

Explaining Perceptions of Advertising Tone

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Abstract: We investigate whether the news media and the tone of actual ads aired during a political campaign influence people's perceptions of campaign ad tone. Using data on the content of political advertising, local television news coverage and local newspaper coverage in nine races in five Midwestern states in 2006, we discover that perceptions of ad tone respond to both exposure to advertising and exposure to local news media. Both positive and negative advertising drive tone perceptions, and the impact of ad coverage depends not on its volume or mentions of tone, but on whether that coverage is framed strategically or not.

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Explaining Perceptions of Advertising Tone

Recent scholarship has done wonders for the reputation of the 30-second political ad. Once charged with causing voters to stay home on Election Day, political ads are now seen as tools that promote voter learning, increase electoral participation—and do nothing to tarnish people’s attitudes about government and the democratic system. But before scholars collectively go too far in praising political advertising, it is worth considering one other, often overlooked avenue by which advertising may influence the voter: news media coverage of these advertisements. Media coverage of political advertising is quite extensive in most campaigns and represents an indirect route by which advertising might influence perceptions of advertising, and more specifically, perceptions of its tone. Yet to date scholars know little about the extent or effect of such coverage. We therefore ask whether voter perceptions of advertising tone might be related to the media coverage of that advertising in addition to the tone of the paid ads that are actually aired. In doing so, we assess the extent of the news’ media’s influence—their ability (or inability) to shape the reality of the advertising campaign that people see on their own television screens—and the way in which that influence might take place.

There are two main routes by which the news media may influence perceptions of advertising tone. First, and most directly, because the media disproportionately focus their attention on negative ads (Ridout and Smith 2008; Fowler and Ridout 2009), they upset the balance of ads to which people are exposed by amplifying the extent to which individuals are exposed to particular spots. Thus, increased exposure to news media coverage of political advertising might result in more negative perceptions of a campaign ad tone. Second, news reporters may frame or “package” their coverage of political advertising in a specific light. More to the point, research suggests that strategic frames increase cynicism, which may lead citizens to

believe that candidates are attacking more than they actually are. Of course, a final possibility is that the media do not influence perceptions of advertising tone, that the reality of the advertising that people experience first-hand on their television sets trumps the impression of the ad campaign given by the news media.

In sum, our research asks whether it is the tone of the ads to which people are exposed on television that chiefly drives perceptions of advertising tone, or whether the news media play a central role in the process. If the latter, by which route do the news media have an impact: by increasing “secondary” exposure to negative advertising, by framing their coverage to focus on the strategy and game of the campaign, or both?

This research thus speaks centrally to the extent of media influence in political campaigns—and the ability of the news media to trump reality—but it also is important given the potential of *perceptions* of ad negativity to influence people’s behaviors and attitudes toward the political system. Some may question this possibility given the current consensus that negative advertising has no ill effects on the electorate (Lau, Sigelman and Rovner 2007, Jackson, Mondak and Huckfeldt 2009). It may very well be true that exposure to paid advertising does not influence citizens’ attitudes toward government or the electoral system. Indeed, there is a vast literature that investigates the relationship between the tone of advertising *aired* and people’s political efficacy and attitudes toward government. But these findings do not preclude the possibility that when people *perceive* ad negativity, their attitudes toward the political system are negatively influenced. Indeed, the small amount of existing research that examines how *perceptions* of ad negativity influence voters tends to agree that the impact is deleterious. Increased perceptions of campaign negativity are associated with lower efficacy (Craig and Kane 2000, Thorson, et al. 2000), lower trust in government (Craig and Kane 2000, Leshner and

Thorson 2000), a decreased likelihood of voting (Crigler, Just and Belt 2002), a more negative public mood (Leshner and Thorson 2000), and more negative evaluations of the candidates (Thorson, et al. 2000). The only positive to come from greater perceptions of negativity is increased knowledge of the candidates (Craig, Kane and Gainous 2005).

In order to investigate these ideas, we employ public opinion data from nine U.S. Senate and gubernatorial races from 2006 and match up citizens' perceptions of ad tone with the actual ads to which they were exposed along with media coverage of that advertising. In the end, we find that the actual tone of advertising to which people are exposed influences perceptions of ad tone and that media coverage of that advertising has an additional effect on such perceptions. Moreover, our research yields a couple of surprising conclusions about the antecedents of ad tone perceptions. First, both positive and negative advertising—not just negative advertising—drive people's perceptions of the tone of advertising. Second, the news media's influence on perceptions of tone depends critically on the extent to which coverage is framed strategically.

Perceptions of Campaign and Ad Tone

In a wide variety of situations, scholars have measured the tone of “the campaign,” often through political advertising, in order to try to link it with the attitudes or behaviors of the electorate. How much slippage there is between the actual tone of the advertising aired and people's perceptions of ad tone, however, remains unresolved. For instance, one study found that perceptions of campaign tone in the 2000 presidential race as measured over time was related to the actual tone of the race over time, as measured by national news media (Sigelman and Voeten 2004). Work by Sides and colleagues (2005) found that the tone of advertising as measured by coders was a significant predictor of perceptions of tone among survey respondents in three different gubernatorial races, leading them to state that “public perceptions of negativity

do in fact accord with reality” (p. 15). That said, the “true” tone of advertising explained only a small percentage of the variance in perceptions of tone, leading them to conclude that there was still some slippage between the ads individuals are exposed to and how they perceive advertising tone (p. 25).¹

Another study, although focusing on campaign tone as opposed to ad tone, casts some doubt on the claim that ad tone and perceptions of ad tone go hand in hand. Sigelman and Kugler (2003) noted that there was little agreement among survey respondents living in the same state in how they characterized the tone of the gubernatorial campaign in their state. The implication is that ad tone and perceptions of ad tone are largely independent. There are, however, a couple of problems with this study. First, some of the variation in perceptions of tone across individuals may have resulted from their being interviewed at different dates during the campaign (interviewing began in late September and continued until Election Day), leaving open the possibility that the variation in perceptions of tone was reflective of true variation in message tone over time. Second, the authors assumed that all individuals had the same exposure to campaign messages, when, in fact, exposure to such messages varies greatly, depending on the media market in which one lives and one’s television viewing habits. In other words, some of the variation in perceptions of tone may have resulted from true variation in the tone of advertising to which individuals were exposed, variation that is not being picked up by in the authors’ research designs.

¹ Freedman and Goldstein (1999) report on a Virginia survey in which respondents were asked whether the campaign commercials aired in the state’s 1997 gubernatorial race were “generally positive, generally negative, or is it hard to say” (p. 1201). The authors interpret their survey responses as consistent with coders’ characterizations of the campaign based on television advertising. Perhaps one reason the authors find a tight link is that they create explicit individual-level measures of exposure to negative and positive political advertising.

One issue with all of the limited research explaining perceptions of ad tone is it fails to account for one other way in which citizens may learn about the content of political advertising: through news media coverage of that advertising. This last point, which is at the heart of our own research, is not a minor one, as 1) scholars have documented that the news media pay tremendous attention to political advertising when covering a political campaign, and 2) news media serve as an important and influential source of campaign-related information more generally.

Media Coverage of Advertising

Political advertising is a substantial component of news coverage. An analysis of ten different U.S. Senate races in 2004 revealed that the number of newspaper articles discussing political advertising ranged from 6 percent in one state to 28 percent in another (Ridout and Smith 2008). Another study found that, on average, 18.5 percent of the newspaper coverage in five different gubernatorial races in 2006 mentioned advertising, while 30.7 percent of the coverage in four different U.S. Senate races mentioned advertising (Fowler and Ridout 2009). Moreover, a full 6.3 percent of the gubernatorial race stories and 12.9 percent of the U.S. Senate stories in newspapers focused on advertising. Substantial focus on advertising among local television news broadcasts has been reported as well (Fowler and Ridout 2009).

