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A Comparative Content Analysis of Televised Political Advertising

in the United States and Canada in 2004 and 2008

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by

Jessica A. Mahone

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ABSTRACT

A Comparative Content Analysis of Televised Political Advertising

in the United States and Canada in 2004 and 2008

by

Jessica A. Mahone

Analyzing 195 televised political ads from the United States and Canada in 2004 and 2008, this research studies the use of issue and image ads and the attack, acclaim, and contrast function of ads in presidential and federal elections. Results indicate that there is no statistical difference in the use of issue or image ads and no statistical difference in the function of ads in both nations in 2004 and 2008. Issue ads are found to be more commonly used in Canada than in the United States, but there is no statistical difference in the use of acclaim ads between the United States and Canada. Winners in both nations are found to use issue ads more than image ads while winners in Canadian elections were found to use issue ads more than winners of American elections. This study also offers a methodological finding regarding the analysis of issue or image in political advertising. Limitations and implications for future research are also discussed.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my sister, Lara Paige, who is the inspiration for all that I do.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Political advertising is a very frequent topic of communication research. However, and

perhaps somewhat obviously, the bulk of research focuses on American political advertising.

Where research is done on political advertising outside the United States, it is generally in

comparison with American political advertising. Comparative research has been done on

European nations, Latin American nations, and most recently Asian nations. Canadian political

advertising has only been studied sporadically, offering only small pictures of the Canadian

political world. Further, despite their status as bordering nations with a close trading

relationship, there have been no comparative studies of political advertising and campaigns in the

United States and Canada to date.

Though always a part of campaign communication strategy, it was not until recently that

political ads came to dominate public attention (Trent & Friedberg, 2008). In the 2008

presidential campaign, more than $479 million was spent on broadcast media alone, more than

any other single campaign expenditure (Center for Responsive Politics, 2008). In the 2008

Canadian federal election, television advertising expenditures were over C$28 million, making

up the largest campaign expenditure and taking up nearly half of total campaign expenditures

(Elections Canada, 2009a).

The dominance of television advertising in both the communication and financial aspects

of political campaigns points to the most important reason for the study of political advertising:

advertising's influence on individual behavior. Studies confirm that advertising has effects on

voters, but there is considerable debate about what those effects are (Newton, 1999).

If the purpose of representative government is to reflect the opinions and wishes of the

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electorate, it is necessary for as many people as possible to participate in elections. Therefore, perhaps no effects have greater implications for political participation than those of mobilization and demobilization. Atkin and Heald (1976) found a positive correlation between exposure to political advertising and voter knowledge, agenda, interest, affect, and polarization. Despite frequent criticisms of negative advertising, there is evidence that media has a stimulating effect on voter turnout (Goldstein & Freedman, 2002). In their study, Goldstein and Freedman tested the hypothesis that demobilization is not an effect of media but is a function of political interest and involvement. Combining Campaign Media Analysis Group's technology for political ad tracking with information from the 1996 National Election Survey they found that political advertising has a positive effect on voter turnout. Citing a correlation between levels of knowledge and voter behavior, Stevens (2005) examined the informational effects of negative political advertising. His findings indicate that negative advertising primarily impacts those with low levels of political knowledge, and because of the correlation of knowledge with political participation, it cannot be concluded that there is a negative impact on mobilization.

Despite evidence for mobilization effects, several studies have indicated a demobilizing effect. Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino (1994) found demobilization of an opponent's supporters rather than persuasion as the means through which negative ads work, and those most substantially influenced were minimally informed voters. Freedman, Franz, and Goldstein (2004) identified political advertising as an important source of information only to the least informed of voters and not necessarily effective upon informed voters. In her examination of the effects of battleground strategies on citizen involvement, Wolak (2006) makes the argument that increased knowledge is one channel through which political advertising persuades. Huber and Arceneaux (2007) found strong evidence that citizens are persuaded by presidential

advertisements. However, that persuasion does not necessarily result in mobilization.

Although this is not an effects study, these are important considerations for any study of political advertising. Because we know that advertising influences aspects of individuals' political behavior, an examination of the content of political ads is a valuable and critical endeavor. The purpose of this study is to do a comparative content analysis of televised political advertising in the most recent Canadian federal and US presidential elections to explore trends in political ad use in light of what is known about its effects on political participation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background on US Elections

In 2000, George W. Bush was elected President of the United States in a controversial election in which he won the vote of the Electoral College but not the popular vote. Further, a Supreme Court decision regarding a recount of the vote in the State of Florida raised questions about the legitimacy of his victory. However, Bush's response to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, increased his public approval rating dramatically for some time, but by 2004, his administration's decision to invade the nation of Iraq put his reelection bid in jeopardy (Erikson & Tedin, 2007).

Bush's Democratic opponent in 2004 was Massachusetts Senator John Kerry. Kerry disapproved of Bush's foreign policy, most notably the war in Iraq. However, Kerry's persona was read as that of a northeastern liberal elite, out of touch with the average American, while Bush was seen as more of a regular guy. Exit polls on election day indicated that Kerry had won the election, but when the official results were released, Bush won a majority of the popular vote and the Electoral College (Erikson & Tedin, 2007).

Bush's public approval rating plummeted during his final term in office. The war in Iraq ceased to have popular support, and the economy began a downward turn. Bush's party fell out of favor with the American public, and in the 2006 Congressional midterm elections, Republicans lost control of both houses of Congress. They had been anticipated to only lose control of the House of Representatives. This disapproval continued into the 2008 presidential election (MacGillis & Cohen, 2008).

The 2008 US Presidential election was historic for a number of reasons. It marked the first time a nonwhite candidate was nominated by either of the dominant parties in American politics, Democrat Barack Obama, and the first time a woman was nominated for Vice President by the Republican Party. Obama's opponent in the 2008 presidential election was John McCain, a Senator from Arizona. Despite his appearance as a moderate and a bipartisan, McCain's candidacy was hurt by the unpopularity of President Bush and the Republican Party while Obama campaigned on the slogans "Hope" and "Change," signaling that he would be a shift from the previous 8 years. Voter turnout in 2008 was the highest it had been since 1968. Barack Obama won nearly 53% of the popular vote and was able to win several states that John Kerry lost in 2004 (MacGillis & Cohen, 2008).

Background on Canadian Elections

The Canadian political system is a parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister is selected in a manner similar to the selection of the American president by the Electoral College. In the Canadian electoral system, the leader of the party who wins the most seats in the House of Commons becomes Prime Minister. When a party wins a majority of seats in the House, the party is said to form a majority government. When a party wins a mere plurality, or more seats than any other party but less than half of the total seats in Parliament, the party is said to form a minority government (Forsey, 2005). Since 2004, Canada has been ruled by minority governments. The last majority government was that of Liberal Jean Chretien, elected in 2000 (Parliament of Canada, 2009b). Minority governments present precarious situations where the governing party must have the cooperation of opposition parties in order to avoid an election. On average, minority governments stand for just under 18 months, making for frequent elections in short periods of time (Parliament of Canada, 2009a).

The campaign of 2004 marked the first appearance of the Conservative Party of Canada in a federal election. The party, a merger of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance, had become an official party in the House of Commons less than 6 months before the election call (Johnson, 2005). While they did not win the election, the Conservatives made an impressive showing. The incumbent Liberal Party of Canada and their leader, Prime Minister Paul Martin, were held to a minority government (Stephenson, 2006).

In December 2005, following the discovery that the Liberal Party had been taking government funds for the promotion of Canadian unity in Quebec and using them for party purposes, the Conservative Party, along with the two other parties in Parliament, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois, introduced a motion of nonconfidence in the government (CBC, 2005). An election was called for January 23, 2006, and the Conservative Party won a minority government, with Stephen Harper becoming Prime Minister (CBC, 2006a). Martin stepped down as leader of the Liberal Party, leaving an interim leader in place until Stephane Dion was elected party leader in December of that year (CBC, 2006b).

