 2013). In each passing election, immense amounts of money were spent on advertising. , Therefore, it is important to understand the different principles of advertising that might help make cultivation a beneficial tool for determining whether or not negative campaign ads are effective (Northup, 2010; Robideaux, 2013).

No two ads are completely alike even if they have similar goals and principles. However, what they all have in common are sets of conditions, which include the objectives, the nature of the message and the target market of a single ad or campaign as a whole (Armstrong, 2010). This is where the many principles of persuasive advertising come into play and they can be divided into three categories: strategy, general tactics, and media exclusive (Armstrong, 2010).

Strategies. Strategies are very important in not only political advertising but also advertising in general because they can help sell a candidate or a product. According to Armstrong (2010), strategy includes the information presented, influence to motivate, emotion meant to push people with feelings to make a particular decision, and mere exposure such as simply displaying a logo or brand image. These types of decisions could be anything from purchasing a good or service to deciding which political candidate to vote for. Also,

advertising campaigns are very expensive and money must be used wisely in order to obtain maximum effectiveness and not be concentrated in any one area of a campaign (Strömbäck et al., 2013).

A person's brain is constantly being bombarded by and responding to external and internal stimuli. The appropriate influencing of said stimuli can create a behavior change in people (Danciu, 2014). In the world of advertising, this can be anything from buying a product, utilizing a service, or voting one way or another in the political arena (Robideaux, 2013). According to Danciu (2014), persuasive advertising is further separated into two categories, manipulative and non-manipulative. Non-manipulative advertising may seem impossible but it is merely just showing a product, there is no lying, exaggeration, or any other type of creation of false claims (Danciu, 2014). Conversely, manipulative advertising brings ethics into play and is very visible in modern advertising. Traditionally, the courts have not extended First Amendment protection to false and misleading advertising (Mirsa, 2015), which could include political advertising. Commercial companies and even political campaigns tend to exaggerate claims (Gray, 2011) and this can create an uncertain environment for consumers with multiple messages regarding products and ideas available. Some of these may be truthful, and others may be lies designed to fool a consumer. Although this is good from a business standpoint, it is not ethically sound.

General Tactics. The next subset in the principles of persuasive advertising is general tactics The parts of this subset are primarily concerned with acceptance of a change and breadth of messages used (Armstrong, 2010). The tactics of resistance and acceptance on the consumer demonstrate how change is difficult but necessary for an ad campaign to be effective. However, people can try to resist certain messages, but the goal of advertising remains the acceptance of at

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least some parts of the message (Armstrong, 2010).   Contrary to resistance and attention, message and attention deal with the breadth of a campaign trying to reach the most people with an interesting message (Armstrong, 2010). It is important to keep in mind with this subset is the research by Morgan & Shanahan (2010) stating that even if there were no immediate changes after first receiving a message, be it in the form of a controlled experiment or real life attempts at ideological change, ideas are cultivated in the longer term (Gerbner, 1980). This further highlights the relationship demonstrated by Armstrong (2010) that media functions and institutional processes are closely linked in how people create perceptions about them (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

It is important to keep in mind that the same techniques used in commercial advertising to get people to buy a product can be applied to political advertising. The same techniques of deception, ambiguity, and vagueness that Gray (2011) discussed that commercial advertisers use, are also used by political campaigns. Epure, Eisenstat, & Dinu (2014) pointed out the principles of persuasion, strategy, tactics, and methods, and the idea of manipulation through advertising have been often confused. One way to see this is that manipulation typically has a negative connotation which is used to get people to buy products using potentially false and misleading advertising, whereas persuasion is also used in a variety of positive contexts such as public service announcements aimed at promoting positive change (Epure et al., 2014). The underlying idea is that persuasion does not seek to trick or coerce people; it merely seeks to make people aware of all available options in any given situation (Epure et al., 2014). .

Production. The final subset is the media's specific techniques. These involve anything from camera angles, music, still vs. motion, and the pace of the ad (Armstrong, 2010). What this also includes is the placement of ads whether they are in the newspaper, on television or, radio,

or on the internet (Armstrong, 2010). When advertisers and campaign personnel look at the placement, they look for the target audience they are trying to reach (Hess & Doe, 2013). Advertisers spend a lot of time researching their target demographic and what type of media the target demographic most used in order to effectively place ads which should effectively promote their product and result in sales of that product. (Hess & Doe, 2013). These techniques of designing a commercial dictate what efficacious ads should have from the advertiser's standpoint (Armstrong, 2010).

Sometimes ad agencies and companies try to involve consumers in the creation of ads. A well-known example is the Dorito's Crash the Super Bowl campaign where consumers get to pick the commercials that air during the game (Thomson & Malaviya, 2013). Previous research suggested higher effectiveness when brand loyalty is high and consumers can voice their input in creation of ads (Thomson & Malaviya, 2013). For example, when Doritos launched their Crash the Super bowl campaign, tests found higher consumer satisfaction (Thomson & Malaviya, 2013). Consulting the target audience can lead to higher ad satisfaction when advertisers bring in the audience to develop an ad, which could be why consumers of the Doritos ads from that Crash the Super Bowl campaign received the ads in a positive light (Thomson & Malaviya, 2013).

Prior research indicated that exposure to who created the ad (Thomson & Malaviya, 2013) and knowledge of the principles of persuasion (Armstrong, 2011) play a role in determining the persuasive power of an ad. Properly using a strategy, aesthetic design elements, media tactics, and even accentuating negative aspects of a product or political campaign can lead to a more effective ad. However, another quality of an ad that can have major effects is the placement of the ad. Recent research suggested that an ad placed directly into an editorial piece

on the internet might be more effective than a traditional banner ad and pop ups, which are recognizable, and often intrusive (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Flanagin and Metzger (2000) found that when ads are blaring in a consumer's face, they are more likely to recognize the intent of the ad and ignore it. Therefore, when ads are somewhat embedded within content on the internet, it is a little bit more difficult to see the source and avoid them and that is where they should be more effective (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000, Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Ad placement matters, not only in the physical, or potentially digital, location, but also in length, aesthetics, and the right combination of design elements will yield the best results.

The Point of the Ad. When ads are created, they tend to have a conclusion telling viewers what they should believe. This is known as an explicit conclusion (Kardes, 1988). However, in some cases, the conclusion is not always obvious or directly stated demonstrating an implicit conclusion (Kardes, 1988). Advertisers then have the decision of which style of ad to use. They could explicitly tell viewers and/or listeners what to think, or they could leave that decision to the listeners by being implicit. In further examination, Martin, Lang, & Wong (2004) claimed that it depends on the target audience as to whether or not implicit or explicit conclusions work better. A study of 261 participants found that explicitness of a conclusion does not necessarily play a role in positive perceptions of ads and that implicit can be just as favorable as explicit conclusions (Martin et al., 2004). Thus, for ads to be effective, the conclusion might not need to be explicitly stated.