More important for our story, the tone of that coverage was not reflective of the ads being aired. Both negative ads and contrast ads—those that mention both the sponsor and the opponent—were more likely to be mentioned in coverage of U.S. Senate and gubernatorial races than positive ads (Fowler and Ridout 2009; Ridout and Smith 2008). In short, there is substantial coverage of advertising in the news media, and such coverage is very unlikely to emphasize positive advertising. Due to the news media's tendency to cover campaigns through a frame of

conflict or controversy (Bartels 1988; Patterson and McClure 1976; Robinson and Sheehan 1983), most ads that get covered are negative or contrast ads. The upshot is that the media have a large potential to shape the public's perceptions about the mix of ads that the candidates are airing—and to make that advertising seem more negative than it actually is.

But how influential are the media in shaping perceptions of campaigns in general, and the tone of advertising more specifically? A wealth of research in political communication points to the importance of the media in shaping voter perceptions of political candidates (Zaller 1992; Kahn and Kenney 2004) and perceptions of what issues are important (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Similarly, much research has documented the capacity of political advertising to inform the electorate about the candidates for office (Brians and Wattenberg 1996; Ridout, et al. 2004; Freedman, et al. 2004; Franz, et al. 2007), to increase the salience of certain issues (Sides 2001) and even to influence vote choice (West 1994; Goldstein and Freedman 2000; Shaw 1999; Shaw 2006).

Little research, however, has examined the indirect influence of political advertising—the impact it has through its coverage in the news media. West (1994) suggests that this might be an important area of study, writing:

Because news stories place the ad in a larger political context and the reference can be either favorable or unfavorable to the candidate, this style of coverage is an important new development in the media environment. It therefore is important to see how the interpenetration of ads and news influences citizens' impressions of the candidates (p. 1056).

One study that does examine the impact of ad coverage on the electorate speaks not of its impact on perceptions of ad tone, but on its ability to influence candidate favorability. Using the

1996 U.S. Senate race in Minnesota as a case study, Jasperson and Fan (2004) find that coverage of advertising in the state's newspapers was the strongest predictor of the ebb and flow of the Republican candidate's favorability over time. This was true even when one controlled for the dynamics of the ads being aired and the tone of non-ad-related news coverage. One possible explanation for the strong effects of advertising coverage is the higher perceived credibility of the news media (Straughan, Bleske and Zhao 1994; Jasperson and Fan 2004). A different but no less plausible explanation for such a finding derives from experimental examinations of the effect of "ad watch" coverage, which find that ad watches do little more than cause citizens to remember the ad message itself more than the reporter's analysis of message accuracy (Ansolabehere & Iyengar 1995; Pfau & Louden 1994). In other words, the tendency of news to feature negative ads may even further amplify viewer perceptions of a race as negative because the secondary ad exposure increases the accessibility and recall of negative ads. The extent to which the news media influence citizen perceptions of advertising may also depend on the frames used in the news coverage.

Framing

Media framing occurs when a reporter chooses to portray a topic in one of many potential ways, "emphasizing certain evaluations or only parts of an issue at the expense of others" (Schuck and deVreese 2006, p. 5). There are many potential frames that the reporter can use. For instance, Iyengar (1994) makes a distinction between episodic frames, which focus in on specific individuals or discrete events, and thematic frames, which provide a great deal of history, background and context. Others have pointed to valence frames (deVreese and Boomgaarden 2003), which evaluate a political situation or issues in terms of risks or opportunities. Framing effects presumably occur because of "the description of an issue or the

label used in news coverage about the issue” (p. 14, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Certain existing interpretative schemas are made relevant because of the frame that is used in news coverage. As Druckman (2001) puts it, “by emphasizing a subset of potentially relevant considerations, a speaker can lead individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions” (p. 230).

One of the most commonly used frames in coverage of a political campaign is the “strategic” or “game” frame (Patterson 1994, Cappella and Jamieson 1997, Lawrence 2000), by which the news media relate candidate statements to their prospects for victory or defeat. As Cappella and Jamieson put it, the strategy frame “emphasizes who is ahead and behind, and the strategies and tactics of campaigning necessary to position a candidate to get ahead or stay ahead” (1997, p. 33). In a campaign context, such coverage is often referred to as “horse race” coverage (Robinson and Sheehan 1983). This type of campaign coverage has been on the rise since the 1960s (Patterson 1994). Indeed, an analysis of the 1992 presidential campaign found that 47 percent of local television messages about the race referred to the horse race, compared to 43 percent for network news and 39 percent for newspapers (Just, Crigler and Buhr 1999, p. 35). With horse race coverage increasing, what gets left behind is discussion of policy, and so when evaluating candidates, what is likely on the top of voter minds is candidates’ attempts to win, not their proposed solutions to problems of public policy.

In addition, when political news is framed strategically, viewer cynicism about politics rises (Cappella and Jamieson 1996, Cappella and Jamieson 1997, Valentino, et al. 2001, DeVreese and Semetko 2002). Valentino and colleagues explain in more detail: “The basic argument is that when the media portray candidates as opportunists, vying for political power without any real desire to solve policy problems facing their constituents, the public will begin to

adopt the press's negative frame" (2001, p. 349). Strategic frames lead to cynicism not only about particular candidates (Cappella and Jamieson 1996, Cappella and Jamieson 1997) but about the larger political process and government more generally as well. Indeed, a series of experiments conducted about the 1998 Michigan gubernatorial race showed that strategic framing lowers trust in government, leads to a belief that elections are not meaningful and results in lower civic duty—though only among those who are nonpartisans (Valentino, et al. 2001). Strategic framing also led to lower support for policy issues framed in that fashion (de Vreese 2004).²

Hypotheses

In this research, we ask whether, and to what extent, media coverage of political advertising has the ability to influence people's impressions of tone of the advertising that they see on television. Our first hypothesis is that people's exposure to political advertising should drive perceptions of the tone of advertising in political races. The more negative the actual ads to which people are exposed, the more negative people's perceptions of ad tone should be. And the more positive the actual ads to which people are exposed, the more positive people's perceptions of ad tone should be. Because people do experience advertising first-hand on their television screens, it should be difficult for media coverage of advertising to completely take away that reality when they are assessing advertising's tone.

Yet, given the demonstrated power of the news media to shape the spectacle of the campaign (Just, et al. 1996) and, more specifically, the power of media framing to shape public opinion (Iyengar and Kinder 1987), media coverage of political advertising should also wield

² Other research, however, has shown that cynicism resulting from the use of strategic news frames does not lead to lower voter turnout (de Vreese 2005).

some influence on perceptions of advertising tone. We hypothesize that there are two routes of influence for the news media: increased secondary exposure to mentions of ad negativity and strategic framing of advertising in campaign stories.

Given the news media's tendency to incorporate coverage of advertising in stories about the campaign (Ridout and Smith 2008), the first way media may influence perceptions is by increasing exposure to candidate advertising. Media cover advertising for a variety of different reasons, but even when reporters assess the claims of advertising on the air, experimental evidence suggests such coverage has the paradoxical effect of causing viewers to remember the ad message more than the reporter's analysis of message accuracy (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Pfau and Loudon 1994). Therefore, by replaying clips of advertising during news broadcasts, citizen exposure to positive and especially negative spots is increased, which should in turn affect people's perceptions of the tone of advertising accordingly. We call this the increased exposure model.

The second way by which the news media may influence ad tone perceptions is through the use of strategic framing. As we have discussed, studies have shown that exposure to strategically framed stories results in cynicism about particular candidates and the larger political process. We argue here that the effects of such frames may extend to people's perceptions of political advertising. Why? When the media use strategic frames, it will appear as though candidates are in a heated, conflictual battle for victory as opposed to being engaged in a campaign about who has the best ideas of governing. If viewers see the campaign as a high-stakes conflict, then they will also be more likely to believe that the candidates would attack each other in their advertising. Candidates engaged in battle do not say positive things about themselves; they go negative against their opponents. Therefore, we argue that the link between

strategic framing and advertising coverage is important. More explicitly, the use of strategy frames in campaign-related stories that specifically mention advertising should lead to increased perceptions of ad negativity.