After being unable to reach a consensus with opposition parties, Prime Minister Harper met with Governor General Michaele Jean, and an election call was issued for October 14, 2008, merely 3 weeks before the 2008 US Presidential election. Voter turnout in Canada was far lower than in the US and one of the lowest in Canadian history. The Conservatives increased their number of seats in the House of Commons but still lacked enough seats to form a majority government (CBC, 2008). The Liberals had one of their worst electoral performances in history, winning only 77 seats (Elections Canada, 2009b) and Dion stepped down as leader of the party, to be followed by current leader Michael Ignatieff (CBC).

There are a number of differences between the American governmental and political systems and those of Canada, particularly with regard to the party system. Unlike the United States, the Canadian political system is multiparty (Forsey, 2005), and while elections are generally between the Conservative and Liberal parties, there are two other parties in Parliament that are important to the function of minority governments such as the past three. The first, the New Democratic Party (NDP), is a social democratic party founded through the merger of labor unions and the socialist Commonwealth Cooperative Federation. Although its seat count in the House of Commons is rather low, the NDP has proven very important for the survival of minority governments, as historically minority parties must compromise with the NDP to maintain power (Riendeau, 2000). Additionally, in 2008, the NDP had its second strongest showing in an election and held the balance of power between the government and the opposition (Elections Canada, 2009b).

The other opposition party, the Bloc Quebecois, is somewhat a political oddity. In terms of seat count, it is the third largest party in Parliament. However, the Bloc is a Quebec sovereigntist party and does not run candidates outside that province, meaning its overall percentage of the national vote is quite low. Because the party does not run candidates outside of Quebec, it is mathematically impossible for the Bloc to win enough seats in Parliament to form government. For this reason as well as for its sovereigntist agenda the Bloc is generally not considered a national party (Riendeau, 2000).

Agenda-Setting and Political Advertising

Throughout the course of the 20th century, three theoretical models have emerged, shifting the paradigm of mass media research: agenda-setting, priming, and framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For this study, two are considered: agenda-setting and framing. The

discussion begins with agenda-setting. In simplest terms, agenda-setting can be understood as

the process through which media informs people what to think about, and framing can be

understood as the process through which the media informs them how to think about it (Baran &

Davis, 2006).

Agenda-setting theory holds that media play an important role in setting the public

agenda. The importance individuals assign to specific political issues is influenced by the

emphasis on an issue in the media, the length of time the issue appears in the media, and how

much the individual is exposed to media (Atkin & Heald, 1976; Bowers, 1973; McCombs, 2004;

McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Shaw & Bowers, 1973).   For these reasons, the topics of the lead

story on the nightly news or the front-page story in the newspaper are more likely to be

remembered by people as important and to be placed high on their list of issue priorities than the

last story on the evening news or a story in the inside pages of the newspaper (McCombs, 2004).

On its surface, it appears a one-way and possibly manipulative process. However, McCombs

argues that agenda-setting is the result of individuals' natural need to understand the world

around them, and certainly, there are differences in the magnitude of agenda-setting effects on

each individual relative to factors such as their use of media, their social status, and their

personal experiences.

Agenda-setting has primarily been associated with news media (Bowers, 1973;

Ghorpade, 1986; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Shaw & Bowers, 1973), but as research in agenda-

setting has emerged the role of political advertising in the agenda-setting process has become

apparent. McCombs (2004) states that while an election day victory is the ultimate goal of

political campaigns, the immediate goal has increasingly become capturing the public agenda.

Therefore, agenda-setting by campaigns is implicit because of the impact of media on the public

agenda. Through multiple channels, including advertising, campaigns can exert direct and indirect control over the media agenda.

Bowers (1973) conducted one of the earliest studies on advertising and agenda-setting. He found high rank order correlations between voter emphasis and advertising emphasis in 1970 senatorial campaigns. However, he argued that this was indicative not just of an agenda-setting process where information flows from political campaigns to voters via advertising but also indicative of an agenda-setting process from voters to campaigns via public opinion polls. Agenda-setting as far as political campaigns is a cyclical process where information flows from voters to candidates to the media and back to voters. This is a shift from the traditional model of agenda-setting that is essentially a one-way process. Shaw and Bowers (1973) conducted a similar study with 1972 presidential campaign ads and found that high exposure to political advertising correlates with high saliency of issues emphasized in ads. Ghorpade (1986) chose to test agenda-setting and advertising looking for evidence of a two-step agenda-setting process. The first stage is that of traditional agenda-setting theory, transfer of salience from the media –in this case, advertising- to the public mind. The second stage is a move from salience in the public mind to behavior outcomes. His study found evidence that agenda-setting through political advertising does influence behavior.

The above studies focused on evidence of direct agenda-setting effects, i.e., that political advertising influences individuals. However, some consideration must be given to indirect agenda-setting effects through intermedia influence (Danielian & Reese, 1989; McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997; Roberts & McCombs, 1994). Intermedia influence is the influence of one medium on another. The media need not be the same, and they need not be different. For example, Danielian and Reese found

the *New York Times* influenced other newspapers' coverage of the drug issue in the 1980s as well

as the coverage of television networks. Media influences other media, and given that a key part

of campaign strategy is capturing the media agenda (Danielian & Reese, 1989; McCombs, 2004;

McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; McCombs et al., 1997; Roberts & McCombs, 1994), it is

reasonable to expect that advertising's agenda-setting function might not be solely through direct

impact on the voter. Roberts and McCombs's study of intermedia influence in agenda-setting in

the 1990 Texas gubernatorial campaign found that advertising does impact the media agenda.

However, the impact of televised political advertising on the television news agenda was not as

strong as the impact of the newspaper agenda on the television news agenda. In McCombs et

al.'s study of second-level agenda-setting (framing) in Spanish elections, it was found that

candidate attributes emphasized in political advertising were emphasized in other media and

corresponded to the picture of candidates in voters' minds. While this is not an agenda-setting

study, the relationship between political advertising and the public agenda, both direct and

indirect, is one of many reasons analyses of political advertising are important.

Media Framing

As a media theory, framing has its roots in both sociology and psychology (Pan &

Kosicki, 1993). The sociological roots of framing lie in the work of Erving Goffman. Goffman

(1974) theorized that individuals employ "primary frameworks" (p. 21) to interpret and respond

to "a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (p. 21). Goffman

made a distinction between two classes of primary frameworks: natural and social. The class of

interest here, as well as to Goffman, is the social framework. Social frameworks are those that

provide individuals with the background understanding to guide their interpretation of events and

their responses to them. Goffman termed this "guided doings" (p. 22). Individuals can and do

incorrectly apply primary frameworks and thus misinterpret what is around them, but the point remains that individuals apply a background knowledge of an event, idea, or person when they encounter similar events, ideas, or people.

The psychological roots of framing lie in the work of Kahneman and Tversky. Kahneman and Tversky (1983) argued that when faced with an important decision, individuals weigh the outcomes and the probabilities of those outcomes of the options before them. However, any one option can be described- or framed- in different ways. Framing is, therefore, a matter of perception rather than computation. In other words, it is the perception that an outcome is both the best of possible outcomes and the most likely that leads individuals to choose one option over another. Further, because options can be framed in multiple ways, individuals will not necessarily make the same decision if the framing of an option is changed. Unlike Goffman's (1974) argument that experience drives the building and use of frameworks, Kahneman and Tversky argue that the framing of consequences is not rooted in actual experience but does mold experience once a decision has been made.

Media framing theory combines Goffman's (1974) theory with that of Kahneman and Tversky (1983). The theory reaffirms Goffman's concept of primary framework, that which is derived from experiences, while also reaffirming Kahneman and Tversky's argument that any decision can be based on any number of frames. Therefore, in media, framing is a matter of selecting the experiential frame that evokes the desired response from the audience. For this reason, opposing viewpoints of the same issue can be framed in the same terms. Likewise, one viewpoint of a single issue can be framed in multiple ways. As a result, framing has moved beyond theory and become an applied concept, as demonstrated by the title of Republican

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political consultant Frank Luntz's book *It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear* (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

McCombs et al. (1997), McCombs and Ghanem (2001), and McCombs (2004) argue that framing is merely an extension or alternate form of agenda-setting, frequently referred to as *second-level agenda setting*. Second-level agenda-setting theory replaces attitudes about an issue with attributes of an issue. The process of second-level agenda-setting involves the transfer not of issue salience from the media agenda to the public agenda but of attribute salience. In other words, on the first level of agenda-setting, individuals ascertain what issues are important. On the second level, they determine what aspects of those issues are important.