Persuasive advertising is not simple and takes a lot of preparation and research. There are many different principles that need to be followed in order to create an effective ad (Armstrong, 2010). For political candidates this then opens up a possible "formula" that if followed correctly could lead to an effective ad. Also, when ads are placed strategically instead

of indiscriminately (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000) and potentially even use a subtle amount of manipulation (Epure et al., 2014), it could be the difference between winning and losing an election. This leads back to the topic that will be investigated in this thesis of negative political advertising, which will be discussed in the following sections.

The History of Political Advertising

Since the beginning of U.S. history, advertising for candidates in elections. have included forms such as word of mouth, leaflets, and newspapers. (Ansolabahere et al., 1999). However, in the over two-hundred year history of American elections, television advertising has only been going on for one quarter of it, since about 1952 (Chrastil, 2010). Although television has been around before 1952, the 1952 presidential elections were the first ones where TVs were commercially available to the masses (Chrastil, 2010). The 1950s and 1960s brought some very memorable and also famous ads such "I Like Ike" from Eisenhower and "Daisy Girl" from the Johnson (LBJ) era (Chrastil, 2010). What separates these ads from current elections is the technology. According to Chrastil (2010), technology is much more developed today and makes for a better visual story, and turning ads into items that can win awards such as the ADDY Awards given out by the American Advertising Federation.

Political advertising via a film source happened before the television age.   Movie theaters often showed political ads before movies (Jamieson, 1996). For example, Huey Long used to distribute advertisements to movie theaters during his campaigns as a Louisiana state senator (Jamieson, 1996). Former public relations director for the Republican National Committee (RNC) Jack Redding said that movie theaters offered an effective way to reach over 65,000,000 people across the country(Jamieson, 1996). Sixty-five million is many people to be

able to reach and, unlike at home today, those people could not change the channel to avoid having to see the ads.

Another type of ad prominent before television was a radio ad. Candidates running for office and already holding office used radio to disseminate messages, most notably Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) and his fireside chats during the 1930s (Jamieson, 1996; Mann, 2011). What the radio also gave rise to were the first public debates (Jamieson, 1996). While the first official presidential debate between the candidates was not until 1960 between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy (Chrastil, 2010), smaller debates in state elections were going on via the radio (Jamieson, 1996).

This era of radio also gave rise to another concept we know today as spin (Jamieson, 1996). Even before television, radio news broadcasters were taking the words of elected officials out of context and making them to mean something they did not (Jamieson, 1996). We see this also very often today whenever an elected official holds a press conference so they can make sure their voice is heard directly and not through the interpretation of someone else (Chrastil, 2010). Political advertising had come a long way since the beginning of elections in America. After years in the movie theaters, radio, and newspapers, mass campaign advertising was about to make the leap to television.

In the beginning of the television age, political ads were a bit neutral in tone and tended to focus on the sponsor (Mann, 2011). However, the 1964 election between LBJ and Barry Goldwater saw the "Daisy Girl" ad come to light which marked a turning point in political advertising (Chrastil, 2010; Mann, 2011). Although it aired only once during the campaign, the ad was an attempt by the LBJ campaign to tarnish Goldwater's image as a potential war hawk, making the ad one of the first true examples of a negative ad (Mann, 2011).

As the elections moved into the 1970s and early 1980s, political advertising looked at candidate's character. After the Watergate scandal, advertising teams now had to make new assumptions views people held about the presidency. The Watergate scandal destroyed the previously held image that the candidate represents Americans as a whole (Jamieson, 1996). Most research marks this turning point in the 1976 election as when political ads began to focus more on character and less on issues (Jamieson, 1996; Mann, 2011). Through the 1980s, ads began to show most of the same qualities as in the 1970s. Past records in office continued to be important; for example, Jimmy Carter's inability to make connections with members of Congress and Ronald Reagan's time in Hollywood (Jamieson, 1996).

As elections in America moved into the 1990s, a new development came along with it, the Internet. The presidential election of 1996 brought along the first campaign websites where interested voters could go and learn all about the candidates they might be voting for (West, 2014). This also brought along a new way to disseminate ads, although it was more difficult then than now with the development of social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter (Groseclose & Milyo, 2005). While websites gave both parties a bit of a chance for increased transparency, they also opened up room for criticisms from the opponent. Just like Chrastil (2010) pointed out with some of the early uses of television, candidates used the Internet to publish criticisms and discredit websites against other candidates (West, 2014). Take for example George H.W. Bush's use of a tax calculator to help people see what they would pay if he were elected vs what people might pay if the Democrats won the White House (West, 2014). In response, the Democrats published their own website using negative remarks against the

Republicans (GOP) to show that the Republicans plan only really benefited the wealthy (West, 2014).

The introduction of the Internet in 1996 opened another avenue for political advertising. As Jamieson (1996) pointed out, past elections used primarily newspapers, television spots, and radio to advertise. Although the Internet was still in its infant stages in the 1990s, candidates still had access to growing populations and people were beginning to see the power of this new tool (West, 2014). Starting with the 2000 presidential election, more and more candidates were turning to the Internet to display negative ads (West, 2014). Unlike how Jamieson (1996) points out that in the beginning most television and newspaper ads were positive, West (2014) points out that just a few years in to the use of the Internet in the early 2000s, many candidates were reverting to mudslinging and other negative tactics.

One such tactic was something called, "playing the blame game" (West, 2011, p. 117). Candidates began, and still continue, to use massive amounts of attack ads directed at both opponents' stances on issues and their character (West, 2011). Research also indicates that going on the offensive is not the most worthwhile strategy (West, 2011). Candidates run many risks such as decreased approval ratings, people not paying attention to the ads, and also being seen as mean (West, 2011). When viewers were limited to a handful of channels and without the ability to record and fast-forward through ads they were forced to view the add or turn off their television. Today, going on the offensive may gain viewership (ie. Trump). However, many people do not like to view these ads. Fortunately, with so many channels and different media platforms to chose from, people can ignore these ads altogether.

For the most part, political media in America has largely focused around three sources: television, newspaper, and radio (Jamieson, 1996). What this eliminated for most Americans

was a choice on where to get their news. Prior to the development of the 24-hour cable news networks, the main sources on TV were the big three networks of CBS, NBC, and ABC (Jamieson, 1996). This gives people choices when they pick their news. In addition to morning and evening news broadcasts on the big three networks today, people also have their choice of the 24-hour news networks; for another inclusion of a choice, CNN and MSBNC offer the liberal point of view for the Democrats and Fox News offers the conservative side for the GOP (Groseclose & Milyo, 2005). In addition, voters today also have the Internet and social media to find news to help them make their political decisions (Seegard, 2015).