We have less strong expectations concerning mentions of advertising using an issue or non-strategic frame, but we might expect such coverage of advertising to have the opposite effect of strategic coverage, meaning that non-strategic mentions may decrease perceptions of negativity. To explain, if the news media treat a negative ad as part of a valid policy debate, then viewers may not perceive the ad as negative and may even see it contributing to positive dialogue.

Data and Methods

For this analysis, we draw on individual-level data on ad tone perceptions in the Wisconsin/UCLA portion of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).³ This portion of the survey had 3,002 respondents from the nine Midwest media markets. We focus on nine different races – five gubernatorial and four U.S. Senate – in eight media markets from five states: Illinois (Springfield and Chicago), Michigan (Detroit), Minnesota (Minneapolis/St.Paul), Ohio (Cleveland and Columbus) and Wisconsin (Madison and Milwaukee). Although our

³ The 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study – an online survey of 38,443 respondents fielded in October and November of 2006 by Polimetrix – was a collaboration between 39 universities led by Principal Investigator Stephen Ansolabehere and Study Director Lynn Vavreck. A design committee collaborated to write the first 40 questions of the survey, called the Common Content, which were given to all respondents. The Common Content was followed by different questionnaires from CCES university teams, which were asked of a subset of respondents. Respondents who completed the questionnaires were selected from the Polimetrix PollingPoint Panel using sample matching. The Common Content was matched to the 2004 American Community Study (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; however, the Wisconsin/UCLA portion of the CCES was matched to the 2000 Census to enable sample matching by media market. For more information on the 2006 CCES, see web.mit.edu/polisci/portl/cces/index.html. For more information on sample matching, see Rivers (2006).

sample is limited to respondents in Midwest states, we believe the results should generalize more broadly. The nine races analyzed span a wide range of campaign environments from a solidly Democratic Wisconsin Senate race to several toss-ups, and we even include two open seat contests (Ohio's gubernatorial and Minnesota's senatorial races). The eight media markets also include a wide range in terms of size with the third largest market in the country (Chicago), three large markets (Detroit, Minneapolis, and Cleveland), two medium sized markets (Columbus and Milwaukee), and two smaller markets (Champaign/Springfield and Madison).

Perceptions of ad tone were tapped through a series of questions that asked respondents "what kind of television ads" were aired by four different candidates: the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, the Democratic U.S. Senate candidate, and the Republican U.S. Senate candidate. Respondents were given four response options: mostly negative, mixed, mostly positive, and don't know/unsure. We recoded these options so that mostly positive scored 1, mixed scored 2, and mostly negative scored 3. We eliminated "don't know" and "unsure" answers from the analysis.⁴

One important predictor of tone perceptions is the tone of advertising to which an individual was exposed. In order to create a measure of this, we relied upon data supplied by the Wisconsin Advertising Project, which processes and codes ad tracking data captured by a commercial firm, TNSMI/CMAG. These Wisconsin data contain detailed information about the ads aired in each of the media markets that we examined, including the number of spots aired

⁴ Respondents who answered "don't know" to the tone questions made up about 12 percent of total respondents in all races except for the Republican Senate challengers, where 22 percent of respondents said "don't know." The larger percentage in these races is likely due to the large number of relatively unknown, underfunded Republican Senate challengers in our sample.

each day, the sponsor of each ad, and the tone of the advertisement.⁵ In addition to the frequency data, the Wisconsin Advertising Project also codes each storyboard – a transcript and screen shots of every few seconds of visual – for further information about the content of each ad. For each Republican and Democratic candidate in the gubernatorial and Senate races, we added up the total number of negative or contrast ads and the total number of positive ads (including ads aired on behalf of a candidate by the parties or other outside groups) aired at various times of the day in each media market.⁶ Following a procedure described by Freedman and Goldstein (1999), we then combined these data about the tone of advertising in each media market with survey data about the amount of television each respondent reported watching in order to create an individual-level measure of exposure to each type of ad tone (negative or contrast and positive).⁷

The other important predictor of tone perception in our models is the individual's exposure to media coverage of political advertising in the race of interest. Here we were

⁵ Ridout et al., (2002) report on the reliability of the ad tone measure, finding agreement between the original code and the average across five additional coders of well above 90 percent when ads were classified dichotomously as either positive or negative. When negative ads were subdivided into pure negative and contrast ads, reliability did decline, though Kendall's tau-b was still high, ranging from .677 to .822, depending on the coder.

⁶ We chose to combine negative and contrast ads for a few reasons. First, existing research examining perceptions of ad or campaign tone focuses on the positive versus negative distinction, coding all those ads that mention an opponent as negative. Second, it makes sense that viewers would focus more on the negative component of a contrast ad given that negative information is more likely to be recalled (Pratto and John 1991). Finally, even when we estimate our main models with exposure to contrast ads and exposure to negative ads entered separately, our basic substantive findings do not change, as we will show later in the manuscript.

⁷ Exposure was calculated by multiplying the proportion of time an individual reported watching television during blocks during the day (dayparts) by the cumulative number of ads aired during each daypart and dividing by the number of stations tracked. Ridout et al. (2004) provide a validity assessment of this procedure. However, we make one change to the traditional daypart exposure method: because the CCES has the actual station an individual reported watching for early- and late-evening newscasts, respondents are matched to the total number of ads aired on the specific station watched during evening news times. Finally, each exposure measure is logged to account for diminishing returns of added exposure and measurement error induced through self-reports (Stevens 2008).

interested in both local television news broadcasts and local newspaper coverage. In order to create an individual-level exposure to ad-related news coverage measure, we used data on the volume of ad-related coverage on the local television station that the respondent reported watching the most and the local newspaper or newspapers the respondent reported reading. The television data come from the University of Wisconsin NewsLab, whose coders characterized each campaign-related story on a variety of factors, including whether and to what extent it mentioned advertising.⁸ Local newspaper information came from a database we created of newspaper ad mentions from 15 different newspapers serving the eight media markets for which we have advertising data.⁹ A graduate student coder examined all campaign-related articles in these newspapers printed between September 7, 2006, and November 6, 2006, noting all mentions of political advertising.

We measured media exposure differently depending on the media effects model that we were investigating. For the increased exposure model, we created two media measures: one indicating a person's exposure to positive ads mentioned in the media and the other tapping the person's exposure to negative ads mentioned in the news media. For the framing model, we created two measures: one tapping each respondent's exposure to strategic coverage of political

⁸ The Midwest News Index, a project of the University of Wisconsin NewsLab, monitored the highest-rated early and late-evening half-hour of news coverage aired during the 60 days prior to Election Day 2006 on 35 stations in the five Midwestern states. UW NewsLab captured 97.6 percent of targeted broadcasts on the 31 stations examined in this manuscript. For more information on the UW NewsLab, see <http://mni.wisc.edu>. To match the local newspaper data, we limited our analysis of the television news stories to those that mention both candidates running for the Senate or gubernatorial race in the state served by the media market.

⁹ These 15 newspapers were the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Springfield State Journal Register*, *Champaign Urbana News Gazette*, *Detroit News*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Ann Arbor News*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, *the Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Akron Beacon-Journal*, *The Columbus Dispatch*, *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Capital Times* and *the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

advertising and one tapping exposure to non-strategic coverage.¹⁰ Our first task was to identify what constituted “strategic” coverage of advertising by having a coder noting which of eight reasons was the primary reason for mentioning advertising in the story.¹¹ We decided to use a fairly broad definition because scholars have noted that that “process coverage” of things such as campaign events and candidate standing (Sigelman and Bullock 1991) may detract from coverage of policy questions. Moreover, discussions of campaign tone (e.g., a candidate’s decision to air a negative ad) are often described in a strategic fashion. We therefore include in our definition of strategic coverage general discussions of candidate strategy and tactics, discussions of campaign tone, and evaluations of the success of an ad. Discussions of the tactics and strategies of the candidates constituted 33.2 percent of ad coverage, the tone of the race made up 12.8 percent of coverage, while evaluating the success of an ad made up 4.4 percent. Non-strategic reasons for mentioning advertising included evaluating the factual claims of an ad otherwise known as “ad watch” coverage (11.8 percent), illustrating a policy issue (8.5 percent), discussing character or other non-policy matters (7.9 percent), or merely describing the ad (1.8 percent).¹²

¹⁰ The tone of ads mentioned in media coverage is empirically distinct from whether the coverage is strategic or not. One might think that negative ads would be associated with strategy mentions and positive ads would be associated with non-strategy, policy mentions, but that is not the case. Negative ads are mentioned in a strategic context 56 percent, and positive ads are mentioned in a strategic context 56 percent of the time.