Frame analysis is not the purpose of this study although the concept is highly relevant to the use of issue ads or image ads by political candidates. Emphasis on policy or character has been a frequent research topic among political communication scholars. Joslyn (1986), West (1993), Benoit (2001), and Johnston and Kaid (2002) all found that televised presidential campaign ads emphasized policy and issues more than character and image. Further, research on international political advertising (Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 1995; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997; Chang, 2000) indicates that policy and issues are a more common focus in televised ads than character and image. Campaigns appear to be built more often around policy and issues than character and image, and the question being asked here is, relevant to the use of issue ads or image ads, how did candidates in the United States and Canada frame their campaigns in 2004 and 2008?

Functional Theory of Political Discourse

Functional theories of mass communication have been derived primarily from the work of sociologist Robert Merton (Wright, 1960, 1974). The primary concern of functional analysis is the "consequences of standardized, patterned, and repetitive social phenomena" (Wright, 1974,

p. 198). Wright identified four levels ranging from the whole of the mass communication system to individual communication behaviors at which functional analysis can occur. The analysis presented is at the second level, a mode of mass communication, advertising. Wright's (1960; 1974) purpose in devising a functional analysis framework for mass communication is a bit different from the purposes of this analysis and different from functional theorists of political communication. Wright was primarily concerned with testing the effects of the presence and absence of various communication systems in societies.

Functional theory of political discourse does hold to functional analysis' concern with standardized and patterned social phenomena and their operation within society. However, functional theory does not hold consequences to be the same as function. In functional theory of political discourse, it is argued that function is purposive. The function of an ad is intended by its makers and is apparent through its content rather than a consequence of the content (Benoit, 1999, 2001; Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997; Diamond & Bates, 1984; Jamieson, Waldman, & Sherr, 2000).

A number of functional categorizations of political advertising have been offered by scholars over the years. Diamond and Bates (1984) devised four categories of political advertising, related to phases of electoral campaigns: identification, argument, attack, and visionary. Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr (2000) offer a simple triad of functional categories for political advertising: advocacy, attack, and contrast. Benoit, Pier, and Blaney (1997) and Benoit (1999, 2001) offer a similar triad: acclaim, attack, and defense. Advocacy (Jamieson, Waldman, & Sherr, 2000) and acclaim (Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997; Benoit, 1999, 2001) correspond to the identification and argument categories of Diamond and Bates. Regardless of the name of the category, advocacy, acclaim, identification, and argument ads serve the same purpose- to make a

candidate known and to argue his or her case to voters. Attack ads serve their own purpose- to make the case against an opponent (Benoit, 1999, 2001; Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997; Diamond & Bates, 1984; Jamieson, Waldman, & Sherr, 2000). From here the categorizations differ. Diamond and Bates have designated the fourth phase and function of campaign advertising as visionary. During this phase, the candidate offers voters a picture of his or her vision of the world to come with his or her election. Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr's third category is contrast, which is merely the pitting of a candidate against an opponent, and Benoit's third category is defense, which is a response to an attack. It should be noted that all these categorizations arose from studies of American political communication but have been applied in studies of international political communication as well (Benoit & Klyukovski, 2006; Benoit & Sheafer, 2006; Choi & Benoit, 2007; Lee & Benoit, 2004; Wen, Benoit, & Yu, 2004).

American Political Advertising

Political advertising in the United States is one of the most common topics of political communication research. As shown earlier, it is frequently the center of media effects studies. Content analyses of American political advertising vary widely in scope, purpose, and methodology. Joslyn (1986) studied presidential televisions spots from the 1980s, finding that policy was addressed four times more often than character. West (1993) found that in prominent presidential television ads policy was emphasized more than character. Because of this, he contends that political advertising may be a better source of information than commonly believed. Benoit's (1999) longitudinal study of presidential spots from 1952 to 1996 found that incumbent party candidates acclaim more than they attack. Challengers attack more than incumbents but still make more acclaim appeals than attacks. Johnston and Kaid (2002) explored the differences in techniques, strategies, narratives, and symbols used in televised

political spots in US presidential campaigns from 1952 through 2000. They determined that issue ads are more common than image ads, that attacks are more common in issue ads than in image ads, and that image ads focus primarily on candidates' credibility. Issue ads rely on emotional language, with more than one quarter using fear appeals. In issue ads, candidates tend to speak for themselves rather than rely on the use of an announcer and use issue ads to call for change. Further, despite their reliance on a dichotomy between image ads and issue ads, they find that elements of image ads are frequently a part of issue ads and vice versa.

Canadian Political Advertising

Canadian political advertising has been the subject of little research. Considerable research has been conducted on Canadian election campaigns, but the bulk of that research focuses on factors such as strategy, economic conditions, and news media. The following are the very few studies that have addressed advertising in Canadian elections, and only one that has addressed content. Nolan's (1981) study traced the roots of modern day Canadian political communication to elections occurring between 1867, the year Canada was founded, to 1925. In his analysis of the election campaigns in the 15 federal elections occurring in that time frame, he found that the personality of party leader was central to campaign strategy well before the emergence of television. Following this, the bulk of research has focused on political advertising in the late 20th century, particularly the span from 1993 through 2006. The 1993 Canadian federal election featured particularly harsh advertising against Liberal leader Jean Chretien. Two ads of the Progressive Conservative campaign highlighted Chretien's facial paralysis. Haddock and Zanna (1997) found that these ads increased Chretien's popularity, due in part to their personal attacks against Chretien but also because attack ads are not commonplace in Canadian political advertising. Nesbitt-Larking (2007) analyzed the content of television ads run by the

Liberal and Conservative parties during the 2006 Canadian federal election campaign and found that the Liberal Party used attacks far more than the Conservatives. He speculates that this possibly contributed to the Liberal Party's loss in 2006.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Joslyn (1986), West (1993), Benoit (2001), and Johnston and Kaid (2002) all found that televised presidential spot ads emphasized policy and issues more than character and image. What research has been conducted on televised political spot ads abroad (Chang, 2000; Holtz-Bach & Kaid, 1995; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997) indicates that policy and issues are a more common focus in televised ads than character and image. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H_1: Issue ads were more common than image ads in North American elections in 2004 and 2008.

The lack of research on Canadian televised political advertising on a comparative basis with American televised political advertising raises the following questions:

RQ_1: Were issue ads more prominent in Canadian federal elections or American presidential elections from 2004 through 2008?

RQ_2: Were issue ads more prominent in the Canadian federal election of 2004 than the American presidential election of 2004?

RQ_3: Were issue ads more prominent in the Canadian federal election of 2008 than the American presidential election of 2008?

Benoit (1999) and Johnston and Kaid (2002) reported that acclaims were more frequent in American televised advertising than attacks. In research on political advertising in other countries, acclaims have outnumbered attacks without exception (Chang, 2000; Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 1995; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997; Wen, Benoit, & Yu, 2004). Haddock and Zanna (1997)

found that Progressive Conservative party attack ads in the 1993 Canadian federal election were effective in increasing Jean Chretien's popularity because such attacks are uncommon in Canadian political advertising. Nesbitt-Larking (2007) points to the attacks employed by the Liberal Party in the 2006 Canadian federal election as partly responsible for the party's poor performance in that election. Because of the connection between electoral performance and the use of attack ads in Canada, it might be expected that Canadian parties are reluctant to use attacks. Thus, it is hypothesized:

> H_2: Acclaims were more common than attacks in North American elections in 2004 and 2008.

Additionally, what little research has been conducted on Canadian political advertising indicates that attacks are unsuccessful, particularly for incumbents. Further, Benoit's (1999) study of presidential spots found that incumbents are more likely to make acclaims than are challengers. The nature of the Canadian political system is such that there is virtually always an incumbent. In the federal elections of 2004 and 2006, the Liberal Party of Canada and its leader, Paul Martin, were incumbent, and in the federal election of 2008, the Conservative Party of Canada and its leader, Stephen Harper, were incumbent. In the 2004 American presidential election, Republican George W. Bush was incumbent, but in the 2008 presidential election, there was no incumbent candidate. Thus, it is hypothesized:

> H_3: Acclaims were more common in Canadian federal elections than in American presidential elections from 2004 through 2008.
>
> H_4: Acclaims were more common in the 2004 Canadian federal election than in the 2004 American presidential election.