Negative Political Advertising

Political communication has entered all realms of our lives and all forms of media that we are subject to from traditional sources like radio and newspaper to new electronic media like social networking sites and the internet as a whole (Ansari, 2014). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand the impact of this communication on our lives in to better understand the effects of political advertising, which could also include how to combat the effects of advertising (Ansari, 2014). One of the most frequently used advertising schemes involves negative ads about both candidates and issues (Winneg, Hardy, Gottfriend, & Jamieson, 2014). A recent study published by Ridout, Franz, and Fowler (2014) showed that over the past 16 years, there has been a rise in the overall negativity of advertising in political campaigns. These have come along with the goals of both perceptions of candidates as well as Advertising has also been used outside of campaigns aimed at influencing passage of legislation (Ridout et al., 2014). Policy based advertising has shown effects in both how voters view the candidates, most times in direction desired, but also in how people view political campaigns which draws the assumption

that people are now beginning to view campaigns in general as negative, and not just the ads (Ridout et al., 2014).

While negative campaign advertising might seem very broad in scope, it is actually simple to define. Mark (2006) defined negative advertising as, "the action a candidate takes to win an election by attacking an opponent rather than emphasizing his or her own positive attributes or policies" (p.2). accomplishments. Also according to Mark (2006), negative ads can be further divided into ones that contain truth and deception Just like the findings of Ridout et al. (2014), the research by Mark (2006) also stressed how whether a negative ad has some truth to it or it is just a dirty trick. Even still, most Americans still cringe when they see one on TV or the Internet or hear negativity on the radio (Mark, 2006). In a numbers sense, a 2004 Pew Research Center Poll found that 61 percent of Americans found negative ads were very annoying along with another 20 percent who found negative ads somewhat annoying (Geer, 2006). This connects to the current study demonstrating how most Americans find negative ads annoying and maybe even demobilizing (Geer, 2006; Ridout et al., 2014).

Political ads tend to focus on emotions in order to elicit a cultivated response (Weber, 2013). A recent study by Weber (2013) tested political ads utilizing several different emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, and enthusiasm, where respondents were shown ads from each category and asked to describe their feelings (Weber, 2013). The anger ads had a perfect positive correlation with eliciting angry emotions and an almost perfect positive correlation with disgust (Weber, 2013). This demonstrated how anger-based ads elicit the strongest responses to what the ad was designed for, and also that anger was a much more mobilizing characteristic than sadness (Weber, 2013).

In a field study environment, negative ads may not be effective at increasing voter turnout. Barton et al. (2016) tested negative campaign advertising and measured its effectiveness in terms of voter turnout. The results of the Barton et al. (2016) experiment found significant evidence to show that negative advertising significantly increased voter turnout than those who received positive messages. Further, the study only tested a one-time reaction to campaign advertising, not repeated exposure. Although Grimm and Mengel (2011) suggested that after time, the effects of exposure to advertisement can fade, the results of Barton et al. (2016) suggest otherwise as the participants studied were exposed to the information five months before the election the study's survey asked about in terms of voter turnout.

When testing advertising effects, something to keep in mind is how ad exposure is measured. Similar to Ansolabahere et al.'s (1999) method of lab testing, Robideaux (2013) also used a "lab" type environment of having participants view ads to test single-instance exposure. The finds of Robideaux (2013) reflected the idea that positive ads yield a more positive attitude about elections. While Robideaux (2013) did not ask specific questions related to intent to vote or vote choice, the results lend more to the fact that measuring ad exposure is difficult and always has concerns. Krupnikov (2008) counted the number of times ads were played in certain geographic areas to attempt to determine exposure. The results of the Krupnikov (2008) found that participants exposed to direct negativity indicated higher levels of apathy and less desire to vote for either candidate presented. In other studies, researchers have used various methods of measuring ad effects such as self-reported measures over a period of time (Guess, 2014) and monitoring media use of respondents automatically, similar to the Nielsen system (Prior, 2013). Either way, there will always be drawbacks and threats to reliability and validity; the best measure often depends on the target population.

To bring cultivation back into this study of ads, the main idea is that the more television people watch, the more likely they are to believe what they see is reality (Gerbner, 1969). Similarly, Mutz and Nir (2010) found that significant consumption of prime-time television, whether fiction or non-fiction, did grow beliefs of what politics is like and also indifference towards certain facets of the American political system. Further supporting this idea is Maxien, Wise, Segrist, Nutting, and Bradley's study (2008) that found that political party affiliation further changes a person's estimate of social reality showing cultivation can apply to political advertisements. When preconceived notions are strong, people are better equipped to resist the effects of cultivation. In this case, Maxien et al. (2008) showed that political views and ideology can be these preconceived notions to resist cultivation, showing that cultivation theory is applicable to political advertising. In the realm of political advertising, candidates want people to think that the ads they design are reality and vote for them, regardless of the tone or content of the ad.

Many studies exist looking at the effects of political ads using various methods to measure exposure and ad effectiveness. However, studies looking to test cultivation analysis have only traditionally looked at the theory in terms of full-length fictional television programs (i.e. McKay et al., 2014) or news programs (i.e. Lett et al., 2010). Research looking at the validity of cultivation analysis has examined the theory in the context of short 30-second ads to see the mobilizing and persuasive power of political ads. With political ads saturating the airwaves during election season, cultivation theory is a new lens through which to look at political ads that is not analyzed much in previous research.

For this current study, the sample is college students. In a previous study on college-students, results found no significant evidence to support the idea that negative ads demobilize

voters ("Party identification, message sidedness, and the effectiveness of negative political advertising", 2012). Similarly, Robideaux (2013) found that although consumers generally found negative ads to be annoying, negative ads also provided more information and can influence voters more strongly than positive ads. In contrast, Krupnikov (2008) added that negative ads can be demobilizing but only if people saw the ads after they decided which candidate they preferred but before they actually voted. What is evident throughout this literature review is that the research regarding the effectiveness of negative political advertising, regarding both mobilizing and persuasive effects, is varied and offered different results from study to study. Therefore it is important to continue this research to add to the argument one way or the other. Thus, it is predicted:

H1: Participants consuming high levels of television will be more likely to vote for the sponsor of the ad they view.

H2: Participants who view a negative ad will be less likely to vote than someone who views a positive ad.

H3: Participants who view a negative ad will be less likely to vote for the target of the ad than someone who views a positive ad.

Although research like the study by Ridout et al. (2014) showed how negative advertisements are often ineffective, they are still very widely used in campaigns today (Winneg et al., 2014). Current literature suggests that negative advertising offered a new area for research (Fridkin & Kenny, 2011). Overall, the research surrounding political advertising is complicated. Krupnikov (2008) found that voters in an area with higher levels of negative ad exposure were less likely to vote in an election. Fridkin and Kenney (2011) found that less polarized people indicated more disdain for negative ads and thoughts that candidates were less credible.