¹¹ We had a new coder recode a sample of 91 newspaper and 22 television stories on this variable. Overall agreement with the original coding was quite high at 88 percent. Agreement for newspapers was 87 percent and for television was 91 percent. Overall reliability, as measured by Kappa was 0.85.

¹² The coder gave “other” as the primary reason for the ad mention in 19.3 percent of stories. We did not include these “other” stories in our calculations of strategic and non-strategic media exposure. Examples of stories that fit into this category are one that discussed public financing of advertising, one that discussed a complaint against an ad alleged to be false and one that compared the amount of air time devoted to advertising with air time devoted to news reports of the campaign.

For each television news story or newspaper article that mentioned advertising, we used a second round of coding to identify the primary rationale (strategic or non-strategic) for discussing advertising. For each newspaper and both broadcasts (early- and late-evening) aired on each television station, we calculated the total number of strategic and non-strategic advertising mentions by or on behalf of each of the major party candidates in each race.¹³ We then multiplied the number of ad-related mentions (by frame, party, and office) in each news source by the frequency with which each respondent used that source (a proportion ranging from 0 for “not at all (0 times)” to 1 for “almost every day (5-7 times)”). We then logged each measure, as we did with the advertising measures, and summed over all local news media. This left us with two individual-level measures of exposure to local television news and local newspaper coverage of advertising for each race and candidate: a measure of likely exposure to strategic mentions of advertising in local media and a measure of likely exposure to non-strategic mentions of advertising in local media.

In addition to taking into account ad exposure and exposure to ads in the news, we wanted to control for several other individual-specific factors that might affect peoples’ perceptions of ad tone. These included:

Political information: Sigelman and Kugler (2003) suggest that the politically informed “should be more likely to perceive campaigns as negative, whether because they pay closer attention or because they are more likely to consider aggressive tactics ‘negative’” (p. 157), and their empirical tests support this idea. On the other hand, Sides and colleagues (2005) note that the “educated and politically attentive may be more likely to appreciate what can result from a critical exchange between candidates, such as a better

¹³ Generic references to advertising in the senatorial or gubernatorial races were counted both for the Democratic and Republican candidates.

understanding of their character or issue positions” (p. 14). Regardless of the direction of the relationship, we believed it important to include a measure of political information, which we measured through an additive index capturing correct answers to six factual questions: (1) which party held the House, (2) who was Secretary of State, (3) the job of Nancy Pelosi, (4) the job of Clarence Thomas, (5) the job of John Roberts (open-ended), and (6) the job of Dennis Hastert (open-ended).

Educational Attainment: Believing education might work similarly to political information, we included in our models a measure of the number of years of education that the respondent had completed.

Gender: Sides et al. (2005) discover that women are less likely than men to view campaign criticism as legitimate. We therefore include a female indicator variable.

Partisanship: Because partisanship colors perceptions of candidates, we expect that Democrats, more so than Republicans, would view Democratic candidates as running a less negative ad campaign. Likewise, Republicans, more so than Democrats, should view Republican candidates as running a less negative campaign. Partisanship is measured using the standard seven-point scale, ranging from strong Democrat on one end to strong Republican on the other.

Competition: We also include a variable indicating the competitiveness of races we examined. This information came from Charlie Cook’s September 7 race ratings. Toss-up races (Minnesota Senate, Ohio Senate, Michigan governor, Wisconsin governor) were coded 3, leaning races (Michigan Senate, Illinois governor, Ohio governor, Minnesota

governor) were coded 2, races that were “likely” for one candidate were coded 1 (none in our sample), and “solid” races (Wisconsin Senate) were coded 0.

We estimate ordered logit models. In each case, the dependent variable is the perceived ad tone (from mostly positive=1 to mostly negative=3) for each of the Republican and Democratic candidates in the gubernatorial and senatorial races. Results are weighted, and standard errors are clustered by media market to account for sampling by that unit.

Results

Before turning to the results of the model estimations, we first examine some descriptive findings about perceived ad tone. Figure 1 and Figure 2 display the distribution of perceived candidate ad tone in each gubernatorial and Senate race, respectively. It seems clear from these figures that, in the aggregate, citizens are able to perceive differences in ad tone across the various states. Some of the distributions look fairly normal, some look fairly uniform, and some are skewed, resembling stair steps. Moreover, voters were able to make distinctions across competing candidates. Take, for instance, the Wisconsin Senate race in which over 80 percent of voters reported that the Democratic candidate, Herb Kohl, was running a positive ad campaign. Yet the majority of these same Wisconsin respondents believed that the ads of Kohl’s Republican opponent, John Gillespie, were mostly mixed, and more believed they were negative than positive. Even though there are some instances in these figures in which sizeable numbers of respondents disagreed on the tone of the race (about a quarter of Michiganders perceived incumbent Senator Debbie Stabenow’s advertising as mostly positive, and about a quarter perceived it as mostly negative), we are more optimistic than Sigelman and Kugler (2003) that people are detecting real differences in advertising tone.

[Figure 1 and Figure 2 here]

Multivariate models

We begin by examining the increased exposure model, which posits that both exposure to negative advertising and exposure to coverage of negative ads will have an independent impact on perceptions of ad tone. Table 1 shows the estimates from four separate models predicting perceptions of ad negativity, one for each type of race. The first thing to notice is that increased exposure to negative advertising leads to increased perceptions of ad negativity, with the exception of the Republican gubernatorial races. Moreover, increased exposure to positive advertising leads to decreased perceptions of ad negativity, with the exception of the Democratic Senate races. And in that race, the effect is statistically significant at the .15 level. While the results clearly demonstrate that the tone of advertisements to which citizens are exposed has an effect on individual perceptions of candidate ad campaigns, what is particularly striking is that it is not just exposure to negative advertising that influences perceptions of tone, but exposure to *positive* advertising matters just as much.

[Table 1 here]

The impact of media coverage, however, is not so robust. Although the tone of the ads discussed by the news media in the Republican gubernatorial races does have a significant impact on perceptions of ad negativity, the signs on the coefficients are opposite of our expectations, with coverage of negative ads leading to decreased perceptions of negativity and coverage of positive ads leading to increased perceptions of ad negativity. In only one instance, in the Democratic Senate races, do news media have the hypothesized impact. Here increased exposure to coverage of positive ads is associated with reduced perceptions of ad negativity, in spite of the fact that coverage of positive ads was relatively rare. All in all, then, we have little support for the increased exposure model.

That said, respondent-specific and campaign context factors do help to predict perceptions of ad tone. Not surprisingly, one of the strongest predictors is the partisanship of the individual. All else equal, respondents who identify as Democrats are much less likely to view Democratic candidates as airing negative advertising, while Republicans are much more likely to believe Democratic candidates are airing negative spots, and vice versa. This evidence is consistent with the hostile media phenomenon (Vallone, Ross and Lepper 1985), which posits that partisans tend to recall elements of a news story that are negative to their own point of view, and thus all partisans view the media as biased against them. In addition, the more competitive the race, the more likely citizens were to perceive Democratic senatorial candidates advertising as negative, which may in part be due to the large number of Democratic incumbents in the Midwestern races during 2006. Moreover, politically knowledgeable respondents were more likely to believe Republican candidates in both races were airing negative advertisements. As Sigelman and Kugler (2003) suggest, this could be a function of political sophisticates' paying closer attention to politics, or it may be that the more politically knowledgeable have a general propensity to view campaigns as negative. Increased education had an inconsistent impact, leading to lower perceived negativity in the Democratic Senate races but higher perceived negativity in the Republican gubernatorial races. Women were less likely than men to perceive negativity, but this difference was statistically significant only in the Republican Senate races. In sum, ad tone perceptions are predictable, but we have yet to show an influence of the news media on ad tone perceptions. We thus turn to the framing model.