H_5: Acclaims were more common in the 2008 Canadian federal election than in the 2008 American presidential election.

Additionally, Benoit (2001) found that policy (issues) is emphasized in televised political advertising more often by winners than by losers. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H_6: Issue ads were used more often than image ads by winners in North American elections in 2004 and 2008.

The results of Haddock's and Zanna's (1997) and Nesbitt-Larking's (2007) studies indicate that character might have been more of a focus of losers in political advertising in Canada. However, there is no research on this in the Canadian context or in a comparative context between Canadian and American political advertising. Therefore, the following questions are raised:

RQ_4: Did winners of Canadian federal elections from 2004 through 2008 use issue ads more than winners of American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008?

RQ_5: Did the winner of the 2004 Canadian federal election use image ads more than the winner of the 2004 American presidential election?

RQ_6: Did the winner of the 2008 Canadian federal election use image ads more than the winner of the 2008 American presidential election?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Content analysis is the systematic evaluation of the content of recorded communication (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2002). This study was designed to meet the objectivity, systematization, and reliability standards of the framework put forward by Kolbe and Burnett and Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken.

Sampling and Unit of Analysis

For this study, a convenience sample of 205 televised political ads from the United States and Canada during 2004 through 2008 was collected. The unit of analysis was each individual ad. The sample was limited to party ads (Canadian) and candidate ads (American). Outside party, or 527, ads were not included because such ads are rare in Canada due to strict regulations on political advertising, limiting what is available for comparison between the two countries. Further, only English-language ads were included in the sample due primarily to the researcher's lack of fluency in a foreign language. American ads were limited to those from the nominees of the two main parties because those were the ads most familiar to the American public as well as the candidates most likely to win the presidency. Additionally, only ads from the postconvention phase were included. The date for this was determined by the last day of the latest convention held for the 2004 and 2008 elections. This ensured that the ads viewed would be specifically for the general election as opposed to primary elections. Also, this reduced the timeframe of the American presidential campaign to roughly 8 weeks, which is of benefit when comparing ads from Canadian campaigns, which average about 5 weeks in length (Forsey, 2005). Canadian ads were limited to the ads of the Conservative, Liberal, and New Democratic parties.

The ads were primarily collected from a number of Internet sources. Ads from the 2004 American presidential election were taken from the Stanford University Political Communication Lab, and ads from the 2008 presidential election were downloaded from the YouTube channels of Barack Obama and John McCain. Ads from the 2004 Canadian federal election were collected from two sources: a general YouTube search for "Canadian election ads 2004" and from the website of Jonathan Rose of Queen's University. Ads from the 2006 Canadian federal election were collected through a YouTube search for "Canadian election ads 2006." Liberal Party and New Democratic Party ads from the 2008 Canadian federal election were collected from each party's YouTube channel. The Conservative Party of Canada provided its 2008 election ads upon the request of the researcher.

Coding Instrument

Independent variables in the instrument were year of the ad, the nation where the ad aired, the sponsoring party or party of the candidate airing the ad, if the candidate or party was incumbent, and if the candidate or party were the winner of the election where the ad appeared. Dependent variables in this study were adapted from two previous studies. The first, issue and image, was to determine if the ads were focused on policy (issue) or character (image). The second, function, was to determine the purpose of the ads. For both variables, coders were asked to indicate the dominant content of the ads.

The issue and image variable was adapted from Johnston and Kaid's (2002) study of videostyle in televised political ads. As in the Johnston and Kaid study, following initial coding, the variable was recoded into two categories, issue and image. The issue category combined the first three categories- issue concern, vague policy preference, and specific policy preference-

from the original variable. The image category consisted of the remaining category, personal

characteristics.

The function variable was an adaptation and combination of the categories set forth by

Benoit, Pier, and Blaney (1997) and Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr (2000). In this study the

functional categories used were attack, acclaim, and constrast. Contrast (Jamieson, Waldman, &

Sherr, 2000) rather than defense (Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997) was chosen as a category

because there can be difficulty identifying a defense ad without a direct designation that the ad is

a response to an opponent's ad. This would be particularly true for the Canadian portion of the

sample, as my coders were unfamiliar with Canadian politics. The categorization and

operationalization for the variables of issue and image and function are found in Table 1.

Table 1.
Categorization and Operationalization of Issue and Image and Function Variables

Issue and Image	Issue concern	Ad references concern about an issue without suggesting a policy
	Vague policy preference	Ad references a policy without providing details
	Specific policy preference	Ad references a policy with details
	Personal characteristics/ group associations	Ad references the personal characteristics and associations of a candidate
Function	Attack	Ad's content is primarily negative rhetoric about an opponent
	Acclaim	Ad's content is primarily positive rhetoric about the sponsoring candidate
	Contrast	Ad's content contrasts the sponsoring candidate with an opponent(s)

Coding Procedure

Coder Training and Pretest

Coder training is an important aspect of objectivity in content analysis research (Kolbe &

Burnett, 1991; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2002). Two coders, a

graduate student and a recent master's graduate, were chosen and trained in a 1-hour session.

Neither knew the hypotheses or research questions in this analysis. The primary researcher read the coding scheme to both coders, explaining the operationalizations of each variable. After coders familiarized themselves with the coding scheme, they were shown three US Senate campaign ads from 2008 and asked to fill in a code sheet. Coders were shown more ads in sets of three to four until agreement was reached between both coders. In total, 10 ads were shown and analyzed by the coders. The researcher answered questions from the coders in order to clarify the procedure. Following this, the sample was distributed to both coders.

Coder Independence

For objectivity purposes, it is important that coders work independently of one another (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). In this study, the coders did not know one another prior to coder training and were instructed to analyze data without the input of others.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability tests the quality of a research instrument. High levels of agreement suggest that an instrument is reliable (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2002). In this study, intercoder reliability was calculated according to the Perreault and Leigh (1989) reliability index (Ir):

Ir = √{[{Fo/N) – (1/k)][k/ (k-1)}, where

Fo is the observed frequency of agreement between judges

N is the total number of judgments

k is the number of categories

This method was chosen because it is the most suitable method for calculating reliability between two coders while controlling for expected chance agreement (Grayson, 2001). Table 2 shows the reliability indexes calculated for each variable in this analysis.

Table 2.
Reliability Indices by Country

Variable	Country		Overall
	US	Canada	
Issue and Image (4 category)	.57	.47	.54
Issue and Image (2 category)	.58	.66	.65
Function	.88	.87	.88
Overall	.79	.76	Overall: .71

Overall reliability for the original issue and image variable was low (.54), as was

reliability for both countries, with .57 reliability for American ads and .47 reliability for

Canadian ads. For the recoded issue and image variable, reliability remained below the .85

threshold suggested by Kassarjian (1977). A number of factors including adequacy of coder

training and specificity of what constitutes an issue and what constitutes an image in political

communication might contribute to this. Full details regarding the reliability of this instrument

are discussed below in the limitations portion in the discussion section of this thesis. Overall

reliability for the function variable was .88, with .88 reliability among US ads and .87 reliability

among Canadian ads. Average reliability for American ads was .79, and average reliability for

Canadian ads was .76. Overall reliability for this study was .71. The reporting of reliability

indices for individual measures is preferable to the reporting of a single reliability index for an

entire analysis. A single index might mask low reliabilities for certain measures while the report

of individual reliabilities allows all aspects of an analysis to be assessed accurately (Kolbe &

Burnett, 1991; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002).

Following the calculation of reliability, the researcher settled disagreements between

coders by acting as a "tiebreaker." The researcher noted the codes given by each coder and

viewed the ads where disagreements occurred, selecting a "winner" from the two codes given.