However, Carraro and Castelli (2010) found that participants in an experiment saw negative ads as annoying, the ads also made the source seem more competent and electable. Also in these areas, negative ads tended to be the types of things people see as relevant, and relevance to people is a key ingredient in the persuasiveness of a message (Garramone, 1984). Negative messages also tended to vary in tone than positive messages, which also are inclined to get people to pay attention to them more, which could be an indicator as to why negative ads continue to saturate the airwaves during elections (Fridkin & Kenny, 2011).

Another common reason on why candidates use negative advertising is because the other candidate used them (Iyengar, 2011). As far as the type of ad goes, in lower-level races like state elections, the attacks were more about personal qualities (Ansolabahere & Iyengar, 1995). In big national elections, the focus shifted on to performance and issue-centered ads (Iyengar, 2011). If a candidate was attacked in any way they almost have to attack back because they do not want to be seen as weak in the eyes of the electorate and point out flaws in the opponent (Iyengar, 2011). This brings back the research of Mark (2006), who stated that candidates must point out flaws in their opponents in order to gain an edge. New candidates to the scene often do not have the advantage of name recognition and constant media coverage (Hess & Doe, 2013). Therefore, pointing out flaws allows them to talk about how they will be different, which unfortunately for the American people means going negative (Hess & Doe, 2013; Mark, 2006).

These negative advertisements had demobilizing effects as well as boomerang effects (Anaslobahere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1999; Harvell & Pfau, 2012). Just like how Ridout et al. (2014) demonstrated that people are starting to view campaigns in general as negative, Ansolabahere et al. (1999) used previous research to show that these campaigns can demobilize voters. Using ads from the 1992 US Senate election, the researchers showed that attitudes

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toward the targets of the negative ads went overall in a negative trend but voting was a bit different (Ansolabahere et al., 1999). The research found that people were more likely to vote the way of the target as their attitudes toward the sponsor also went down (Ansolabahere et al., 1999). Although this showed an effective cultivation of a belief towards a particular facet of a campaign, it did not reach the desired cultivation which would have been that receivers of the ads performed a desired action, in this case voting for or against a particular candidate, which did not happen (Ansolabahere et al., 1999). More recently, Cho (2013) found that when ads and campaigns are this negative, they foster feelings of cynicism towards not only candidates, but government as a whole. This could sometimes be a strategy of candidates because if less people are voting, that means there are less people available to vote for the opposition (Mark, 2006).

On the flip side of this argument, a study by Harvell & Pfau (2012) found that negative issue ads worked against the candidate sponsoring the ad. This study drew upon previous research from Garramone (1984) who stated that sometimes when ads try to evoke negative feelings toward a target, they can evoke negative feelings toward the sponsor. The previous research found that this type of effect is most common when the negative ads attack the character of the target and less so issues important in the campaign (Garramone, 1984). The study by Cho (2013) also supports this by stating that negative ads make people cynical and think that their vote either way will not do anything to change the current system and not vote at all. These results present evidence for both cultivation and the boomerang effect at work (Garramone, 1984; Gerbner, 1969).

Negative advertising can have sometimes unpredictable effects and in the environment where ads cost a lot and are used so frequently (Winneg et al., 2014), it is important to find out more to gain a clearer sense of whether or not negative ads are effective. Further, Goldstein and

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Freedman (2002) found the exact opposite effect. While some studies found that negative advertising demobilizes voters (Ansolabahere et al., 1999; Harvell & Pfau, 2012), Goldstein and Freedman's (2002) study found that when some viewed heavily negative ads, their probability to vote went up almost four percent. This demonstrates how divided the research is, further justifying the need for more research..

Like Harvell and Pfau (2012), who found that certain types of negative advertising could work in the ad sponsor's favor, Geer (2006) proposed the idea that negative ads are actually good for democracy. Democracy is all about competition for everything from the hearts and minds of the people, to resources, to money (Geer, 2006). Unlike positive ads and campaigning, which tended to avoid points of disagreement between candidates so they could avoid their actual viewpoints, negative campaigns force candidates to debate and compete (Geer, 2006). This offers a direct contradiction to the findings of Cho (2013) saying that negative ads should not make people more cynical about government, but actually more willing to get involved as they keep democracy alive and well. Geer (2006) proposed that negative ads can even enrich society by giving people better information about candidates and policies to have better civic discussion. Negativity could in turn increase questioning of positions and discourage a groupthink type mentality that might result from positivity (Geer, 2006). While negative ads might be better for society, studies such as Carraro and Castelli's (2010) found that the public still find them as annoying, demonstrating needs for more research to see just how effective or ineffective negative ads are.

While television ads have demonstrated these qualities of demobilization (Ansolabahere et al., 1999) and boomerang (Garramone, 1984), it is important to pay attention to other forms of ads, in this case campaign mailers. These pop up in your mailbox during election season and

throughout the calendar year (Doherty & Adler, 2014). A recent study tested partisan-based mailers from an election in Colorado looking at how effective they were at causing people to approve or disapprove of a particular candidate (Doher & Adler, 2014). Participants were surveyed based on the partisanship of the letter and how the letter impacted their overall perceptions of the candidate in question (Doherty & Adler, 2014). The mailers were effective in that people who got the positive ads did feel more positively about the two candidates (Doherty & Adler, 2014). Negative mailers produced the same response as negative television ads looked at by Harvell and Pfau (2012) when shown to people in Colorado. People who received the negative mailers also showed decreased likelihood to vote as well as negative ideas of both sponsor and target (Doherty & Adler, 2014).

In 2012, candidates and outside action groups spent approximately 10 billion dollars which Robideaux (2013) claimed is a result of candidates adopting the same business models that commercial advertisers use to sell products as previously mentioned. That said, negative ads have been found to be somewhat more credible and believable to receivers (primarily current supporters of the sponsor) (Robideaux, 2013). Contrary to the findings of Ridout et al. (2014) who found that negative ads generally have bad effects, Robideaux (2013) found that negative ads can be credible and believable to help keep current supporters loyal. Also, negative ads provided information that is not usually available elsewhere, so negative ads are seen merely as "informational ads" and not trying to invoke new ideas (Robideaux, 2013). In this same study, Robideaux (2013) assessed the impact of positive and negative ads on the emotions of college students. Each student was randomized to view one of four political ad commercials, only once, and then completed a questionnaire that measured how the subjects felt about the ads. Those studied liked positive ads more than they liked negative ads about the opposing candidate.

Although those studied did not like negative ads, they found them to be more credible and believable than positive ads, especially ads aired on television. Positive ads may make people feel better but people don't find positive ads believable, especially if they are on television (Robideaux, 2013).