Table 2 reports the results of a model that uses both exposure to strategic and non-strategic ad coverage to predict perceptions of ad tone. Consider first the evidence relating to the impact of exposure to ads. As in the previous models, exposure to negative and contrast ads

works as expected (the more negative or contrast ads one sees, the more likely he or she is to say that the candidate is airing mostly negative ads) with one exception. Ad exposure appears not to affect evaluations of ad tone in the Republican gubernatorial races (although the coefficients are signed as expected). In sum, our results indicate that the tone of advertising actually aired does affect the perceived negativity of the campaign. And of particular interest again is the fact that positive advertising has as much influence on perceptions of tone as negative advertising. Indeed, in some instances positive ads have more impact; in the Democratic gubernatorial model and the Republican Senatorial model, the coefficient on exposure to positive advertising is greater than the coefficient on exposure to negative and contrast advertising. In addition, this model finds that the characteristics of the individual, especially partisanship, influence ad tone perceptions.

[Table 2 here]

We have established that exposure to advertising affects people's perceptions of ad tone, and this holds in all of our models, but we have yet to find a consistent influence of the news media. This changes, however, when we turn to the framing model. The estimates reported in Table 2 reveal that both strategic and non-strategic mentions of advertising influence perceptions of ad tone. In both the Democratic gubernatorial and Republican senatorial specifications, increased exposure to strategic coverage of advertising resulted in increased perceptions of negativity among the public. Not only does strategic coverage affect perceptions of tone, but non-strategic coverage does as well. Increased exposure to non-strategic coverage of advertising decreases citizen perceptions of negativity in three of the four models.

Figure 3 displays the change in the predicted probability of negative ad tone perceptions given changes in exposure to strategic coverage of advertising (in the gray bars) and given

changes in positive (in white) and negative (in black) advertising exposure from one standard deviation above and below the mean.¹⁴ Excluding the Republican gubernatorial candidate case (where the ad and media exposure coefficients are insignificant), changing positive advertising exposure from one standard deviation above to one standard deviation below its mean corresponds to a decline in the probability of answering “mostly negative” by anywhere from 0.09 in the Democratic senatorial candidate case to 0.41 in the case of Republican senatorial candidates. Changes in exposure to negative advertising have the opposite effect: the probability of answering “mostly negative” increases anywhere from 0.10 for Democratic senatorial candidates to 0.39 for Republican senatorial candidates. Although the size of the change in negative ad perceptions appears similar between negative and positive ad exposure, it is worth noting that the scale and standard deviation of positive advertising is smaller than that for negative advertising, meaning that exposure to an individual positive ad has a greater effect in moving perceptions of negativity relative to exposure to individual negative ad.

Finally, although the changes are not as dramatic as the changes for negative and positive advertising exposure, Figure 3 shows that, in all models, increased exposure to strategic mentions of advertising in local media leads to increases in perceived candidate negativity. More specifically, given a shift in exposure to strategic ad coverage from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean, the probability of answering “mostly negative” increases from 0.08 in the Republican senatorial case to 0.17 in the Democratic

¹⁴ Bars represent the change in predicted probability of respondent answering that a particular candidate’s advertising is “mostly negative” based on a change in positive (negative) ad exposure from one standard deviation above the mean for positive (negative) ad exposure to one standard deviation below the mean for positive (negative) ad exposure. Probabilities are calculated for female respondents holding all other variables (including the other ad exposure level) constant at their means. Statistically significant changes are noted by asterisks.

gubernatorial case (excluding cases where the coefficient is insignificant but in the right direction).

[Figure 3 here]

By and large, our data suggest again that the framing that the media use in covering political advertising has an independent effect on citizen perceptions of ad tone above and beyond candidate paid advertising. The bulk of the evidence, then, confirms the idea that tone perceptions depend on news coverage of political advertising and that the framing of that coverage matters. Non-strategic coverage leads people to believe that advertising in the race is more positive; strategic coverage leads people to believe that advertising in the race is more negative.

Robustness Checks

To ensure that our findings were not driven by a specific coding or modeling decision, we conducted a few robust checks. First, to see whether the exclusion of respondents who answered “don’t know” to the tone question would influence our results, we re-estimated our framing models but coded respondents who answered “don’t know” as mixed. In only one instance did the substantive result change: exposure to non-strategic ad coverage was no longer a significant predictor of perceived tone in the Republican Senate race (Table A1).

Second, instead of combining exposure to negative and contrast ads into one category, we re-estimated our framing model, entering negative exposure and contrast exposure separately. By and large, our substantive findings about the impact of positive and negative ad exposure on perception of tone hold. In all four models (Table A2), exposure to positive advertising decreases perceptions of negativity, and in three of the four models, exposure to negativity advertising increases perceptions of negativity. The only “odd” finding from these models is that

the impact of exposure to contrast ads by themselves has inconsistent effects, sometimes being positively associated with perceptions of ad negativity and sometimes being negatively associated with such perceptions.

Third, we wanted to ensure that our framing results were not entirely dependent on our decision to classify certain reasons for the media's discussion of an ad as strategic or not. It might be argued that coverage of a candidate's character, more often than not, is framed strategically. For this reason, we reclassified character and other non-policy coverage as strategic and re-estimated the model (Table A3). Our findings are robust to this alternative, with all ad and media exposure variables in our original model retaining the same signs and statistical significance.

Discussion

We entered this research asking whether the news media influenced people's perceptions of the tone of political advertising, and if so, by which route that influence took place. We found little support for that idea that increased discussion of a negative ads leads to greater perceptions of negativity. Rather, it is how the media frame coverage of political advertising—as strategic or not—that influences people's perceptions of advertising tone. This finding speaks to the power of the news media—that they can influence people's perceptions of advertising tone even when people have alternative information in the form of the ads to which they themselves are exposed.

Of course, "reality" matters as well. The person who is exposed to a large number of negative ads perceives the campaign's advertising as more negative, and the person who is exposed to more positive advertising perceives the campaign's advertising as more positive. Somewhat surprisingly, we found that positive advertising has as much of an influence in driving perceptions of ad tone as negative advertising. This is an important finding as it indicates that,

contrary to the idea that negative advertising is more memorable (Lau 1985), positive advertisements may play a much more important role in this process than previously thought. Despite scholarly and news media focus on conflict and controversy, our analysis suggests that while increases in the airing of negative advertisements can change public opinion, changes in the volume of purely positive ads have an effect, too. As such, our findings lend credence to Lau's (1985) prediction that at "sometime in the future we could be writing about the 'positivity effect' in political perception" (p. 137), where it is positive information that stands out against a ground of negativity. Perhaps due to years of exposure to negativity in ads and news, citizens have come to expect that negativity in their campaigns, and thus positive advertising is becoming a novelty—and therefore strong enough to affect perceptions of ad tone in a way that negative advertising is less able to do.

With respect to news coverage of advertising, we found that the way in which advertising is used in local media coverage has a profound effect on the way in which citizens perceive campaign advertising tone. Coverage that is intended to highlight strategy increases perceived negativity of the candidates' advertising, while coverage framed non-strategically decreases perceptions of negativity. These results suggest that local media coverage of campaign advertising can and does shape citizen perceptions of advertising, which may in part explain why previous work found so much slippage between actual tone of spots airing and citizen perceptions of advertising and campaign tone. Therefore, scholars should pay more attention to the link between paid and free media, as both types of exposure may work to influence voter perceptions, which may in turn also affect citizen attitudes toward the political system and ultimately their behavior. Clearly, though, we would like to do more to examine the link between individuals' perceptions of tone and their behavior and attitudes.