This is a method suggested and used in previous content analysis studies (Kolbe & Burnett,

1991; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Marshall & Roberts, 2008). The final data set used in analysis consisted of cases where coders had reached agreement and those cases where disagreement had been settled by the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 205 televised political ads in the United States and Canada in 2004 through 2008. Although ads from 2006 were coded in this analysis, during data analysis that portion of the sample yielded too little data to work with and was dropped from the analysis. The final sample was 195 televised political ads from the United States and Canada in 2004 and 2008. The following descriptive statistics consist of frequencies and percentages by country, party, year, incumbents, and winners.

Sample Distribution by Nation and Party

Table 3 shows the sample distribution by nation and party. Of the 195 ads used in final analysis, 50 (25.6%) were Canadian, and 145 (74.4%) were American. Conservative Party ads made up 40% of the Canadian sample; Liberal Party ads made up 42%, and New Democratic Party ads made up 18% of the Canadian sample. Of the American sample, 78 (53.8%) were ads sponsored by Democratic nominees for president, and 67 (46.2%) were sponsored by Republican candidates. Of the total sample, the 78 ads sponsored by Democratic candidates made up the largest portion of the sample (40%) while New Democratic Party ads made up the smallest portion (4.6%). Liberal party ads were the largest Canadian portion of the sample (10.8%), and again, ads sponsored by Democratic candidates made up the largest American portion of the total sample (40%). No analysis was based on the party variable, but it is important to note the sources and their frequency, particularly given that this is a convenience sample.

Table 3.
Sample Distribution by Nation and Party

	Canada			
	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Totals
Frequency	20	21	9	50
Percentage of Canadian Sample	40%	42%	18%	100%
Percentage of Total	10.3%	10.8%	4.6%	25.6%
	United States			
	Democrat		Republican	
Frequency	78		67	145
Percentage of US Sample	53.8%		46.2%	100%
Percentage of Total	40%		34.4%	74.4%

Sample Distribution by Nation and Year

Table 4 shows sample distribution by nation and year. Of the 195 ads used in the final analysis, 75 (38.5%) were from 2004 and 120 (61.5%) were from 2008. Of ads from 2004, 12 (16%) were Canadian and 63 (84%) were American. Of ads from 2008, 38 (31.7%) were Canadian and 82 (68.3%) were American.

Table 4
Sample Distribution by Nation and Year

		Year		Total
		2004	2008	
Canada	Frequency	12	38	50
	Percentage	16%	31.7%	25.6%
US	Frequency	63	82	145
	Percentage	84%	68.3%	74.4%
Total	Frequency	75	120	195
	Percentage	38.5%	61.5%	100%

Sample Distribution by Nation and Incumbency

Table 5 shows sample distribution by nation and incumbency. Of the 195 ads used in final analysis, 144 (73.8%) were from nonincumbent candidates and 51 (26.2%) were from incumbents. Of the Canadian portion of the sample, 24 (48%) of ads were from nonincumbents and 26 (52%) were from incumbents. This reflects the nature of the Canadian political system, where there is always an incumbent because the party is the candidate rather than the leader. Of the American portion of the sample, 120 (82.8%) were from nonincumbents and 25 (17.2%) were from incumbents. This is likely due to the timeframe of this analysis. In 2004, George Bush was an incumbent president, meaning that there could not be an incumbent in 2008. Of the total sample, 26 ads (13.3%) were from Canadian incumbents and 25 (12.9%) were from American incumbents while 24 (12.3%) were from Canadian nonincumbents and 120 (61.5%) were from American nonincumbents.

Table 5.
Sample Distribution by Nation and Incumbency

	Canada		Totals
	Incumbent	Non-Incumbent	
Frequency	26	24	50
Percentage of Canadian Sample	52%	48%	100%
Percentage of Total	13.3%	12.3%	25.6%
	United States		
	Incumbent	Non-Incumbent	
Frequency	25	120	145
Percentage of US Sample	17.2%	82.8%	100%
Percentage of Total	12.9%	61.5%	74.4%
Total Frequency	51	144	195
Percentage of Total	26.2%	73.8%	100%

Sample Distribution by Nation and Outcome

Table 6 shows sample distribution by nation and outcome. Of the total sample, 103 ads

(52.8%) were sponsored by defeated candidates or parties, and 92 (47.2%) were sponsored by

winning candidate or parties. Of the Canadian portion of the sample, 28 ads (56%) were

sponsored by winning parties and 22 ads (44%) were sponsored by defeated parties. Of the

American portion of the sample, 81 ads (55.9%) were sponsored by defeated candidates and 64

ads (44.1%) were sponsored by winning candidates. The 28 Canadian ads sponsored by winning

parties make up 14.4% of the total sample while the 22 ads sponsored by defeated parties make

up 11.3% of the total sample. The 81 American ads sponsored by defeated candidates make up

41.5% of the total sample while the 64 ads sponsored by winning candidates make up 32.8% of

the total sample.

Table 6.
Sample Distribution by Nation and Outcome

	Canada		Total
	Winner	Defeated	
Frequency	28	22	50
Percentage of Canadian Sample	56%	44%	100%
Percentage of Total	14.4%	11.3%	25.6%
	United States		
	Winner	Defeated	
Frequency	64	81	145
Percentage of US Sample	44.1%	55.9%	100%
Percentage of Total	32.8%	41.5%	74.4%
Total Frequency	92	103	195
Percentage of Total	47.2%	52.8%	100%

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Use of Issue Ads and Image Ads by Nation and Year

Hypothesis 1 predicted that issue ads would be more common than image ads in North

American elections in 2004 and 2008. Overall, of ads coded in this analysis, 86 (44.1%) were

issue ads while 55.9% were image ads, which is in contrast with previous literature. Fifty-two

percent of ads from 2004 elections in the US and Canada were issues compared with 32.9% of

ads from 2008 elections. Forty-eight percent of ads from 2004 were issue ads compared with

60.8% of ads in 2008. A shift from issue ads to image ads between 2004 and 2008 might be

suggested by the data, but H1 is rejected (χ^2(1, N=195) = 3.083, p = .079). Table 7 shows the

distribution of issue and image ads by year.

Table 7.
Issue and Image Ad Use by Year

| | | Year | | Total |
		2004	2008	
Issue	Frequency	39	47	86
	Percentage	52%	39.2%	44.1%
Image	Frequency	36	73	109
	Percentage	48%	60.8%	55.9%
Total	Frequency	75	120	195
	Percentage	38.5%	61.5%	100%

Research question 1 regarded the use of issue and image ads in Canadian federal

elections versus the use of issue and image ads in United States presidential elections in 2004

and 2008. As shown above, image ads were used more often in North American elections

overall in 2004 and 2008, but broken down by nation, issue ads were used more commonly in

Canadian federal elections than in American presidential elections. Twenty-eight (56%) of

Canadian televised political ads were issue ads, compared to 58 (40%) of American televised

political ads. The relationship between nation and the use of issue or image ads appears to be

significant (χ^2(1, N=195) = 3.861, p = .049). Table 8 shows the distribution of issue and image

ads by nation.

Table 8.
Issue and Image Ad Use by Nation

		Nation		
		Canada	US	Total
Issue	Frequency	28	58	86
	Percentage	56%	40%	44.1%
Image	Frequency	22	87	109
	Percentage	44%	60%	55.9%
Total	Frequency	50	145	195
	Percentage	25.6%	74.4%	100%

χ^2=3.861, df=1, p=.049

Research question 2 regarded the use of issue and image ads in the 2004 Canadian federal

election versus the 2004 American presidential election. Overall, 39 (52%) of ads in North

American elections in 2004 were issue ads while 36 (48%) were image ads. Of ads in the 2004

Canadian federal election, eight (66.7%) were issue ads, compared to 31 (49.2%) of ads in the

2004 American presidential election. However, for 2004 ads, the relationship between nation

and use of issue or image ads does not appear to be significant (χ^2(1, n = 75) = 1.231, p = .267).

Table 9 shows the distribution of issue and image ads in 2004 elections by nation.