Another aspect of negative ads that studies have indicated as to why they are so commonly used is they are recognizable (Ansolabahere & Iyengar, 1995). One such study looked at people who both claimed a lot of and not a lot of exposure to campaigns (Ansolabahere & Iyengar, 1995). The study exposed people to different amounts of campaign material and the findings indicated that amongst those who previously indicated not a lot of exposure to campaigns, 20 percent of them were able to recall at least one negative ad (Ansolabahere & Iyengar, 1995). In another study of the 1990 California Gubernatorial race looking at issue ads, the researchers found that negative ads, when viewed by both sides, increased awareness of the issues (Ansolabahere & Iyengar, 1995). This study showed that no definitive answer as to whether or not the negative ads influenced perceptions or likelihood to vote, it did demonstrate the increasing blurriness of the effectiveness of negative ads demonstrating the need for further research. According to previous research there are three main types of campaign ads: issue, candidate or image centered (Iyengar, 2011), and comparison ads (Meirick, 2002).

Issue Centered Ads

Issue ads are one of the three types of ads in campaigns today. These demonstrate a candidate's knowledge and position on major issues in an election (Geer, 2006). The goal of issue ads is to get points across and to cultivate a new point of view amongst the electorate. Curnalia (2009) looked at issue centered ads regarding health care in the context of the 2004 presidential election. Specifically, Curnalia's (2009) study looked the amount of threats used in

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ads relating to pressing issues by both Bush and Kerry and found that what might have been the difference maker was security. Bush's ads explicitly mentioned security, something Kerry did not do, as way to play on another pressing issue of the 2004 election, security in the post 9/11 era. While Curnalia (2009) could not definitively prove that threats regarding national security was what won Bush the election, her results offered that issue ads are effective, particularly when fear is stimulated.

Candidate/Image Centered Ads. When dealing with candidate-centered ads and cultivation, the goal is to create an alternate view of the personal character or attributes of an opponent (Geer, 2006). According to the research of Meyer (1989), an effective way to create a negative alternate view is to use violence or even the threat of violence toward people. Meyer (1989) commented on a review of over 50 studies to suggest that television does have an impact on perceptions of reality, particularly when violence is involved. Voter response yielded the intended actions of both mobilization and voting for the sponsor of the negative ad (Meyer, 1989). This offered a contradiction to the study by Cho (2013) who found that people who viewed heavy negative advertising, in this case both candidate- and issue-centered ads, were less likely to vote for the victim of the ad and also less likely to even vote.

In the realm of candidate-based advertising, studies like the one by Cho (2013), Garramone (1984), and Ridout et al. (2014) showed that positivity should be the way to go. However, according to Hale, Fox, and Farmer (1996), negativity could prove to be useful to challengers. Challengers often do not have a national or statewide name for themselves and cannot talk about their records in office (Hale et al., 1996). Therefore, newcomers often turn to negative campaign practices such as tarnishing their opponents in order to "give voters reasons to throw incumbents out of office" (Hale et al., 1996, p. 331). It is also interesting how the research

and findings of Hale et al. (1996) indicated that the strategy of keeping ads positive could be used the same way with issue-centered ads.

        Comparison Ads. The final type of political ad is comparison ads. According to Meirick (2002), comparison ads look at two different candidates, often running for the same office, on one point of interest in order to make themselves look better. While purely issue and purely image ads are still very prominent (Ridout et al., 2014), comparison ads are on the rise and have distinct advantages and disadvantages from image and issue ads (Meirick, 2002). Current research says that comparison ads are a bit better than negative ads because they provoke less character attacks and more discussion of issues (Meirick, 2002). Further, comparison ads are not all negative as they do portray one candidate in a favorable light and, as   Meirick (2002) found to elicit less negative emotions.   Comparison ads offer a potential better avenue for candidates as studies like the ones by Cho (2013) and Meyer (1989) who found that negative ads evoked negative feelings and may even boomerang (Garramone, 1984). Voter cynicism is rising and negative campaign ads have the potential to backfire, especially among young adults (Robideaux, 2013) Negative ads can cause many different effects, the most common of which appear to be causing people to vote against the sponsor of the ad and causing negative emotions. Thus, it is predicted:

        H_4: Participants who view a negative ad will be more likely to vote for the target of the ad than the sponsor.

        H_5: Participants who view a negative ad will be more likely to show a higher level of negative emotion than someone who viewed a positive ad.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The study was on the School of Communication Studies' SONA system where it was available to all James Madison University (JMU) Communication Studies majors and students in the general education communication classes. Class credit was given to participants in the communication classes. Although this convenience sample could be a threat to external validity, there will still be random assignment into treatment groups via Qualtrics to ensure random assignment needed for experiments.

Three hundred twenty three students completed the survey. Thirty-two responses were deleted from the data set for one of two reasons. The first one is that the survey had too many questions with no answer given and the second reason is that participants indicated they were 17 years old or younger. From a sample of n = 292, 235 were female (85.5%), 55 were male (18.8%), and 2 chose not to answer (.7%). The mean age was 19.04 and the standard deviation was 4.64. Of the 292 respondents, 250 were freshmen (85.6%), 12 were sophomores (4.1%), 12 were seniors (4.1%), 10 were juniors (3.4%), and 8 did not answer (2.7%).

Procedure

This pre-test post-test design utilized four treatment groups and a control group. Using the survey software Qualtrics, each participant was randomly placed into one of the assessment groups (1. Negative issue ad ($n = 57$), 2. Negative image ad ($n = 59$), 3. Positive issue ad ($n = 56$), or 4. Positive image ad ($n = 58$)), or the control group ($n = 61$). After participants gave consent to participate in the study, the participants answered pre-test questions about intent to vote and their television viewing habits. Then, based on the Qualtrics assigned assessment

group, participants viewed the appropriate ad. Lastly, participants instructed to complete part two of the study.

For part two, each participant viewed one ad deemed by the researcher as issue or image focused, and then positive or negative and one deemed as a control. As for the specific ads being watched, all ads focused on Ed Gillespie and Mark Warner, Republican and Democratic candidates respectively in the 2014 VA Senate race, both image and issue wise in order to ensure uniformity in the ads viewed by participants. Participants who were assigned to the positive image ad viewed the ad, Meet Ed. This ad featured Ed Gillespie talking about his own character and how much of a hard worker he is (Meet Ed, 2014). In this ad he talked about his own character and what he stands for. While the ad discussed about issues that he addressed, he talked mainly about how he as a person is equipped to help fix the problem. He talked about his own character and stressed his mindset, making this an image ad and not an issue ad with a positive tone that fit well with the label of a positive image ad.