One seeming irony of our findings with regard to the news media's influence is that exposure to coverage of ads of a certain tone had no direct influence perceptions of ad tone. Rather, it is the framing of the news coverage—strategic or not—that made the difference in how people responded to news coverage. Although critics of negative advertising may still have things to complain about, the evidence presented here suggests that negative advertising by itself is not the only factor in shaping viewers' perceptions of the tone of advertising, as the news media influence such impressions as well. Thus, both reality and the world created by the news media influence people's perceptions of the campaign.

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Table 1: Effect of Advertising and Media Exposure on Perceptions of Ad Tone (Increased Exposure Model)

	Dem Gov	Rep Gov	Dem Sen	Rep Sen
Neg/Con Ad Exp.	1.120*** (0.216)	-0.0835 (0.353)	0.321** (0.128)	1.201** (0.577)
Positive Ad Exp.	-1.520*** (0.237)	-0.370*** (0.0572)	-0.322 (0.202)	-1.484*** (0.456)
Negative Ad Media Exp.	-0.0560 (0.255)	-0.497*** (0.168)	0.0596 (0.148)	0.0143 (0.393)
Positive Ad Media Exp.	0.172 (0.459)	1.909*** (0.347)	-1.846*** (0.345)	0.292 (0.959)
Education (yrs)	-0.0153 (0.0324)	0.0398* (0.0239)	-0.0677** (0.0305)	-0.0190 (0.0476)
Political Knowledge	0.0335 (0.0804)	0.0793** (0.0366)	0.0132 (0.0670)	0.129*** (0.0341)
Female	-0.0662 (0.199)	-0.0171 (0.195)	-0.0189 (0.360)	-0.339** (0.152)
Party ID 7-pt	0.401*** (0.0438)	-0.336*** (0.0600)	0.438*** (0.0836)	-0.401*** (0.0518)
Competition	-0.00568 (0.139)	0.210 (0.402)	0.587*** (0.0652)	-0.224 (0.224)
τ_1	-0.556 (0.680)	-2.738*** (0.528)	1.101** (0.533)	-4.072*** (0.882)
τ_2	1.847*** (0.716)	-0.367 (0.513)	3.422*** (0.748)	-1.057 (0.880)
Observations	1653	1641	1208	1002
Chi-square	59.16	2286	849.8	236.5
Pseudo-R ²	0.120	0.0930	0.192	0.112

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2: Effect of Advertising and Media Exposure on Perceptions of Ad Tone (Framing Model)

	Dem Gov	Rep Gov	Dem Sen	Rep Sen
Neg/Con Ad Exp.	0.931*** (0.200)	-0.452 (0.373)	0.465*** (0.106)	1.094* (0.597)
Positive Ad Exp.	-1.338*** (0.238)	-0.102 (0.0739)	-0.421** (0.190)	-1.449*** (0.515)
Strategy Ad Media Exp.	0.830*** (0.316)	0.499 (0.481)	0.0614 (0.263)	1.501*** (0.195)
Non-strategic Ad Media Exp.	-1.044*** (0.332)	-0.407 (0.869)	-0.826* (0.466)	-1.032** (0.459)
Education (yrs)	-0.0250 (0.0286)	0.0268 (0.0289)	-0.0673** (0.0310)	-0.0231 (0.0477)
Political Knowledge	0.0299 (0.0750)	0.0923** (0.0375)	0.0168 (0.0700)	0.129*** (0.0341)
Female	-0.0696 (0.197)	-0.0110 (0.190)	-0.0102 (0.362)	-0.350** (0.151)
Party ID 7-pt	0.412*** (0.0420)	-0.328*** (0.0619)	0.440*** (0.0827)	-0.402*** (0.0479)
Competition	0.113 (0.128)	0.638 (0.505)	0.530*** (0.0316)	-0.206 (0.217)
τ_1	-0.401 (0.703)	-2.120*** (0.725)	1.043* (0.553)	-4.195*** (0.867)
τ_2	2.025*** (0.732)	0.209 (0.725)	3.359*** (0.749)	-1.153 (0.871)
Observations	1653	1641	1208	1002
Chi-square	163.6	457.5	1983	6514
Pseudo-R ²	0.126	0.0822	0.190	0.117

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1.

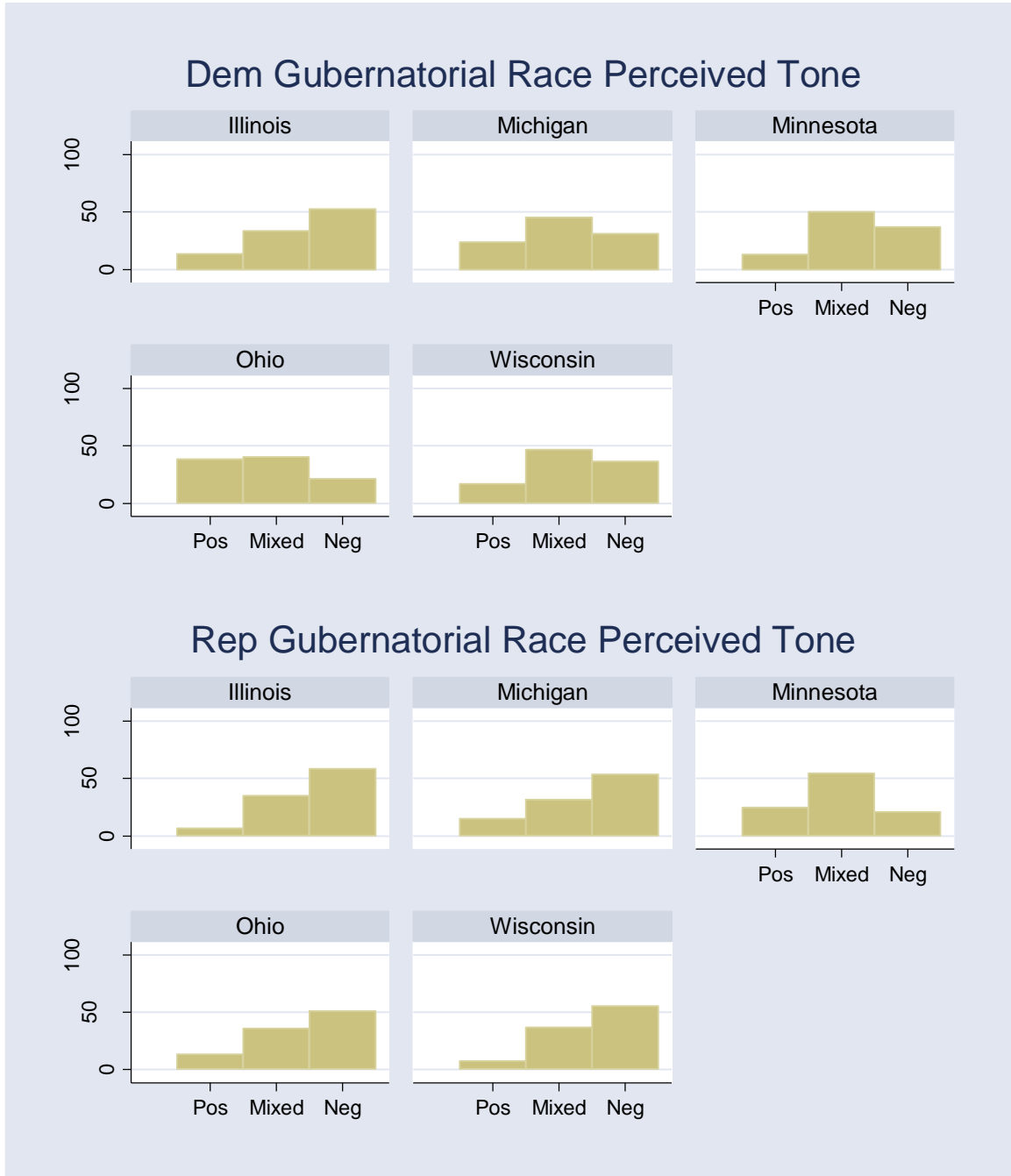


Figure 2.