Table 9.
Use of Issue and Image Ads in 2004 by Nation

		Nation		
		Canada	US	Total
Issue	Frequency	8	31	39
	Percentage	66.7%	49.2%	52%

Table 9 cont'd.
Use of Issue and Image Ads in 2004 in Nation

Image	Frequency	4	32	36
	Percentage	33.3%	50.8%	48%
Total	Frequency	12	63	75
	Percentage	16%	84%	100%

Research question 3 regarded the use of issue and image ads in the 2008 Canadian federal election versus the 2008 American presidential election. Overall, 47 (39.2%) of 2008 election ads in North America were issue ads while 73 (60.8%) were image ads. Of Canadian ads, 20 (52.6%) were issue ads compared with 27 (32.9%) of American ads. The relationship between nation and use of issue or image ads appears to be significant (χ^2(1, n = 120) = 4.232, p = .040). Table 10 shows the distribution of issue and image ads in 2008 North American elections by nation.

Table 10.
Use of Issue and Image Ads in 2008 by Nation

		Nation		Total
		Canada	US	
Issue	Frequency	20	27	47
	Percentage	52.6%	32.9%	39.2%
Image	Frequency	18	55	73
	Percentage	47.4%	67.1%	60.8%
Total	Frequency	38	82	120
	Percentage	31.7%	68.3%	100%

χ^2=4.232, df=1, p=.040

Function of Ads

Hypothesis 2 predicted that acclaim ads were more common than attack in North American elections in 2004 and 2008. Overall, 108 ads (55.4%) were attack ads, 46 (23.6%) were acclaim ads, and 41 (21%) were contrast ads. Attack ads were more common in 2008

(60.8%) than in 2004 (46.7%), while acclaim and contrast ads were more common in 2004 than in 2008. Further, the relationship between the year of ads and their function does not appear to be significant (χ^2(2, N=195) = 5.682, p = .058), so the hypothesis is rejected. Table 11 shows the distribution of the function of ads according to year.

Table 11.
Function of Ads by Year

		Year		Total
		2004	2008	
Attack	Frequency	35	73	108
	Percentage	46.7%	60.8%	55.4%
Acclaim	Frequency	18	28	46
	Percentage	24%	23.3%	23.6%
Contrast	Frequency	22	19	41
	Percentage	29.3%	15.8%	21%
Total	Frequency	75	120	195
	Percentage	38.5%	61.5%	100%

Hypothesis 3 predicted that acclaims were more common in Canadian federal elections than in American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008. Acclaims were more common in Canadian elections (32%) than in American elections (20.7%) while attacks were more common in the United States (61.4%) than in Canada (38%). Additionally, attack ads were more commonly used in both countries than acclaim ads. The relationship between nation and function appears to be significant (χ^2(2, N=195) = 8.261, p = .016). However, a z-test for two proportions with a 95% confidence level finds no significant difference between the use of acclaim ads in Canada versus that of the US, so the hypothesis is rejected (*z* (195) = 1.53, p = .063 (one-tailed)). Table 12 shows the distribution of the function of North American election ads in 2004 and 2008 by nation.

Table 12.
Function of Ads by Nation

| | | Nation | | Total |
		Canada	US	
Attack	Frequency	19	73	108
	Percentage	38%	60.8%	55.4%
Acclaim	Frequency	16	28	46
	Percentage	32%	23.3%	23.6%
Contrast	Frequency	15	19	41
	Percentage	30%	15.8%	21%
Total	Frequency	50	145	195
	Percentage	25.6%	74.4%	100%

χ^2=8.261, df=2, p=.016

Hypothesis 4 predicted that acclaims were more common in the 2004 Canadian federal election than in the 2004 American presidential election. To test this hypothesis, the function variable needed to be recoded because the original coding and small size of the Canadian portion of the sample yielded inconclusive results. In recoding the categories of acclaim and contrast were combined. Overall, acclaim and contrast ads were more common than attack ads in North American elections in 2004. However, attacks were more common in the 2004 US presidential election (50.8%) than in the 2004 Canadian federal election (25%). However, the relationship between nation and function of ads in 2004 elections does not appear to be significant (χ^2(1, n=75) = 2.695, p = .101), so it cannot be concluded that attacks were more common in the US than in Canada in 2004. However, a z-test for two proportions with a 95% confidence level indicates that there is a significant difference between nation and the use of acclaim ads (*z* (75) = 1.936, p = .026 (one-tailed)), so the hypothesis is supported. Table 13 shows the distribution of the function of ads in 2004 by nation as originally coded, and Table 14 shows the distribution of the function of ads in 2004 by nation as recoded.

Table 13.
Function of Ads in 2004 by Nation (Original Coding)

| | | Nation | | Total |
		Canada	US	
Attack	Frequency	3	32	35
	Percentage	25%	50.8%	46.7%
Acclaim	Frequency	6	12	18
	Percentage	50%	19%	24%
Contrast	Frequency	3	19	22
	Percentage	25%	30.2%	29.3%
Total	Frequency	12	63	75
	Percentage	16%	84%	100%

Table 14.
Function of Ads in 2004 by Nation (Recoded)

| | | Nation | | Total |
		Canada	US	
Attack	Frequency	3	32	35
	Percentage	25%	50.8%	46.7%
Acclaim/Contrast	Frequency	9	31	40
	Percentage	75%	49.2%	53.3%
Total	Frequency	12	63	75
	Percentage	16%	84%	100%

Hypothesis 5 predicted that acclaims were more common in the 2008 Canadian federal election than in the 2008 American presidential election. Overall, attack ads were more common in the 2008 North American elections than were acclaim and contrast ads. The 2008 US presidential election featured more attack ads (69.5%) than did the 2008 Canadian federal election (42.1%). Additionally, the Canadian federal election featured more acclaim ads (26.3%) and contrast ads (31.6%) than did the US presidential election, with 22% and 8.5% respectively.

The relationship between nation and ad function in 2008 elections appears to be significant (χ^2(2, n = 120) = 12.126, p = .002), but a z-test of two proportions with a confidence level of 95% indicates that there is no difference between the use of acclaim ads in Canada versus the use of acclaim ads in the US (z (120) = 0.37, p = .356 (one-tailed)), so the hypothesis is rejected. Table 15 shows the distribution of the function of ads in 2008 elections by nation.

Table 15.
Function of Ads in 2008 by Nation

| | | Nation | | Total |
		Canada	US	
Attack	Frequency	16	57	73
	Percentage	42.1%	69.5%	60.8%
Acclaim	Frequency	10	18	28
	Percentage	26.3%	22%	23.3%
Contrast	Frequency	12	7	19
	Percentage	31.6%	8.5%	15.9%
Total	Frequency	38	82	120
	Percentage	31.7%	68.3%	100%

χ^2=12.126, df=2, p=.002

Use of Issue and Image Ads by Outcome

Hypothesis 6 predicted that winners used issue ads more than image ads in 2004 and 2008. Fifty-two (56.5%) of the ads used by winners of North American elections were issue ads, compared to 40 ads (43.5%) that were image ads. Defeated candidates and parties used image ads (67%) more often than issue ads (33%). The relationship between winning and the use of issue or image ads appears to be significant (χ^2(1, N=195) = 10.897, p = .001). Table 16 shows the distribution of issue and image ads according to outcome for candidates of North American elections.

Table 16.
Use of Issue or Image Ads by Outcome

		Outcome		Total
		Winner	Defeated	
Issue	Frequency	52	34	86
	Percentage	56.5%	33%	44.1%
Image	Frequency	40	69	109
	Percentage	43.5%	67%	55.9%
Total	Frequency	92	103	195
	Percentage	47.2%	52.8%	100%

χ^2=10.897, df=1, p=.001

Research question 4 asked if winners of Canadian federal elections in 2004 and 2008 used issue ads more than winners of American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008. Twenty-three (76.7%) of ads used by winners of Canadian federal elections in 2004 and 2008 were issue ads, compared to 49% of ads from the winners of US presidential elections in 2004 and 2008. The relationship between the nation of an election winner and the use of issue or image ads appears to be significant (χ^2(1, n = 132) = 7.168, p = .007). Table 17 shows the distribution of winners' use of issue or image ads by nation.