Participants assigned to the positive issue ad viewed the ad "Ed Gillespie for Senate" by the conservative group Growth PAC (Ed Gillespie for Senate, 2014). This ad featured former Virginia governor Jim Gilmore talking about issues such as reducing taxes, cutting spending, and cutting government regulations (Ed Gillespie for Senate, 2014). The ad talked mainly about issues and did not make very many references to character and personal qualities. The ad talked about what Gillespie would do in Washington making it a positive issue ad because it highlights what he plans to do, not what he has done badly. The ad also did not make reference to any negative aspects of what Gillespie's opponents might do or had done which fit well with the designation of a positive issue ad.

Those assigned to the negative image ad viewed the ad "Exactly" which showed Gillespie as a lobbyist out for himself in Washington (Exactly, 2014). This ad showed Gillespie as an almost evil person out for big business (Exactly, 2014). Although it talked about issues such as lobbying and corporate taxes, it was much more an attack on Gillespie's character making it an image ad and not an issue ad and the ad also had a negative tone which fit well in this category.

Those assigned to the negative issue ad viewed the Anti-Obama-Care Ad by Ed Gillespie which talked about how he opposes Obama care and how Mark Warner supported it (Ed Gillespie's Anti-Obamacare Ad, 2014). This ad discussed the issue of the Affordable Care Act explaining about how bad it was for the country. The ad discussed how Warner supported Obama-Care but not his Warner's character thus making it an issue ad and not an image ad.

Participants assigned to the control group watched the Aaron Rodgers "I'm Going to Disney World" ad (Packers Aaron Rodgers Superbowl MVP "I'm Going to Disney World" Ad, 2011). This is has nothing to do with politics or voting making it a good control ad. For links to all of the ads used in this study, please see Appendix A. After participants viewed each of the ads, participants went to the post-test survey. Participants answered questions relating to how they (happy or sad) felt during the ad, their level of cynicism about government, and their intent to vote in the upcoming 2016 elections even though the ads had no bearing on the these elections. The intent of the campaign ads was to garner their emotional input on the survey participant and to see if the ads would influence their inclination to vote in upcoming elections.Participants answered questions about basic demographic information before being thanked for their time.

Materials

Amount of Television Viewed. This variable was measured using the scale developed by Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch (2003). The measure is six statements measured on a five point likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) (Shrum et al., 2003). In this test, Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .92. For a specific wording of the questions, please see Appendix B.

Political Ideology and Party. Both of these two variables were assessed using the measure developed by Nail, Harton, & Decker (2003). This measure utilizes a five point Likert scale in which participants will rank their ideology from 1. very liberal to 5 ($M = 3.07$; $SD = 1.14$). very conservative (Nail et al., 2003). Participants used the same scale to rank their sense of party identification from 1. very Democratic to 5 ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.45$). very Republican. See Appendix B for the specific questions.

Intent to Vote. To measure intent to vote, a measure was used similar to the one developed by Meirick & Pfau (2005). The questions used a 0 to 100 scale measure with 0 being definitely will not vote and 100 being definitely will vote. The questions were phrased to mean intent to vote and then intent to vote for the conservative candidate in the next election. The questions were asked both before the experimental group ad ($M = 79.63$, $SD = 25.68$) for conservative candidates ($M = 55.7$, $SD = 34.33$) and after the video for in general ($M = 80.40$, $SD = 25.12$) and for a conservative candidate ($M = 57.83$, $SD = 34.31$). For a complete wording of these questions, see Appendix B.

Emotion Towards Candidates. Participant attitudes were measured on the dimensions of four negative emotions and four positive emotions in an attempt to gauge their perceptions on the candidates based on the ads (Dillard & Peck, 2001). Negative emotions were anger, annoyance, fear, and shame and positive emotions included peace, happiness, elation,

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cheerfulness on the positive side (Dillard & Peck, 2001). Although the scales were the same, participants answered questions that changed depending upon the emotion. Pprevious research has shown that negative ads can elicit feelings of cynicism towards government (Robideaux 2013). Krupnikov's (2008) study found higher levels of apathy among respondents and higher levels of cynicism toward elected officials in general. The researcher believed that these negative emotions correspond well with cynicism and offered a good test to these claims that people can doubt elected officials in general because of negative advertising. The researcher chose these eight emotions as these emotions combine well to form the overall emotions of positivity and negativity (Harvell, 2012). The positive emotions yielded an alpha of .91 and the negative emotions yielded an alpha of .86 showing good internal reliability. The questions that asked about the emotions were phrased so that the questions talked about the emotion emitted by the candidate the participant viewed the ad about. Participants assigned to the control group were asked those same questions regarding emotions but were just asked about how they felt at that moment and not about the ad. For complete phrasing of questions, see Appendix B.

Chapter 4: Results

Prior to analysis, the data set was cleaned. A new variable called experimental condition separated each respondent based on the ad they saw.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one predicted a positive correlation between amount of television viewed and likelihood to vote for a conservative candidate. In this case, the conservative candidate was either the sponsor of the ad or being endorsed by the political action committee who produced the ad. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson's correlation was used and no significant evidence was found $r(271) = .02, p = .694$. Therefore, Hypothesis one was not supported.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis two predicted a significant difference in the intent to vote between groups of people who watched a negative and a positive political ad. To test this, a univariate analysis of variance was utilized and there was significance when all five experimental conditions were tested $F(2) = 3.69, p = .026$. To further test this hypothesis, Tukey post hoc tests were performed and the tests indicated a significant difference between the control group and negative image group $p = .027$. This hypothesis demonstrated evidence of a difference between the control group and the negative image group as well as overall support for the idea that viewing negative ads demobilizes voters. Although little evidence was found for between group significance, the overall model of hypothesis two was supported.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three predicted that people who viewed a negative ad ($M = 61.09, SD = 32.73$) would be less likely to vote for the sponsor of the ad they watched than someone who viewed a positive ad ($M = 59.73, SD = 36.18$), in this case a conservative candidate. To test this,

an independent samples *t*-test was utilized and no significant evidence $t(200) = -.28, p = .780$ was found. Thus, hypothesis three was not supported.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis four predicted that people who viewed a negative ad ($M = 61.09, SD = 32.73$) were more likely to vote for the target of the ad than someone who watched a positive ad ($M = 59.73, SD = 36.18$) or the control ad ($M = 47.61, SD = 32.27$), in this case a lower value of willingness to vote for a conservative candidate which indicated boomerang effect. To test this, a one-way analysis of variance was utilized and was insignificant $F(2) = 2.92, p = .056$. Hypothesis four was not supported however; it was close to indicating significance.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis five predicted a significant difference in the levels of negative emotions exhibited between people who watched a positive ad ($M = 6.61, SD = 3.27$) versus a negative ad ($M = 10.60, SD = 3.82$). Specifically that people who viewed a negative ad would have a higher level of negative emotions. To test this hypothesis, an independent samples *t*-test was performed and was significant $t(206) = -10.50, p < .0005$. Therefore, hypothesis five was supported.