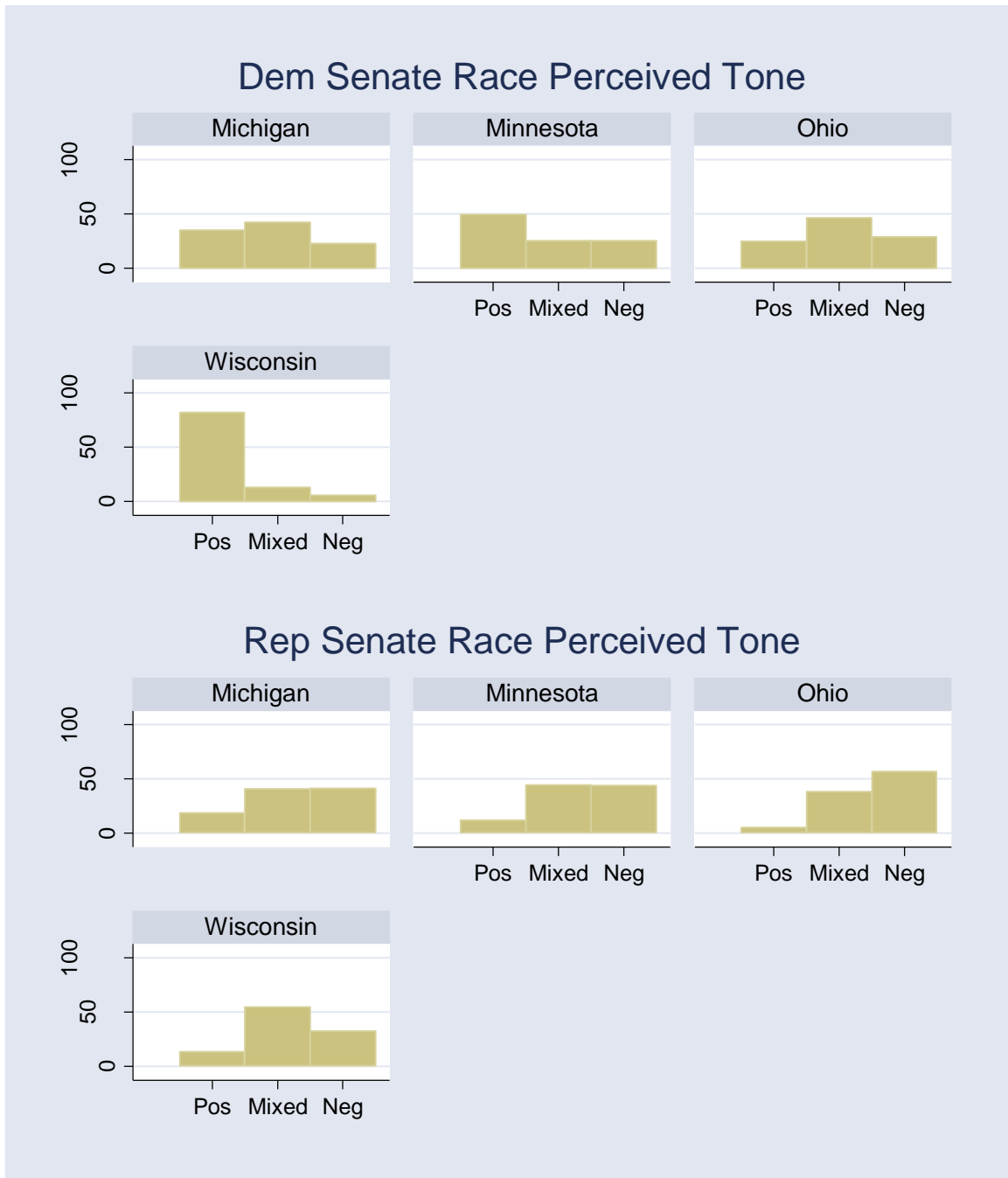
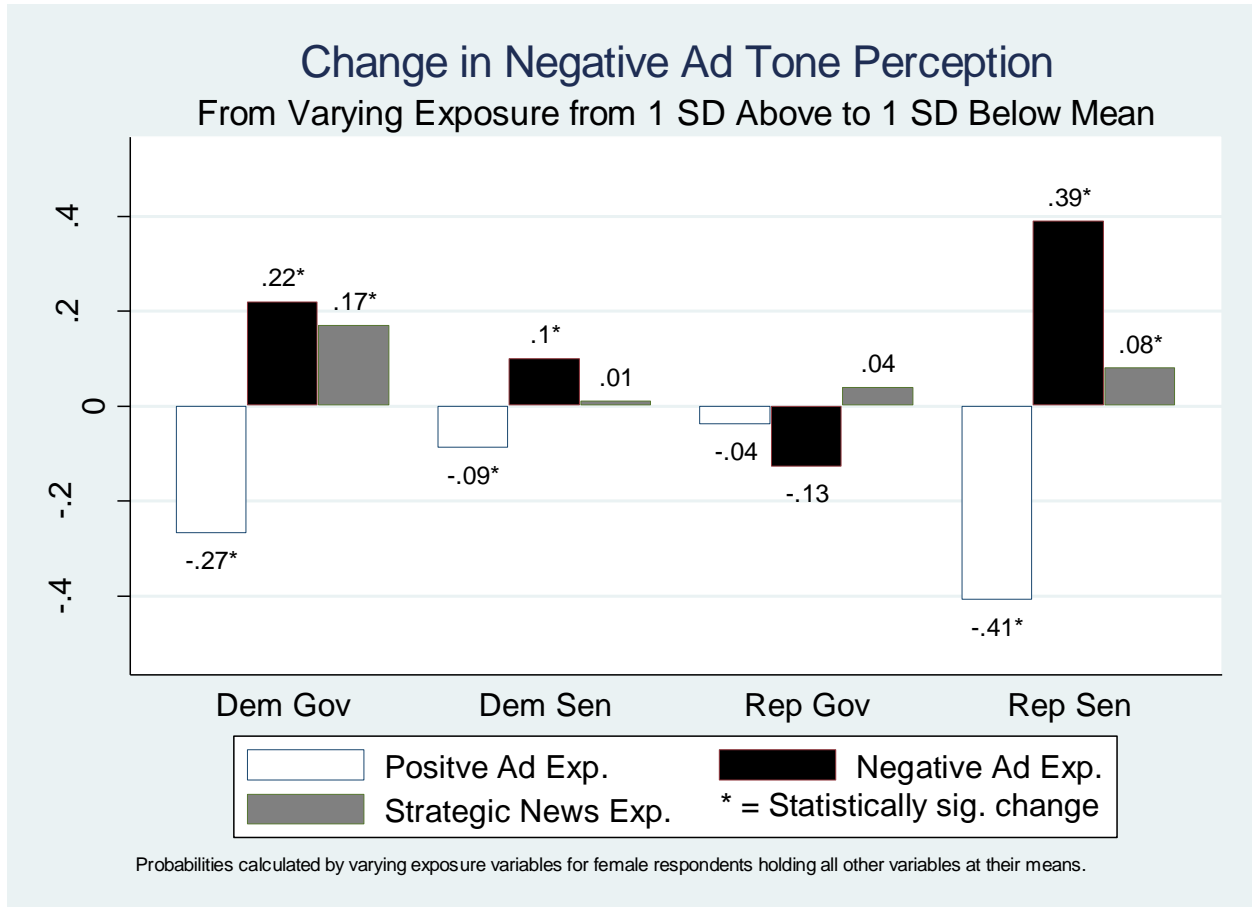


Figure 3.



Appendix

Cooperative Congressional Election Study Question Wording

Ad Tone: In your opinion, what kind of campaign is each of the following candidates [Democratic Senate candidate, Republican Senate candidate, Democratic governor candidate, Republican governor candidate] running? 3=Mostly negative, 2=mixed, 1=mostly positive.