Table 17.
Winners' Use of Issue and Image Ads by Nation

		Nation		Total
		Canada	US	
Issue	Frequency	23	50	73
	Percentage	76.7%	49%	55.3%
Image	Frequency	7	52	59
	Percentage	23.3%	51%	44.7%
Total	Frequency	30	102	132
	Percentage	22.7%	77.3%	100%

χ^2=7.168, df=1, p=.007

Research question 5 asked if the winner of the 2004 Canadian federal election used issue ads more than the winner of the 2004 American presidential election. Overall, 18 (51.4%) of ads used by winners in North American elections in 2004 were issue ads, compared to 17 (48.6%) that were image ads. Seven (70%) of the ads used by the winner of the 2004 Canadian federal election, the Liberal Party, were issue ads compared to 11 (44%) of the ads used by the winner of the 2004 US presidential election, George W. Bush (χ^2(1, n = 35) = 1.933, p = .164). However, the small number of Canadian ads from 2004 in the sample yielded inconclusive results due to an expected count of less than five in one cell of the crosstab, so no conclusion can be made regarding the relationship between the nation of a winner of a 2004 election in North America and the use of issue or image ads. Table 18 shows the distribution of winners' use of issue or image ads in 2004 elections by nation.

Table 18.
Winners' Use of Issue and Image Ads in 2004 by Nation

| | | Nation | | |
		Canada	US	Total
Issue	Frequency	7	11	18
	Percentage	70%	44%	51.4%
Image	Frequency	3	14	17
	Percentage	30%	56%	48.6%
Total	Frequency	10	25	35
	Percentage	28.6%	71.4%	100%

Research question 6 asked if the winner of the 2008 Canadian federal election used issue ads more than the winner of the 2008 American presidential election. Overall, winners of North American elections in 2008 used issue ads (59.6%) more than image ads (40.4%). Fifteen (83.3%) of the ads used by the winner of the 2008 Canadian federal election, the Conservative Party, were issue ads, compared to 19 (48.7%) of the ads used by the winner of the 2008

American presidential election, Barack Obama. The relationship between the nation of the winner of a 2008 election and the use of issue or image ads appears to be significant (χ^2(1, n = 57) = 6.131, p = .013). Table 19 shows the distribution of winners' use of issue or image ads in 2008 by nation.

Table 19.
Winners' Use of Issue and Image Ads in 2008 by Nation

| | | Nation | | |
		Canada	US	Total
Issue	Frequency	15	19	34
	Percentage	83.3%	48.7%	59.6%
Image	Frequency	3	20	23
	Percentage	16.7%	51.3%	40.4%
Total	Frequency	18	39	57
	Percentage	31.6%	68.4%	100%

χ^2=6.131, df=1, p=.013

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to apply methods used to study American political advertising to political advertising in the Canadian context, specifically the categorizations of Benoit, Pier, and Blaney (1997) and Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr (2000) as well as Johnston and Kaid (2002). Additionally, the goal was to do possibly the first comparative analysis of political advertising in the United States and Canada.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that issue ads were more common in North American elections in 2004 and 2008 than were image ads. The data in this analysis do not support this hypothesis. This was in contrast to previous literature showing that issue ads are more commonly used by candidates than image ads both in the United States and abroad (Benoit, 2001; Chang, 2000; Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 1995; Johnston & Kaid, 2002; Joslyn, 1986; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997; West, 1993). North American political advertising might be shifting from a policy focus to a character focus, or this might be indicative of the state of North American politics in the contemporary era. Further, and related to contemporary politics, the 2008 US presidential election was very different from previous elections in terms of its background and historic elements. This might have contributed to the use of image ads in that particular election.

Research questions 1, 2, and 3 all concerned the use of issue and image ads in Canadian federal elections verses the use of issue and image ads in American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008. Overall, parties in Canadian federal elections used issue ads more often than image ads as well as used issue ads more often than candidates in American presidential elections although no relationship exists between nation and the use of issue or image ads in 2004. The

use of issue ads over image ads in Canadian federal elections is not necessarily a surprising finding given previous literature that has established a focus on policy and issues over character and image internationally (Chang, 2000; Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 1995; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997). However, such studies are primarily not comparative. Further, this finding might be the result of differences between the American and Canadian political systems as well as the nature of the 2008 US presidential election.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that acclaims were more common in North American elections in 2004 and 2008. The data in this analysis found that attacks were more common than acclaims. This is in contrast to previous literature establishing that acclaims are more commonly used in elections in both the United States and abroad than attacks (Benoit, 1999; Chang, 2000; Holtz-Bacha & Kaid, 1995; Johnston & Kaid, 2002; Tak, Kaid, & Lee, 1997; Wen, Benoit, & Yu, 2004). As with previous findings, this might suggest a trend towards attack ads in North America or merely indicate the current state of North American politics. It is possibly an effect of increased polarization of the American electorate following the 2004 presidential election (Erikson & Tedin, 2007) combined with a desire on the part of campaigns to mobilize their base through negative advertising, an effect of negative advertising that has been supported by some studies (Atkin and Heald, 1976; Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Stevens, 2005).

Hypotheses 3 through 5 all predicted that acclaims would be used more frequently in Canadian federal elections than American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008. Overall, acclaim ads were more commonly used in Canadian federal elections than in American presidential elections. However, there was not a significant difference between the use of acclaims in Canadian federal elections and American presidential elections overall. Additionally, while there was a significant difference in the use of acclaim ads in the US and

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Canada in 2004, there was not a significant difference in 2008. The overall and 2008 findings are somewhat peculiar given the relationship between incumbency and the use of acclaim ads by Benoit (1999). The 2004 finding is not necessarily surprising for the same reason. The presence of an incumbent party is a characteristic of virtually all Canadian federal elections while incumbent candidates are less common in American presidential elections, so it would have been expected that acclaims would be more commonly used in both Canadian federal elections than in American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008. That attack ads were more common in Canadian federal elections as well as American presidential elections during this time period speaks to the conflicting evidence of the impact of negative advertising on political participation noted by Newton (1999). Voter turnout in the 2008 US presidential election was very high in comparison to recent elections (MacGillis & Cohen, 2008), while turnout in the 2008 Canadian federal election was one of the lowest in history (CBC, 2008). The results regarding the use of attack ads in the American presidential election indicates a mobilizing effect shown in previous research (Atkin & Heald, 1976; Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Stevens, 2005), while the results regarding the use of attack ads in the Canadian federal election indicates a demobilizing effect shown in conflicting research (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994; Huber & Arceneaux, 2007; Wolak, 2006).

Hypothesis 6 predicted that winners of North American elections in 2004 and 2008 would use issue ads more often than image ads. This hypothesis was supported by the data in this analysis, supporting previous research by Benoit (2001) as well as Haddock and Zanna's (1996) and Nesbitt-Larking's (2006) speculation that the use of image and attack ads were detrimental to the success of parties in Canadian federal elections. Research questions 4 through 6 all also addressed the use of issue or image ads by election winners, comparing their use in the

United States and Canada. No conclusion could be made regarding the use of issue or image ads in the 2004 Canadian federal election versus the 2004 US presidential election due to the small size of the Canadian portion of the sample. However, in the case of 2008 elections and elections in 2004 and 2008 overall, winners of Canadian federal elections used issue ads more than winners of US presidential elections. This finding is consistent with the earlier finding in this analysis that issue ads were used more often by candidates in the 2004 and 2008 Canadian federal elections than candidates in the 2004 and 2008 US presidential elections.

Limitations

All research projects have limitations, and there are three important limitations to note with regards to this analysis: the use of only American coders, the size and type of sample used, and the low reliability of one of the instruments used.

Researchers conducting a content analysis should aim to be as objective as possible. To that end, researchers should refrain from coding data themselves so as to reduce the influence of researcher bias (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). The researcher of this particular analysis chose to have two outside coders due to her past employment in political communication as well as her knowledge and opinions regarding Canadian politics. However, both coders were Americans with no knowledge of Canadian politics. On the one hand, this is beneficial to their objectivity in analyzing the Canadian portion of the sample. On the other, such could leave them unaware of aspects of Canadian political culture that might be useful in analyzing that portion of the sample. A lack of knowledge and assumptions about the culture of another nation is one of the primary challenges of cross-national media research (Livingstone, 2003). It is possible that different results would have been found had one of the coders been Canadian.