Chapter 5: Discussion

According to Braun and Gillum (2013), each candidate in the 2012 presidential election spent almost one billion dollars on their respective campaigns. Therefore, it is important for current candidates, future candidates, and everyday citizens to understand this type of research. In regards to television viewing, this study did not find significant evidence further verifying cultivation analysis. Also, no significant evidence was found for the effectiveness of negative political advertising working in either direction. However, some significant evidence was found by means of mobilizing voters and evoking emotions caused by advertising. The next section will discuss each hypothesis in depth and look at some of the practical implications of this research before discussing any limitations and possible directions for future research.

What Went Right and What Went Wrong?

Hypothesis one predicted that people who self-identified to watching more television would be more affected by political advertising. In this case, it meant voting for the sponsor of the ad supporting a conservative candidate. This data set did not yield significant results in support of that hypothesis. This is similar to what Gerbner et al. (1982) found whereas people who consume large amounts of television might identify more as independent and not pay attention to ads, thus demonstrating that cultivation might not explain the effectiveness of political ads. The results do however run in direct contradiction to research on cultivation that more television consumption can create a belief that the TV world is reality (Igartua et al., 2010).

In looking at newer research, there can be several possible explanations for these results. One place to start might be the idea proposed by Jeffres et al. (2008) of third-party effects. As Krieg (2008) pointed out, ads created by political action committees (PAC) independent of the candidates used in the ads for this study could have created a previous view of these candidates

that might have skewed the results. If survey participants already had pre-existing views of these candidates, one 30-second ad may not have been enough to change perceptions to the point of showing significant results.

Another possible explanation for these results is the rise of social media as a source of campaign news. The rise of social media as a political platform has drawn much attention from both political candidates and voters as a way to draw voters and learn about candidates (Segaard, 2015). With young people today, many if not all flock to the Internet, especially on a college campus like the one where this sample was conducted. Saldana, McGregor, & Gil de Zuniga (2015) discovered that more people use the Internet, the more likely they are to consider social media to be a primary source of news along the campaign trail. Saldana et al. (2015) also found that social media use can predict both online and offline political participation that can have an impact on who one might choose to vote for.

Social media also has a key engaging factor. Whether it is organizing people across North Africa to revolt against their dictators or people putting the red equal sign over profile pictures to show support for human rights, social media can mobilize people by the millions (Penney, 2015). With social media, there is more involvement with an issue, i.e., who to vote for, than there is with television. Users of social media can view the same site or video multiple times at their own leisure, which was not the case with this survey. Again, viewers were limited to a 30-second television ad and not a social media campaign that could be viewed again and again. Therefore, this could contribute to the research of Gerbner (1969) by adding to what creates perceptions of reality Hypothesis two predicted that people who viewed a negative ad would be less likely to vote than someone in the control group. The overall model of hypothesis was supported even though little evidence was found between groups. and lends more support to

the notion that negative ads demobilize voters in the here and now. Just like what Geer (2006) found, as people view negative ads as simply annoying, they might be discouraged from voting. This links to the current study as well as what Ridout et al. (2014) suggested that as political ads get more and more negative, people view not only the candidates but also campaigns in general as unfavorable and might not want anything to do with them. This could include voting which might explain the demobilization effect.

While there is evidence to support the demobilization hypothesis, these findings do run in contrast to some research. Krupnikov (2014) found that if voters are exposed to negativity in the early stages of a campaign or any time for one makes a final perception on a candidate, negativity might mobilize them. In this case, the negativity might be the final thing a person needs to form a perception of a candidate and go to the polls to vote for or against them depending on how the tide swings (Krupnikov, 2014). Still, the hypothesis that negative ads demobilize voters has much support including this current study and could continue to question why negative ads are used so often.

Hypothesis three predicted that someone who views a negative ad will be less likely to vote for the target of the ad. In this case, no significant evidence indicated that negative ads were not effective. These results are puzzling because much research exists to show that negative ads are effective. For example, a similar study by Fernandes (2013) found that repeated exposure to negative ads made them effective for a little time, but ineffective after multiple viewings. Considering the findings of Ridout et al. (2014) that political ads in America are becoming increasingly negative, the findings of the current study should have fallen more in line with what Fernandes (2014) found.   Hypothesis four predicted that participants who viewed a negative ad would be more likely to vote for the target of the negativity, in this case a liberal candidate

indicating the boomerang effect. As Garramone (1984) found, when people are continually and/or repeatedly exposed to negativity in political ads, it might potentially backfire on the candidates who sponsored the negativity by thinking that those people sponsoring the ad are not worthy of political office. In the case of this study, the results mirrored more on the side of what Goldstein and Freedman (2002) observed that negative ads actually can be effective.

Hypothesis five predicted that participants who viewed a negative ad would self-report higher levels of negative emotion. The findings from this survey supported hypothesis five. . This is similar to what Chang (2001) found while studying print ads and the emotions the ads elicited. Just as this current study found that negative television ads can elicit negative emotions; Chang (2001) found that ad-evoked emotion can come from print ads as well and create a strong impact in perception formation towards a particular candidate.

While studies such as the one by Geer (2006) suggest that negative ads might discourage people from voting, more current research shows that negative ads or emotions brings people out to vote (Barton et al., 2016; Krupnikov, 2008). Research by Jaeho (2015) found that negative emotion caused by attack advertising increased voter participation and efficacy. This was primarily true when the ads presented information that ran contrary to the receiver's viewpoints (Jaeho, 2015).

Limitations

Several factors could have affected the results of this study. Some of the more obvious include the demographics of the sample. The study had overwhelmingly more women than men participate which meant that more often than not, equal variances could not be assumed during statistical analysis. In addition, while the number of participants who self-identified to be independent was a good proportion more respondents identified as either a weak or strong

Republican/conservative than identified as weak or strong Democrat/liberal. Both of these factors could have skewed the results.

Another limiting factor could have to do with the ads chosen for the study. The ads were taken from a previous Virginia senate race. These ads were not new and were aired multiple times prior to the commencement of this study. This could have resulted in participants having a previously held view of the candidates presented in the ads. These perceptions could have affected how people responded to the questions about whom they might vote for as they might have believed that the questions were asking about the candidates in the video when the questions were just asking about a candidate in general.

Each participant only viewed one ad, which became a significant rate-limiting factor in this survey. This survey utilized single ad viewing because it was felt that very few people would agree to complete the survey if repeated viewing of an ad was necessary. Also, of those that agreed to the survey, very few would complete it if they had to view repeated exposures of multiple ads. Further, the researcher did not have access to funding that would allow for compensation of participants to the point where more people would be interested in completing a repeated exposure based study. Cultivation analysis is dependent upon repeated exposure to a message and that a history of television viewing along with current viewing of political ads would activate perceptions of previous campaigns and influence the decision to go out and vote in the next election.