Local Television News Use: During the past week, how often did you use the following news sources [Early-evening local television news (usually 5 or 6pm); Late-evening local television news (usually 10 or 11pm)]? 0=Not at all (0 times), 0.2727=Once or twice (1-2 times), 0.6363=A few times (3-4 times), 1=Almost every day (5-7 times). Additive scale of early and late news use created.

Newspaper Use: During the past week, how often did you use the following news sources [A local newspaper(s); A national newspaper(s)]? 0=Not at all (0 times), 0.2727=Once or twice (1-2 times), 0.6363=A few times (3-4 times), 1=Almost every day (5-7 times). Additive scale of local and national newspaper use created.

Party Identification: Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican or Independent. [If independent] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic or the Republican Party? [If Republican or Democrat] Would you call yourself a strong Republican/Democrat or not very strong Republican/Democrat? 1=strong Democrat, 2=weak Democrat, 3=leaning Democrat, 4=independent, 5=leaning Republican, 6=weak Republican, 7=strong Republican.

Political Knowledge: Additive scale of correct answers to the following questions:

- Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington? 0=Democrats or Don't Know, 1=Republicans
- Who is the current Secretary of State? 0=George Schultz, Madeline Albright, Donald Rumsfeld, Not sure; 1=Condoleezza Rice
- What job or office does Nancy Pelosi hold? 0=CEO of National Broadcasting Company (NBC), Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Surgeon General of the United States, Not Sure; 1=Democratic Leader of the House of Representatives
- What job or office does Clarence Thomas hold? 0=Chair of the Federal Reserve, Senator from Maine, Ambassador to United Nations, Not Sure; 1=Associate Justice of the Supreme Court
- What job or office does John Roberts hold? (open-end) 0=incorrect answer, 1=Chief Justice of U. S. Supreme Court
- What job or office does Dennis Hastert hold? (open-end) 0=incorrect answer, 1=Republican leader in the House of Representatives

Education: What is the highest level of education you have completed? 8=did not graduate from high school, 12= high school graduate, 13=some college but no degree (yet), 14=two-year college degree, 16=four-year college degree, 18=post-graduate degree.

Female: 0=Male, 1=Female

Table A1: Effect of Advertising and Media Exposure on Perceptions of Ad Tone (Framing Model, including “Don’t Know” Answers)

	Dem Gov	Rep Gov	Dem Sen	Rep Sen
Neg/Con Ad Exp.	0.914*** (0.145)	-0.0151 (0.291)	0.421*** (0.111)	1.181** (0.528)
Positive Ad Exp.	-1.226*** (0.200)	-0.0224 (0.0958)	-0.698*** (0.174)	-1.166** (0.470)
Negative Ad Media Exp.	0.804** (0.336)	0.537 (0.555)	0.0660 (0.286)	1.252*** (0.334)
Positive Ad Media Exp.	-1.007*** (0.329)	-0.383 (0.874)	-0.794 (0.490)	-0.565 (0.698)
Education (yrs)	-0.0210 (0.0292)	0.0181 (0.0169)	-0.0719** (0.0291)	-0.0281 (0.0503)
Political Knowledge	0.0389 (0.0710)	0.133*** (0.0377)	-0.00544 (0.0586)	0.152*** (0.0413)
Female	-0.0607 (0.186)	-0.0640 (0.224)	0.0669 (0.348)	-0.311** (0.144)
Party ID 7-pt	0.402*** (0.0429)	-0.301*** (0.0573)	0.422*** (0.0906)	-0.343*** (0.0468)
Competition	0.0783 (0.115)	0.424 (0.457)	0.343*** (0.0506)	0.0136 (0.155)
Constant	-0.481 (0.680)	-1.732** (0.741)	-0.451 (0.705)	-3.567*** (1.008)
Constant	2.373*** (0.655)	1.045 (0.761)	2.435*** (0.810)	0.626 (0.962)
Observations	1894	1892	1429	1434
Chi-squared	1308	1644	111.0	133.1
Pseudo-R2	0.117	0.0688	0.159	0.116

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A2: Effect of Advertising and Media Exposure on Perceptions of Ad Tone (Framing Model, Separating Negative and Contrast Ad Exposure)

	Dem Gov	Rep Gov	Dem Sen	Rep Sen
Negative Ad Exp.	0.839*** (0.255)	1.220** (0.592)	-0.0209 (0.106)	3.072*** (0.377)
Contrast Ad Exp.	-0.437 (0.584)	-1.469*** (0.428)	0.509*** (0.153)	-4.391*** (0.544)
Positive Ad Exp.	-0.749** (0.368)	-0.510*** (0.179)	-0.522*** (0.184)	0.975** (0.431)
Negative Ad Media Exp.	0.768** (0.310)	-0.0421 (0.396)	0.0732 (0.282)	2.007*** (0.193)
Postitive Ad Media Exp.	-0.962*** (0.341)	0.263 (0.742)	-0.830* (0.468)	-0.501 (0.558)
Education (yrs)	-0.0241 (0.0279)	0.0287 (0.0265)	-0.0704** (0.0280)	-0.0137 (0.0527)
Political Knowledge	0.0287 (0.0751)	0.0936** (0.0403)	0.0149 (0.0682)	0.135*** (0.0437)
Female	-0.0886 (0.192)	0.00420 (0.194)	-0.0156 (0.364)	-0.331** (0.169)
Party ID 7-pt	0.413*** (0.0415)	-0.338*** (0.0631)	0.438*** (0.0823)	-0.395*** (0.0503)
Competition	-0.137 (0.197)	0.112 (0.273)	0.548*** (0.0466)	0.106 (0.257)
Constant	-1.254** (0.541)	-2.720*** (0.775)	0.858** (0.393)	-3.993*** (0.933)
Constant	1.176** (0.534)	-0.333 (0.776)	3.171*** (0.588)	-0.904 (0.956)
Observations	1653	1641	1208	1002
Chi-squared	868.5	29.40	209.3	1093
Pseudo-R2	0.127	0.0954	0.190	0.128

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A3: Effect of Advertising and Media Exposure on Perceptions of Ad Tone (Framing Model, Including Character Mentions as Strategic)

	Dem Gov	Rep Gov	Dem Sen	Rep Sen
Neg/Con Ad Exp.	1.003*** (0.250)	-0.481 (0.379)	0.519*** (0.106)	1.247** (0.616)
Positive Ad Exp.	-1.416*** (0.266)	-0.101 (0.0920)	-0.471*** (0.174)	-1.581*** (0.542)
Negative Ad Media Exp.	0.643** (0.282)	0.551 (0.603)	-0.168 (0.193)	1.063* (0.607)
Positive Ad Media Exp.	-0.896*** (0.302)	-0.474 (0.792)	-0.607** (0.308)	-0.451** (0.205)
Education (yrs)	-0.0221 (0.0286)	0.0255 (0.0287)	-0.0669** (0.0311)	-0.0215 (0.0472)
Political Knowledge	0.0306 (0.0738)	0.0918** (0.0373)	0.0168 (0.0697)	0.133*** (0.0341)
Female	-0.0701 (0.194)	-0.0149 (0.184)	-0.00696 (0.362)	-0.348** (0.149)
Party ID 7-pt	0.409*** (0.0420)	-0.330*** (0.0593)	0.441*** (0.0837)	-0.401*** (0.0479)
Competition	0.101 (0.135)	0.671 (0.495)	0.496*** (0.0435)	-0.263 (0.223)
Constant	-0.384 (0.709)	-2.114*** (0.722)	0.976* (0.543)	-4.158*** (0.860)
Constant	2.037*** (0.737)	0.216 (0.717)	3.288*** (0.757)	-1.127 (0.867)
Observations	1653	1641	1208	1002
Chi-squared	924.0	313.7	112.7	266.3
Pseudo-R2	0.125	0.0825	0.189	0.115

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1