The second major limitation of this analysis is in regard to the sample. The sample collected and used was a convenience sample. Random samples are always preferable for any content analysis study (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Neuendorf, 2002). The sample in this analysis consisted of the entire population of 2004 and 2008 American presidential candidate ads. A convenience sample of party ads in the 2004 and 2008 was selected because Canadian federal elections Canadian election ads are far more difficult to obtain than American election ads, as there are not websites dedicated to the collection of Canadian political ads as there are of American political ads. Because a convenience sample has been used, results might not be truly representative of political advertising in the US and Canada in 2004 and 2008. Further, the small size of the Canadian portion of the sample rendered some findings inconclusive.

Finally, the low reliability of the issue and image instrument used is a severe limitation on findings regarding that variable and might be the result of a number of things. First, low reliability might have be the result of inadequate coding instructions or insufficient coder training on the part of the researcher (Neuendorf, 2002) although great effort was made to ensure agreement between coders as to how to code the ads during training. Additionally, the researcher was available to coders to answer any questions that arose during analysis. Second, coders may have had difficulty in distinguishing between manifest and latent content (Neuendorf, 2002; Marshall & Roberts, 2008). For example, an ad critiquing the policy of an opponent on the basis of his or her group associations would be considered an issue ad due to its address of a policy. However, a coder might code it as an issue ad due to the mention of a candidate's group associations or personal characteristics. In this instance, what is an issue ad appears as an image ad due to the underlying message that the opponent has a conflict of interest or is untrustworthy. Third, the problem might be the issue and image categorization itself.

Benoit, Pier, and Blaney (1997) indicated that the issue and image categorization is problematic because issue and image are interrelated. In other words, a candidate's stance on an issue can influence the candidate's image. Further, it is difficult to define what constitutes an issue. *Issue* generally refers to "topics of conflict in a discussion" (p. 3). In the context of political communication, *issue* also indicates a policy consideration. However, candidate image-character, qualifications, experience- might become an issue by virtue of becoming a topic of discussion or disagreement. Therefore, it is possible that coders viewed ads regarding some aspect of candidates' personal characteristics as issue ads. For example, in the 2008 Canadian federal election several Conservative Party ads focused on Liberal leader Stephane Dion's unpreparedness and inadequacy for being Prime Minister, all tagged with the line, "Stephane Dion is not a leader." In this study, coders designated this set of ads in exact opposite ways with one identifying them as issue ads and the other identifying them as image ads. Therefore, the issue and image categorization and the instrument built around it might be in need of revision.

Implications for Future Research

This study is possibly the first comparative analysis of political advertising in the United States and Canada. As such, one obvious implication is the need for further comparative studies on political communication in both countries. Such research might include print advertisements, radio spots, and web ads in addition to televised ads. In addition, the ads of candidates for Congress and candidates for Member of Parliament might be another area of comparative research. Additionally, studies specifically addressing the influence of the public agendas of both nations on the one another would be very beneficial to understanding the nature of the relationship between the American political system and the Canadian political system.

A number of longitudinal studies of American political advertising have been conducted (Benoit, 1999, 2001; Benoit, Brazeal, & Benoit, 2006; Johnston & Kaid, 2002). A longitudinal study of Canadian political advertising, both on its own and in comparison with American political advertising, would yield more conclusive results regarding trends in political advertising in North America as well as potentially identify influences of political advertising in one nation on the other.

Finally, in addition to comparative studies with the United States, comparative research of Canadian political advertising and that of other parliamentary democracies might be useful in identifying patterns and commonalities in political communication that exist in that political system. Further, such research might aid in identifying specific influences of American politics on Canadian politics.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: American Ads

2004- George W. Bush
"Agenda"
"Clockwork"
"Complicated Plan"
"Don't Take Chances
"Economy: Common Sense vs. Higher
Taxes"
"Global Test"
"Healthcare Hypocrisy"
"Healthcare: Practical vs. Big Government"
"Medical Malpractice"
"Medicare Hypocrisy"
"Nearly 2 Million Reasons"
"No Limit"
"Peace"
"Risk"
"Rock"
"Searching"
"Terror Agenda"
"Thinking Mom"
"Time"
"Tort Reform"
"Whatever It Takes"
"Windsurfing"
"Wolves"
"Worldview"
"Your Doctor"

2004- John Kerry
"Across America"
"Bush's Mess"
"Can't Win"
"Cheney Halliburton"
"Defend America"
"Despicable"
"Different Story"
"Doesn't Get It"
"Economy Kickstart"
"Ever Since"
"Flu"
"He's Lost, He's Desperate"
"Hoover"
"Immediate Help"
"Incentives"
"Ingenuity"
"Innovation"
"January Surprise"
"Jobs"
"Juvenile"
"Leading"
"Looking"
"Michael J. Fox"
"Middle Class Families"
"Never"
"Not True"
"Obligation"
"Powerful"
"Protect"
"Real Americans"
"Reasons"
"Right Track"
"Rx Drugs"
"Stem Cell"
"Truth on Taxes"
"Uninsured"
"Wrong Choices"
"You Saw"

2008-John McCain
"ACORN"
"Advice"
"Ambition"
"Ayers"
"Better Off"
"Chicago Machine"
"Compare"
"Crisis"
"Dangerous"
"Disrespectful"
"Dome"
"Education"
"Embarrass"
"Empty Words"
"Fact Check"
"Folks"
"Foundation"
"Freedom"
"Hype"
"I Am Joe"
"Jim Johnson"
"Joe the Plumber"
"Ladies and Gentlemen"
"Lies and Sighs"
"Life Savings"
"McCain is Right"
"Mum"
"Obama Chavez"
"Obama Praising McCain"
"Original Mavericks"
"Overseas"
"Patriotic Act"
"Preconditions"
"Promise"
"Rein"
"Special"
"Strong"
"Sweat Equity"
"Symbols of Hope"
"Tax Cutter"
"The Coal Miner"
"Week"

2008-Barack Obama
"90 Percent"
"A Stronger Economy"
"Article"
"Barney"
"Better Off"
"Burden"
"Defining Moment"
"Delighted"
"Designation"
"Figured"
"Fundamentals"
"His Administration"
"His Choice"
"Honor"
"It Gets Worse"
"Life Member"
"Lose"
"Mills"
"Naked Lies"
"Need Education"
"No Maverick"
"One Word"
"Plan for Change"
"Prescription"
"Promise"
"Real Change"
"Rearview Mirror"
"Same Path"
"Same"
"Sold Us Out"
"Something"
"Spending Spree"
"Still"
"Taketh"
"Tested"
"The Subject"
"Try This"
"What Kind"
"Who Advises"
"Zero"

2004- Conservative Party
"Commitment"
"Demand Better"

2008- Conservative Party
"A Nation of Immigrants"
"A Time for Certainty"
"Canada Has to Stand for Something"
"Canadians on Stephen Harper"
"Carbon Tax"
"Childcare"
"Economy"
"Family is Everything"
"Fundamentals"
"Gamble"
"Lest We Forget"
"Not a Leader"
"Not Worth the Risk"
"Pay More"
"Soft on Crime Doesn't Work"
"The True North Strong and Free"
"What in the World"
"You Lose"

2004- Liberal Party
"Balancing the Books"
"Canada"
"Caregivers"
"Cities"
"Environment"
"Healthcare"

"Stephen Harper: The Truth"
"The Harper We Don't Know"

2008- Liberal Party
"Denial"
"Falling Behind"
"Harper and New Canadians"
"Harper and the War in Iraq"
"Harper, Howard, Bush, and Iraq"
"Harpernomics and Bush"
"Harpernomics and You"
"Liberal Leadership"
"The Choice on Canada's Water"
"The Real Agenda"
"The Real Harper"
"This is Harpernomics"
"Turn the Page"

2004- New Democratic Party
"Harper and Martin"
"Harper, Martin, and Bush"

2008- New Democratic Party
"Chalk Talk: Healthcare"
"Chalk Talk: Leadership"
"Chalk Talk: The Economy"
"Strong Leader"
"Strong on the Economy"
"Strong on Healthcare"
"Strong on the Environment"

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