In doing research about political behavior, predicting likelihood to vote is difficult. The survey that this study utilized asked participant's likelihood to vote in the 2016 Presidential Election, almost a year away at the time the survey was done. The only real way to learn voter turnout is to do a survey at the polls after people vote and ask them if they voted and whom they

voted for. The scale used in this study affected the reliability of results, as a similar scale could in any study.

In addition, these ads all came from television and as Seegard (2015) found, more and more young people are starting to get their news about politics from social media. This study did not even ask about social media or take it into account when looking at the factors that determined the effectiveness of television. Future research might extend knowledge of how cultivation works with other mediums.

The final factor that might have skewed the results is a computer issue. In doing the survey, the researcher did not include the function to force the response on all questions. Therefore, over 30 responses were deleted because of incomplete surveys. Many participants left many questions unanswered, some even skipped over viewing the ad completely, and this may have influenced outcomes.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should at a minimum aim to correct the demographic imbalances. First, a more even breakdown of men and women should be sought in order to assume equal variances in analysis. Secondly, research done in this area should attempt to find an even breakdown between people who self-identify with a particular party or ideology.

In the realm of findings, future researchers could look at this type of study in two different ways. If researchers wanted to further prove cultivation analysis, they should look for an older demographic who might watch more television, or look to test a different medium that younger people might use more frequently than television. If researchers wanted to strictly focus on political advertising and keep a demographic of college students, they should look at social media specific campaigns. With more and more young people turning to social media for

political news, this an area of research that has room for growth and would benefit from more studies. Painter (2015) looked at trust levels in the government and in candidates based on source of news. The study found that people who got information from Facebook as opposed to a candidate's website had higher trust levels in these candidates and government as a whole. Painter (2015) likens this growth in trust to greater ease of interactivity and expression for both candidates and voters. Although the study by Painter (2015) did not directly test for cultivation effects, it did demonstrate varying levels in public perception to what candidates wanted to see as articulated by Gerbner (1982). This demonstrates the cultivation can work for positive issues and not just negative and with mediums other than just television.

Future experiments should also seek a better measure of whether or not people voted and who they voted for. While this could cause concerns for looking at experimental effects of ads, the results on voting should be more reliable. One way to do this without being at the polls when people vote would be to ask retrospective questions. Asking about something that already happened could help alleviate uncertainty about something that has not happened yet. Some research suggested that combining forecasts of whether or not people may vote and existing data on past voting patterns could yield improvements in predicting turnout ("Can likely voter models be improved", 2016).

Future experiments looking to test political advertising should also utilize controls. In this study, no controls were run to account for ideology and party identification however future studies should utilize controls. Further studies should also seek a stronger method of measuring ad exposure. While asking about television consumption in general is an okay glimpse at how many ads a person might have been exposed to, a stronger method needs to be utilized. In both types of studies, the ads used should be new. With this current study, the ads were over a year

old and opened the door for pre-conceived notions of the candidates presented which could and should be corrected for in future studies Also, if the intent is repeated exposure then any future surveys should evaluate repeated exposure of the same or similar ads over a long period. Although it does raise additional reliability and validity concerns, compensation might be necessary in a repeated exposure experiment. Finally, any electronic survey used should have the force-response tool activated to prevent having to delete multiple responses due to incomplete survey forms incompletion.

Conclusion

Political campaigns in the US cost a lot of money. Therefore, it is important to understand whether political ads are effective and some of the different factors that may cause them to be effective or ineffective. While this research study found no significant evidence to suggest effectiveness either way whether it be in terms of persuasion or mobilization, it does offer a better picture of what should be done in future studies. There was however, some evidence to suggest that negative advertising demobilizes voters, possibly through arousing negative emotions, which should offer some potential advice to political candidates.

Lastly, although this study found no significant evidence to support the theory of cultivation analysis, it is still a plausible theory. More research should be done grounded in this theory as it does offer more to it than some of the other media effects theories. While political ads may not have been the best way to test this theory, there are other ways it could be done and get more significant results that could potentially be applied to political communication. There is more research to be done in all of these areas, and this study adds to some of that research.

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Appendix A
Campaign Ads
Positive Image: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDkAjSIlYFk
Positive Issue: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlaSpqZ3e2E
Negative Image: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBSL_qh_Hd0
Negative Issue: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGGRzy2msLk
Control: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mys0ZkYZWJk

Appendix B
Instruments

Pre-test

1st Screen: Party Identification
1)   Very Liberal 2) Liberal 3) Moderate 4) Conservative 5) Very Conservative
Please identify your political party affiliation
1)   Very Democrat 2) Democrat 3) Independent 4) Republican 5) Very Republican

2nd Screen: Intent to Vote
        Please list your intent to vote in the next Election on a scale of 0 to 100 with 0 being
        definitely will not vote and 100 being definitely will vote: _____
        Please list your intent to vote for a Republican candidate in the next election a scale of 0
        to 100 with 0 being definitely will not vote for a Republican and 100 being definitely will
        vote for a Republican: _____

3rd Screed: Amount of Television Viewed
        Please state how much you agree with the following statements about your television
        viewing habits.
1. I watch less television than most people I know.
2. I often watch television on weekends.
3. I spend time watching television almost every day.
4. One of the first things I do in the evening is turn on the television.
5. I hardly ever watch television.
6. I have to admit, I watch a lot of television.

Each statement will be answered on the following scale: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3)
        neither agree nor disagree, 4) agree, 5) strongly agree

4th Screen: Participants will now view the ad or video corresponding to which ever treatment or
        control group they have been assigned to

Post-Test

5th Screen: Emotions
When I think of voting for a Republican candidate, I think: (Emotion measure 1-8)
Angry 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Peaceful 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Annoyed 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Happy 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Fearful 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Elated 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Ashamed 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)
Cheerful 0 (none of this feeling) 1 2 3 4 (a great deal of this feeling)

6th Screen: Cynicism
Please designate how much you agree with the following statements using the following scale
    1. Strongly Disagree 2.Disagree 3. Somewhat Disagree 4. Neutral 5. Somewhat Agree 6.
        Agree 7. Strongly Agree

Elections give voters a real choice among candidates with different positions
Candidates seriously discuss major problems facing the nation and offer detailed solutions to
those problems
It makes a difference who wins elections

7th Screen: Intent to vote
Please list your intent to vote in the next Election on a scale of 0 to 100 with 0 being definitely
        will not vote and 100 being definitely will vote: _____
        Please list your intent to vote for a Republican candidate in the next election a scale of 0
        to 100 with 0 being definitely will not vote for a Republican and 100 being definitely will
        vote for a Republican: _____

8th Screen: Demographics

Finally, please answer the following demographic questions.

What is your gender? Male or Female
What is your age? _____ Years
What is your year in school? Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior