DOMINICAN
UNIVERSITY
of CALIFORNIA

Dominican Scholar

Senior Theses and Capstone Projects

Student Scholarship

2018

Nationalize or Localize: Senatorial Incumbent and Challenger Differences in Issue Prioritization

Joshua Rosenberg
Dominican University of California

Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.

Nationalize or Localize: Senatorial Incumbent and Challenger

Differences in Issue Prioritization

By

Joshua Rosenberg

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts In
Political Science**

**Department of Political Science & International Studies
Dominican University of California
April 16, 2016**

Abstract

How do politicians choose which issues to emphasize in an election? Studying campaign behavior is crucial to understanding how political ads target voters and prioritize issues. Senate candidates normally attempt to either nationalize the election or emphasize state issues in their campaigns. How do Senate incumbent and challenger candidates differ in terms of issue prioritization? I hypothesize the challengers attempt to nationalize the election, while the incumbents generally focus their efforts on state issues. Political conventional wisdom indicates challengers typically try to nationalize the election by attempting to criticize the incumbent for either supporting or voting against the current presidential administration. In contrast, incumbents tend to focus on state issues because they have the ability to claim credit for work done in their state, and usually know their constituency better than the challenger. However, current literature is inconclusive, requiring further research. This study is qualitative and uses content analysis to examine political ads from five different senate elections in 2014: Arkansas, Colorado, North Carolina, New Hampshire, and Alaska. The data are compelling as they reflect trends during a midterm election of a second term presidency in which the constituents appear to be rising against the current party in power.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

There are countless people that should be on this page and I wish I could include everyone. I am extremely thankful for everyone that has supported me throughout not just my college career, but my childhood as well. I would not be the person am I today without all of you and I am eternally grateful. First, I would like to specifically thank my amazing parents Carol and Randall Rosenberg for providing me with the unconditional love and countless opportunities to succeed (and for proofreading my forty-two page thesis). I would like to thank my siblings: Shannon, Jaime and Noah. You three and Mom and Dad are my biggest inspirations and you push me to be better every day. I would like to thank my best friends from Hawaii nei for always supporting me and helping curb my homesickness. My friends up at Dominican more than deserve to be mentioned here as they have helped me through so many hard times and I will miss you all terribly. I would especially like to thank Gigi Gokek and Alison Howard. Both of you have pushed me to be a better student and advising me to take advantage of every opportunity. Thank you for encouraging me to not limit myself and helping me realize I am capable of much more. You both had a tremendous impact on my education here at Dominican University of California, and no words can express my gratitude. I would also like to thank Jordan Lieser for helping me develop both as a writer and a student, and always pushing me to be the best. I would like to thank Hannah Rodriguez-Farrar for always supporting me and recommending me for numerous fantastic opportunities. Thank you to all of my soccer coaches who have gotten me to play at a level capable of getting recruited by Dominican University. Thank you to my best friend and girlfriend, Sabrina, for always being there for me. I would not be here without you. Lastly, I would like to thank my golden retriever Daisy for being a light in my life since sophomore year of high school. Thank you all.

Introduction

How do politicians utilize campaigns to get elected? In every election, the campaigns of the candidates utilize strategies intended to give them the necessary edge to be successfully elected. Studying campaign behavior is paramount in providing insight on these specific methods and why certain decisions are made leading up to Election Day.

A core decision that each campaign must make is which issues are going to be prioritized. Candidates decide which voter blocs to target and then emphasize the issues that they believe will persuade those constituents into voting for them. A candidate's campaign will often prioritize issues they believe the voters care about rather than the issues that they have the most to offer, based on the candidate's own background and experience. For example, a candidate that specializes in environmental science may not run heavily on climate change and instead choose to focus on a completely different issue if it is deemed more important to the constituents than global warming. Campaign tactics are designed to influence the public's opinion of the candidate in a way that will hopefully get him or her elected. The public needs to know how and why this happens so that they can make informed choices about which candidates actually represent their interests.

In most races, there is an incumbent and a challenger. The incumbent is an elected official that is currently holding office. The challenger is a candidate that contests the incumbent for his or her seat in office. However, in some cases there are "open elections" in which an incumbent is absent. In this situation, there are essentially just two challengers running against each other for the open seat. Open seats usually occur because of redistricting (the process in which district lines are redrawn according to the US Census every ten years) or the current politician in office chooses to retire or passes away. Incumbents usually have a tremendous

advantage over challengers in an election because they benefit from name recognition, the ability to fundraise earlier, franking privileges (free congressional mail service), credit claiming, and their legislative record. As a result, incumbent senators have enjoyed a reelection rate of about ninety percent (Mahtesian, 2012). Almost every state in the United States (US) is different in terms of its demographics and saliency of issues. However, one common element in a senate election is how candidates attempt to either nationalize the election or emphasize state issues within their campaigns. This presents an interesting question: How do senate incumbent and challenger candidates differ in terms of issue prioritization?

I hypothesize that the challengers attempt to nationalize the election, while incumbents generally focus their efforts on state issues. The reasoning behind this argument is based on conventional wisdom, which suggests challengers will normally attempt to tie the incumbent to the current administration in a negative light. Their efforts are concentrated on trying to either criticize the incumbent for supporting or opposing the current administration's policies. It is even more probable for the challenger to tie the incumbent to the current administration if the presidential approval rating is low in the respective state. For example, if there is a Democratic president and the incumbent is a Democrat, it is extremely probable that the Republican challenger will criticize the incumbent for supporting the president's policy agenda. Moreover, if there is a Democratic president with a Republican incumbent, the democrat challenger will most likely condemn the incumbent for opposing the president's policies.

In contrast, conventional wisdom also suggests that incumbents focus on the issues that are most prevalent in their state. This is a reference to the numerous advantages that incumbents possess as they have the ability to claim credit for work done while in office. For example, if an incumbent has brought some large project to their state that employed thousands of people, he or

she will emphasize that service constantly throughout their campaign. Incumbents usually know their constituency better than the challenger, meaning that they are more knowledgeable on what issues are most important to the voters.

This study examines issue prioritization in five different 2014 senatorial elections: Colorado, North Carolina, Arkansas, New Hampshire, and Alaska. All of these states were among the most competitive senate races in 2014, and with the exception of Arkansas, the election results fell within a five percent margin. The issue prioritization is determined through an analysis of the political ads from each senate candidate. Politicians use political ads frequently to publicize their message, but also to emphasize issues that will aid them in the election. All of the political ads are obtained from the official YouTube accounts for each candidate.

It is important to choose the most competitive elections because of certain rationales. First, the most competitive elections typically bring the highest voter turnout. Elections that are not competitive usually result in complacency within the constituency, translating to a lack of a need to vote. If people believe their desired candidate is going to win relatively easily, then they are dissuaded from actually going to the polls to vote. Second, candidates with a comfortable lead in their race have a lesser need to move public opinion in non-competitive elections. Therefore, they do not necessarily have to prioritize their issues in ways that they believe will help them get elected. Finally, in more competitive elections there would ideally be more political ads produced by each candidate. A barrage of ads is fairly common in competitive elections as each candidate attempts to persuade specific voting groups.

In the academic sphere, there is a plethora of literature that discusses campaign and voting behavior. There are also numerous studies on wave elections, campaign persuasion strategies, and the role of public opinion. However, there is a decided absence of literature on

issue prioritization with respect to political campaigns and what senate candidates tend to focus on. Moreover, there has not been any extensive research on the 2014 election cycle, which happened to be a "wave election". This type of election is one in which there is usually a wide spread dissatisfaction amongst the constituents with the current state of the country. This potentially leads voters to elect candidates from the opposite party of the one that is in power. This presents a gap in the literature that requires further research.

This study is qualitative and uses content analysis to examine the political ads from each senator in the specified races. Analyzing the political ads in a methodical way allows for a better understanding of how both senate candidates in an election prioritize issues. The interesting aspect of this research is that it focuses on the midterm of a second term presidency in which a type of insurrection appears to be building for the presidential election race in 2016. In a midterm election, the president's party generally loses seats in Congress whether it is in the House, Senate, or both. The theory behind this is that midterm elections usually see smaller voter turnout, which are comprised of motivated partisans on the opposite side of the political spectrum. The voters that elected the president and other congressional members from the same party are less inclined to show up during the midterm elections. Additionally, there is typically a decline in approval in the polls almost every U.S. president experiences as they make policy decisions that alienate certain groups among the constituency. Furthermore, studies show it is common for voters to have split tickets (ballots not uniformly checked off for the same party) out of fear of one party having too much power. These studies indicate some constituents' preference for divided government.

This paper first discusses the existing literature on senate candidates' issue prioritization as well as other relevant topics such as voting behavior, wave elections, and incumbency

advantages. This discussion reviews the scholarly debate on the topic and indicates the reasoning behind the need for this study. The literature review is followed by an in-depth discussion on the logical reasoning behind the argument presented in this paper. Next, the study describes the process in which the data are collected. This process entails the development of a code sheet, which is used to determine the frequency of key terms in each political ad. These frequencies compared with numerous polls, which rank the top issues for each state. Additionally, polls that display the most important national issues at the time are included. The information from these polls is then compared to the frequencies of the key terms in the coding sheet. This indicates whether or not the senate candidate is prioritizing national or state issues. It is also worth including the presidential approval rating in each state in 2014 to determine if it correlates with a challenger's attempt to tie the incumbent to the Obama Administration.

This paper concludes with a discussion of these implications, which is crucial in determining what the results mean and how it affects the scholarly debate on issue prioritization. This section is then followed by a thorough review of the study and the potential flaws that occurred in the research. All of these components are essential to make suggestions for future research on political issue prioritization.

Existing Literature

This section discusses the scholarly debate surrounding the issue prioritization of incumbents and challengers. There is currently a lack of literature focusing specifically on issue prioritization in senatorial races. However, there is a significant amount of literature on topics I deem as relevant to this study. I begin this review with a discussion of the "incumbency advantage," which numerous scholars have attributed to the overwhelming reelection rate of congressional members. Second, I cover wave elections and how they could potentially alter a

candidate's strategies. Third, this review includes an examination of studies on political

campaign strategies to gain a better understanding of the methods politicians utilize. Fourth, I

review the literature on voting behavior, which could have an effect on candidates' issue

prioritization. Lastly, it is necessary to discuss research on public opinion and its effects on

campaign strategies.

Incumbency Advantage

There are tremendous advantages that incumbents have over challengers in elections,

which could affect the primary issues senators focus on throughout their campaigns. The

incumbency advantages this section discusses are the selection effect/name recognition,

constituency services, and the building of war chests.

Selection Effect/Name Recognition

One of the greatest advantages incumbents usually have over their opponents is name

recognition. A study conducted by Kam and Zechmeister (2013) examined how the mere

familiarity with a candidate affects their voting decision. These scholars tested their theory with

experiments and found evidence to support the notion of constituents using name recognition to

form their decision (Kam & Zechmeister, 2013). Although the mass media and political

campaigns spend millions of dollars on advertisements, an enormous portion of the electorate

remain unfamiliar with political candidates. When voters are in the booth with an absence of

information on two candidates, they may rely on name recognition to make their decision.

Gowrisankaran et al. (2004) theorized a "selection effect" in senatorial campaigns, which

encompasses other incumbency advantages such as name recognition. The concept of

incumbency advantages presented in this theory is one of the more popular schools of thought

among scholars (Jacobson, 2016; Abramowitz, 1975). However, scholars were critical of his

other findings. The selection effect explains that elections involve incumbents of relatively higher quality in comparison to their challengers. The rationale is that incumbents have won past elections and winning candidates are generally of higher quality. Name recognition and a better rapport with constituents are factors that make these candidates higher quality and continuously reelected. This incumbency advantage, in combination with the need for mass resources in modern elections, ultimately deters challengers of equal or higher quality from running (Duggan, 2004; Gowrisankaran et al., 2004). An interesting finding from this study indicates tenure as an unimportant determinant of the incumbency advantage. To clarify, Gowrisankaran et al., insinuates that the experience of being in office for certain durations does not have an effect on reelection probabilities. Instead, the opponents a politician defeats throughout their career have a greater effect on reelection. For example, an incumbent who defeats a six-year incumbent has a greater reelection probability than an incumbent who defeats a two-year incumbent (Duggan, 2004; Gowrisankaran et al., 2004).

Constituency Services

Constituency services have become much more necessary with the extensive growth of government, which has caused congressional members to change the focus of their activities. Constituents often require assistance from their congressional members in dealing with bureaucratic problems. Many consider these services as electoral profit because they are purely nonpartisan, meaning they do not upset any constituents. The effectiveness of constituency services has led to debate between scholars. Some scholars explained the benefits of constituency services and how they could theoretically be very effective (Cain et al, 1987; Jacobson, 2016). However, King (1991) focused on the numerous methodological problems that existed in past and current research that examined the correlation between incumbents and electoral success.

This scholar did not argue either for or against the effectiveness, but he contended that future research needs to portray the effects of constituency services in congressional elections (King, 1991). This analysis was essential as it provide suggestions for future research on correlations between the incumbency advantage and electoral success.

Pork barreling is a type of constituency service and has also been controversial with respect to the effectiveness of it. Jacobson (2016) defined pork barrel legislation as the large government funded projects that congressional members bring back to their district or state. This service should logically satisfy constituents because of the abundance of new jobs and other benefits granted from these projects. However, some scholars have doubted the effectiveness of pork barreling (Stein & Bickers, 1994). The scholars argued that constituents have generally been uninformed of the benefits legislators bring to their district because many of them lacked political knowledge or cared about politics. This essentially rendered these benefits ineffective (Stein & Bickers, 1994). Additionally, these scholars pointed out a flaw in past pork barrel research; the absence of empirical tests to prove their effectiveness.

War Chests

War chests are defined as the mass amount of campaign funding that incumbents accumulate throughout their time in office in anticipation of reelection or running for higher office. A majority of this funding comes from supporters and special interest groups. Elections are gradually becoming more expensive, making campaign war chests increasingly more important in political campaigns. Senate races are notorious for being expensive and significantly more so than House races. This is because Senate race are more competitive than House races with their longer terms (six years versus two years) and constituency sizes. More competitiveness typically results in the candidates spending more money than usual on

advertisements, voter mobilization efforts, and other essentials to obtain support. Furthermore, House members represent single districts, whereas senators represent entire states. This difference in constituency sizes results in a more expensive mode of communication for senators as they rely on television advertising rather than personal contact to reach their constituents (Hernnson, 2016).

Not only are large sums of money important for campaign operations and advertisements, but they are also utilized to ward off quality challengers. Numerous scholars conducted studies that measured the effectiveness of war chests in preventing high quality challengers from running in opposition. Goodliffe (2007) concluded war chests do not have a significant effect in deterring strong general-election challengers. Additionally, Goodliffe argued that an incumbent's war chest is simply leftover capital from the previous election. In contrast, Eaves (2003) found senators raising insurmountable sums of money, essentially scaring away quality challengers. The logic behind her argument is quality challengers strategically choose when to run against an incumbent, and the incumbent's campaign funding is certainly a factor to consider (Goodliffe, 2007). Literature on war chests is important to review because of the intriguing implications. Hypothetically, if an incumbent could ward off quality challengers using war chests, there should logically be less incentive to prioritize state issues of lesser interest. A lower quality challenger should make the race less competitive giving the incumbent the opportunity to campaign on issues less prevalent among their constituents.

Wave Elections

Wave elections have become commonplace, having occurred in 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2014. This type of literature is important to cover because of the implications that it has for

senatorial issue prioritization. There are two main aspects that are necessary to discuss: the source of wave elections and the strategies candidates employ in anticipation of wave elections.

Sources of Wave Elections

Wave elections are ones in which a party makes major gains in the House and Senate. Furthermore, the incumbents losing their seats almost all come from one party (Simpson, 2011; Casey, 2015; Arnn, 2014). In wave elections, there are candidates of lower quality who win simply because of the strength of the election surge. These candidates would usually not win in an election where the national tilt was more level. Rothenberg (2014) gave a criterion for labeling an election as a wave election. He used a minimum net change of twenty seats in the House as a threshold, but conceded it is arbitrary and there lacked a concrete benchmark.

Numerous scholars have theorized the rationale behind these phenomena but the primary cause of wave elections remains inconclusive. One theory conveyed "strategic politicians" as the main triggers of wave elections (Jacobson & Kernell, 1983). This concept entailed a large number of high quality challengers making tactical decisions on when to run, usually based off of the national political climate. For example, if the current national economic conditions are poor, the minority party will be able to recruit high quality challengers to oppose high quality incumbents. These candidates have usually campaigned on the salient issues and the need for sweeping change to redirect the current direction of the country.

Wave elections could imply lower quality candidates "riding the wave" to office, which could result in subsequent wave elections when they are challenged and lose to higher quality challengers. Furthermore, some scholars have argued that freshmen congressional members elected in these waves are more ideologically extreme than others (Simpson, 2011). The extremity would theoretically make these incumbents more vulnerable in future elections.

Simpson (2011) found evidence of ideology and candidate quality not being major causes of wave elections. Instead, national conditions were found as the main determinant. However, it is worth noting that this study only analyzed one reelection success of a freshman class, which denotes an insufficient sample.

Another source of wave elections is detailed in the "presidential coattails" concept, which is still prevalent today. This theory explains the ability of winning presidential candidates to extend their coattails to same party congressional candidates and help them win their election (Erikson, 2016). This idea is essentially straight ticket voting, where people vote for all of the candidates from the same party on their ballots. Erikson (2016) found strong evidence indicating support for the party of the winning presidential candidate increases proportionally with support for congressional candidates of the same party. Some scholars correlated wave elections with a vast change in opinion over the electorate, which has been contradicted by recent elections. They contended that a majority of Americans have become fearful of a large government and desired a reversal in the growth of government. However, recent elections have seen the American people electing waves of politicians who support larger government (Arnn, 2014).

Strategies Used in Anticipation of Wave Elections

National conditions can present opportunities for challengers to exploit and adapt their campaign strategies. A case study of the Florida's 18th Congressional District perfectly exemplified challengers who employed a more negative message that focused on national issues (Greenberg, 2015). This study highlighted the strategies utilized by Republican candidate Carl Domino throughout his campaign, which resulted in a significant loss to Democrat incumbent Patrick Murphy in what was supposed to be a tight race. Domino repeatedly referenced "connecting Murphy to national Democrats, Obamacare, immigration/national security, and the

budget" in his advertisements (Greenberg, 2015). He primarily focused on national issues in an

attempt to ride the wave with other Republicans in office.

This case study also demonstrated how masterful politicians could execute a campaign to

defend against wave elections. Murphy completely avoided tying himself to the Obama

administration and painted himself as an independent. His campaign focused specifically on

local issues and they were by far the most referenced throughout his advertisements. In his entire

ad campaign, he referenced his opponent one time. He highlighted his legislative record and the

millions of dollars of federal money that he brought to his district, which addressed local issues.

However, it is worth noting that although this study lends support to my hypothesis, the

implications of Greenberg's study may only apply in specific instances. Florida Republicans are

historically known for their environmentalism and supporting moderate candidates, which

greatly benefitted Murphy. Greenberg (2015) conceded that localizing elections worked in

Florida because the constituents had very real issues affecting their daily lives. The prominent

national issues such as ISIS and Obamacare were passive issues that faded into the background

of daily life (Greenberg, 2015).

Political Campaign Strategies

There are an overwhelming number of campaign strategies, but the three main types of

tactics that I am examining are targeting strategies, gender differences in strategies, and

persuasion strategies. These are essential to discuss because campaign strategies directly decide

what issues an incumbent or challenger will prioritize.

Targeting Strategies

Targeting strategies involve candidates crafting an individual message toward a specific

group of the electorate rather than large groups of voters. This has been a viable strategy for

many candidates who have had a loyal constituent base. When a candidate has a large enough base, they only need to persuade certain groups of voters to win the election. One study connected campaign spending with targeting techniques (Boyer et al., 2015). This study examined how campaigns may anonymously distribute individualized messages to the electorate with the intention of targeting individuals. These scholars also suggested that voters evaluate candidates by the level of campaign persuasion efforts directed at them (Boyer et al., 2015). Furthermore, they argued there are two different types of voters: swing voters and partisan. The former tends to vote for the candidate who directs more campaign effort at them, and the latter votes for their candidate regardless of persuasion effort. However, it is the main method for measuring campaign effort is campaign expenditures. There are other ways to measure campaign effort in targeting groups of the electorate besides the monetary approach such as time spent or frequency of local appearances.

Some scholars have studied how campaigns have targeted voter groups based on gender (Holman et al., 2015). Holman et al. (2015) focused primarily on the advertisements that targeted women. These scholars classified the advertisements into two types of targeting: issue-based and identity-based targeting. The former involves advertisements that illustrate issues that female voting groups care about, and the latter appeals to women symbolically. This study found evidence that identity-based targeting ads greatly affected a group of women's vote choice. However, this type of targeting is very rarely effective for male candidates because female voters tend to identify with candidates who share their identity and interests (Holman et al., 2015). This study was well executed and set up an identity-based targeting framework for future studies to be conducted for other minority groups such as Hispanics, Blacks, and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT).

Gender Differences in Strategies

Existing literature suggested that there is not a significant difference in terms of campaigns strategies between male and female candidates (Windett, 2013; Herrick, 2016). Windett (2013) researched this topic and found that female candidates running for higher levels of office in particular, tended to go against gender stereotypes. They refrained from greatly emphasizing issues that are considered feminine such as equal pay, aspects of health care, and education. The logic behind this is people perceive women candidates as less qualified than men, which incentivizes them to run a more "masculine" campaign. According to Windett (2013), this presents an opportunity for male candidates facing female candidates to strategically force their opponents into campaigning on feminine issues. This strategy essentially attempts to portray their opponents as single-issue candidates.

Herrick (2016) focused on gender differences in state legislative candidates and gave support to the study conducted by Windett (2013). It highlighted the evidence of there being few differences between the issues male and female candidates campaign on, and also recognized the differences found at the state level. Herrick (2016) examined the websites of male and female candidates and found a greater focus on women's issues when females are running against other female candidates. This study also found Republicans focused on women issues less than the Democratic Party. It is worth noting that there are some flaws in this study. First, a sample size of three states (Alaska, Colorado, and Minnesota) within the same election year is not large enough to make generalizations from the data. Second, the data came solely from the websites of the candidates and neglected advertisements, social media, and other methods that could indicate issue prioritization.

Persuasion Strategies

Persuading voters is perhaps the most important skill for politicians to master because it is essentially what grants them electoral success. Existing literature indicates social science has taken over electoral campaigns (Pons, 2016). The need for engaging in ideological and policy debates has been overshadowed by the desire for maximizing the number of votes. This scholarship argued two ways to win votes: mobilizing non-voters who would likely support them and persuading active voters to vote for them instead of their opponent (Pons, 2016). This ultimately led to politicians prioritizing persuasion and manipulation techniques in their campaigns.

A group of scholars asserted that the traditional incumbent strategies include emphasizing their accomplishments and charisma to persuade the electorate (Trent & Friedenberg, 2004; Nicole, 2007). Additionally, they use endorsements from their party or other significant leaders to garner additional votes. These scholars also discussed the traditional challenger strategies, which entailed calling for change and attacking the legislative record of the incumbent. Furthermore, challengers often tried to portray themselves as a moderate or the "center of the party candidate" (Trent and Friedenberg, 2004; Nicole, 2007).

Scholars also suggested that both incumbents and challengers used "get out the vote" (GOTV) campaigns to bring political debate to the doorsteps of many voters (Pons, 2016). A case study examined the persuasion strategies used by Republican incumbent State Senator Wadsworth Yee in the 1974 Hawaii State Senate election where he won in a marginally Democratic district (Dang & Hioko, 1975). These scholars found his most effective persuasion strategy was door-to-door canvassing (Dang & Hioko, 1975). This is known to be effective and has become common in modern campaigns because it creates a personal connection between the

candidate and his or her constituents. This research is very important to the topic of persuasion strategies.

Advertisements have become more popular as technology develops and gives politicians additional platforms to broadcast them. An important aspect of this issue is how candidates use advertisements to persuade. While advertising may not always have a direct effect on a voter's choice, it may alter the previous evaluation that voters had on the candidate (Bratu, 2013). One study argued that politicians use their advertisement campaigns to persuade voters by appealing to their emotion (Brader, 2005). The ads in theses campaigns include music and images that draw out emotions such as fear or excitement. This research found evidence of political advertising successfully motivating voters by appealing to their emotions (Brader, 2005). This well-executed study contributed to the literature on emotionally appealing advertisements.

Public Opinion and Voting Behavior

Behavioral voting patterns are very important to consider when researching issue prioritization. When voting patterns become transparent, candidates should logically adjust their campaign strategies accordingly. Similarly, public opinion ties in to this debate as well. I will be primarily focusing on voting patterns of issue voters and examining the role of public opinion in elections.

Issue Voters

A common consensus among scholars related voters being very reflective of the state of national economic conditions (Vandenbroek, 2011; Harpuder, 2003). Harpuder (2003) focused specifically on voter behavior in senatorial elections. His findings provided support for the "angry-voter" hypothesis in which voters express their frustration with the state of the national economy by voting for the challengers in races. Moreover, the higher the level of dissatisfaction,

the more likely people are to vote. This study also stipulated that challengers use this information to make a poor national economy more salient through campaign messages to increase voter turnout.

Similarly, Vandenbroek (2011) researched voter behavior and found the economy is nearly always relevant because of its widespread impact. He argued Obama's electoral victory in 2008 was a result from the view that the Republican Party was unable to handle the economy. Additionally, this study argued that voters support a candidate they view as being the most capable of handling issues they care about. Vandenbroek (2011) contends voter ID does not preclude rationality in issue voting. The flaw of this research is it fails to account for uneducated voters who simply vote party lines, which would definitely affect the results.

Role of Public Opinion

In order to discuss literature on the role of public opinion in elections, an explanation defining public opinion polls and their importance is necessary. According to Gallup, a public opinion poll is a "type of survey or inquiry designated to measure the public's view regarding a particular topic or series of topics" (Nielsen, 2007). These types of polls are non-biased and are given by trained interviewers to a random sample of the population being measured. These polls are important, especially in politics, to provide information on the viewpoints of specific groups of voters or citizens. Most literature examined the accuracy of polls involving public opinion on issues. However, Morwitz and Pluzinski (1996) analyzed how polls affect public opinion. Their study suggested a potential altering of voters' attitudes when polls are broadcasted to them prior to their votes being casted (Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996). Their study was much needed to provide a framework to have this gap in the literature further filled.

In a democratic system, public opinion is especially important to keep elected officials accountable and representative. Furthermore, elected politicians generally adjust their government activities to public opinion in order to get reelected. Numerous scholars researched what constituents expected from their elected members of Congress (Lapinski et al., 2016). They claimed most citizens have a higher preference for members who represent them on the salient national issues. However, this is not to say members cannot or should not focus on local issues because citizens expected them to perform in this area as well. Lapinski et al. (2016) used nationally representative surveys to give support to their argument.

In the modern era, where citizens receive their political news from a variety of sources, research on media agenda setting is critical. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) advanced the agenda-setting hypothesis, which argues that the issues receiving the most attention from the national news becomes the nation's most important issues to the viewing public. Behr and Iyengar (1985) gave support to this hypothesis with survey evidence that showed a correlation between the nations "most important problems" with the amount of coverage these same issues received. This research was conducted well and accounted for real-world conditions being a determining factor of the amount of news coverage certain issues receive. Additionally, they criticized other scholarship on this topic for ignoring real world conditions, which resulted in inflated estimates of media influence within their studies (Behr & Iyengar, 1985).

After reviewing the literature, it is clear where my research fits in the scholarly debate. Research is needed to add literature to the topic of issue prioritization in senatorial campaigns. A majority of the existing literature focuses on persuasion techniques and campaign strategies. While these topics fall within the scope of my study, there is a lack of studies specifically dealing with senate races and how they prioritize issues in their advertisements. Most of the existing

studies focused primarily on one specific congressional district election or senate race, which made their conclusion and findings insufficient to prove a trend (Shea and Medvic, 2008; Greenberg, 2015). My study focuses on a specific election year and provides much needed research on an important political subject. Additional future studies on issue prioritization, in combination with mine, can suggest a trend.

Argument

This section elaborates on the logic behind the main argument previously introduced: senatorial challengers attempt to nationalize the election, while the incumbents generally focus their efforts on emphasizing state issues throughout their campaigns.

There are numerous incentives for senator incumbents seeking reelection to prioritize state issues within their campaign. The first stems from the incumbency advantage, but specifically the casework and constituency services senators complete in their terms. Incumbents often bring large projects to their state or district, which provides tremendous benefits. For example, a senator could bring a significant construction job to his/her district that employs hundreds or thousands of people. Senators have the capacity to use these services and projects to entice the citizens into voting for him or her.

The incumbency advantage also includes incumbents having the tendency to know their district better than their challenger. Incumbents have already been successfully elected, and therefore know what would be sufficient to win a race. To clarify, most senate incumbents know who their loyal supporters are and the constituent groups they need to target and convince to be successfully elected. Furthermore, they know what state issues are the most prevalent and prominent within their respective states, which gives them further incentive to prioritize state issues.

Presidential approval ratings are a definite factor in the campaign behavior of incumbents. It is extremely common for presidents to experience a drop in approval ratings throughout their first and/or second term. Logically, this would inhibit incumbents from linking themselves to the current administration to prevent a reverse effect of the presidential coattails. If a majority of the state disapproves of the president's performance, linking yourself to the current administration could be political suicide. One of the few instances where an incumbent would nationalize the election would be if the president in his or her state has high approval ratings. For example, if a Democratic senator was from a blue state such as California and there was a Democratic president in power, an attempt to nationalize the election would be practical considering a majority his or her constituents would usually approve of the president. A second situation is if the incumbent was from the opposite party of the president and wanted to accentuate his or her opposition to the president's policies. For example, it would be expected for a Republican incumbent running in a red state in 2014 to emphasize the numerous times he or she voted against Obamacare (Democratic President Obama's health care policy).

Nationalizing elections could be incredibly beneficial for challengers seeking to topple established incumbents. Logically, this is the most sensible option for them and they often attempt to provoke public dissent towards the incumbent for either obstructing or promoting the president's policies. For example, Barack Obama was a Democratic President who was in office from 2008-2016. A Republican challenger campaigning for the midterm congressional elections could emphasize the support from a Democratic incumbent toward Obama's gun control policies, especially in a state with predominantly pro-gun constituents. Challengers from the same party of the president may nationalize the election by highlighting the legislative record of the incumbent for voting against the president nearly every time, especially if the incumbent

originally campaigned as a moderate. For example, a Democratic challenger could criticize a Republican incumbent for voting against Obama 99 percent of the time if that incumbent campaigned as a moderate or independent candidate.

Similar to the discussion earlier on incumbents, presidential approval ratings play a pivotal role in attempts to nationalize the election. If a president has a low approval rating in the same state of a challenger from the opposite party, the most practical option would be to focus on national issues and link the incumbent to the current administration. Furthermore, this is where the literature on wave elections is certainly necessary. As noted earlier, wave elections seem to have become increasingly common. Challengers in senatorial elections would likely attempt to nationalize the election if they receive information or are advised on a potential wave approaching.

Data Collection

This section explains the methodology and elaborates on the data collection process within this study. Furthermore, it discusses the details of the code sheet used to analyze each political ad.

This study analyzes the political ads from five different senate races in the 2014-midterm elections: Colorado, North Carolina, Arkansas, New Hampshire, and Alaska. This specific election year was chosen because it was in an interesting year of American politics with President Obama halfway through his last term. Furthermore, the Republican Party seemed to have gained momentum from the decline in presidential approval ratings. These senate races were specifically picked because of the narrow electoral margins, making them among the most competitive elections in the nation. Competitive elections generally result in more campaign expenditures, extensive media coverage, an abundance of political ads, and higher voter turnout.

These races were also selected to diversify my sample with political ads from states that are predominantly blue (Colorado is purple but some have considered it blue from recent elections), red (Alaska and Arkansas), and purple (North Carolina and New Hampshire). In American politics, the political spectrum has a left and right side. A more liberal person, one who is open to new ideas and willing to discard traditional values, would be on the left of the political spectrum. In contrast, a conservative, one who adheres to the traditions of our nation, would be on the right of the spectrum. American politics denotes a state on the left side of the spectrum as voting predominantly Democratic and a blue state, and one that votes Republican as a red state. For example, if a political analyst described a state as leaning left, he or she is implying the voters tend to vote democratic. A blue state denotes a tendency to vote for the Democratic Party, and a red state indicates a state where a majority of voters support the Republican Party. A state considered "purple" is one with a lot of independent voters, meaning belonging to neither major party. This results in a swing state because voters could either elect a Democratic or Republican candidate. Candidates almost always focus their campaigns on these hotly contested states. These senatorial races only have incumbents and challengers, meaning none of them are open seat elections. This was necessary to correlate issue prioritization with elections that include an incumbent and challenger. The incumbents are Mark Udall (Democrat, CO), Kay Hagan (Democrat, NC), Mark Pryor (Democrat, AR), Jean Shaheen (Democrat, NH), and Mark Begich (Democrat, AL). The challengers are Cory Gardner (Republican, CO), Thom Tillis (Republican, NC), Tom Cotton (Republican, AR), Scott Brown (Republican, NH), and Dan Sullivan (Republican, AL).

In research, the techniques are expected to be transparent and have results that are replicable. Replicable results promote reliability, which is a key principle in research. In order

for the issue prioritization of the senatorial candidates in these elections to be determined, content analysis is used to measure the sample for the frequency of references to specific issues. Krippendorf (2012) is a leading scholar on content analysis and defines it as,

> "… a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorf, 2012).

The issue prioritization of senatorial candidates is revealed by their campaign behavior. This compels us to examine their political ads because they are essential methods for politicians to persuade voters to vote for them. They use these ads to widely broadcast their message and emphasize issues that will resonate with voters and help them win elections. Content analysis allows me to examine the terminology used in each political ad to draw conclusions on what issues the candidate is prioritizing.

The sample was collected from the YouTube accounts of each senatorial candidate. This study's selection method, selected every third political ad starting from the ad with the earliest upload date. This method was utilized because of the plethora of political ads produced by each candidate. The rationale for choosing every third and not every two or fifth ad was because of the number of ads each candidate produced. The most sensible option was to choose every third as it gave a feasible number of ads to analyze in a timely manner. Choosing every fifth may have resulted in a shortage of ads analyzed and vice versa. It would be nearly impossible to collect, analyze, and code every single political ad for each candidate in a timely manner. This process was used for each senatorial candidate despite the differences in volume of political ads. For example, if you look at Mark Begich's YouTube account and scroll down to the first political ad for his 2014 campaign, it would be *Into the Ground*. Then every three political ads (including *Into the Ground*) from his first ad would be selected such as *Road – Mark Begich for U.S. Senate* and *Mark Begich – Ad Ideas*. In total my sample contains 79 political ads.

This study uses a code sheet that lists specific terms for national issues, general state phrases, and the state issues. These issues are determined based off of state polls and media commentary on the most important issues in each senate race. These polls were valid in determining the most salient issues as they directly survey citizens in the respective states. They also provide the methodology and method involved in the survey process. The news articles are also valid sources because multiple commentaries are examined for each state to determine a consensus in the media on the most important issues. Each political ad is examined for references to the specific issues and phrases. This code sheet measured the frequency of references to the following national issues/phrases: "Linking opponent/references Obama Administration," "Unemployment/Jobs," "Obamacare/Healthcare," "Budget Deficit," "Education," "Foreign Policy," "Immigration," "Economy," "Change our country's direction," "Income Gap/Tax Bills," "Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)," "Ebola." Furthermore, the code sheet accounted for references to the following general state phrases that incumbents or challengers in all of the races would ideally say: "local jobs," "putting our state first," "local economy," "Legislation supported/crafted (incumbents or challengers that previously held office)," and "personal qualities." While personal qualities is not completely relevant to issue prioritization, it is included to observe how much candidates emphasize their personal traits such as being a "central candidate" or their military backgrounds.

A poll conducted by Quinnipiac University and an article from *US News* deemed the most important issues to the people of Colorado in the 2014 election as "Environment (Coal, Energy, Fracking)," "Federal Overreach," "Gun Policy/Control," "Marijuana," "Voting Rights," "Personhood (Abortion Ballot Measure)," and "Seniors" (Malloy, 2014; Keyes, 2014). An article from *Gallup, the Atlantic,* and *North Carolina Insight* determined the top issues for North

Carolina: "Environment/Energy," "Education (Higher Teacher Salary/Education Budget)," "Poverty," "Veterans," and "Women's Rights" (Dugan, 2014; Roarty, 2014; Guillory, 2016). Arkansas top issues included: "Seniors," "Taxes," "Politicians/Politics," "Gay Marriage," and "Medicare" (Parry, n.d.). A poll from the *University of New Hampshire Survey Center* and an article from the *Boston Globe* determined the following issues for New Hampshire: "Education," "Poverty," "Same-sex marriage," and "Energy" (Miller 2014; Smith, 2014). Lastly, an Alaskan newspaper interviewed senatorial candidates on what they believed the most important issues were ("Candidates share," 2014). The candidates chose the following: "Privacy Rights (Federal Overreach)," "Gun Control Laws/2nd Amendment," "Fisheries," "Oil, Gas, & Energy Industries," "Domestic Violence," "Alaskan Veterans," and the "Aviation Industry."

Analysis

The political ads from five different senate elections were transcribed and coded for references to the specified terms above. The number of ads analyzed for data varied between each state because of the differences in ads available. This section begins with a summary of the data. Furthermore, it includes an in-depth analysis of the data to provide a proper evaluation of the core argument previously made. This section also includes a brief background summary on each candidate. Graphs are also present to demonstrate the results from the code sheets and display a visual image of the data. There were ten total graphs created for a comparison between the candidates of each election on national and state issues.

Table 1: Summary of Results

	Challengers	**Incumbents**
References to National Issues	76	23
References to Local/State Issues	30	55

Overall, it is evident that the challengers in the selected senate races chose to prioritize national issues, while incumbents chose to emphasize state/local issues. There is a significant gap between the challengers' and incumbents' references to national issues. The challengers collectively referenced national issues in their political ads 76 times, and the incumbents mentioned them 23 times. Although the gap between challengers and incumbents on local/state issues is not as large, the incumbents still had more mentions than challengers. The incumbents had 55 references to local/state issues and the challengers had 30 mentions. This table summarizes the data collected from the political ads of the candidates in the selected race.

Colorado 2014 Senate Race

Cory Gardner (challenger) was born and raised in Yuma, Colorado. He was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives in 2005 and the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010 as a member of the Republican Party. Mark Udall (incumbent) was born in Tuscon, Arizona and moved to Colorado after college. Similar to Gardner, Udall was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives in 1996 and the U.S. House of Representatives in 1998. In 2008, he decided to run for an open seat in the U.S. Senate and got elected. Udall is a member of the Democratic Party.

In total, ten ads were selected in the Colorado race to be analyzed. Four came from the Gardner campaign and six came from the Udall campaign. However, this data shows Gardner's campaign strategy aligns with the expectations in my argument. The graphs show that Gardner referenced national issues a total of eleven times and only referenced state issues three times. Additionally, "Links opponent/references Obama Administration" and "Obamacare/Healthcare" were two of his highest scores (three and four). Gardner also mentioned "Foreign Policy" three times and "Budget Deficit" once. This likely indicates an attempt to nationalize the election by linking Udall to Obama's policy agenda. Gardner also only discussed state issues twice; mentioning "Seniors" (issues related to senior citizens) and "Environment" once each. This implies that Gardner chose to dedicate a majority of ads to national elections while neglecting state issues for the most part.
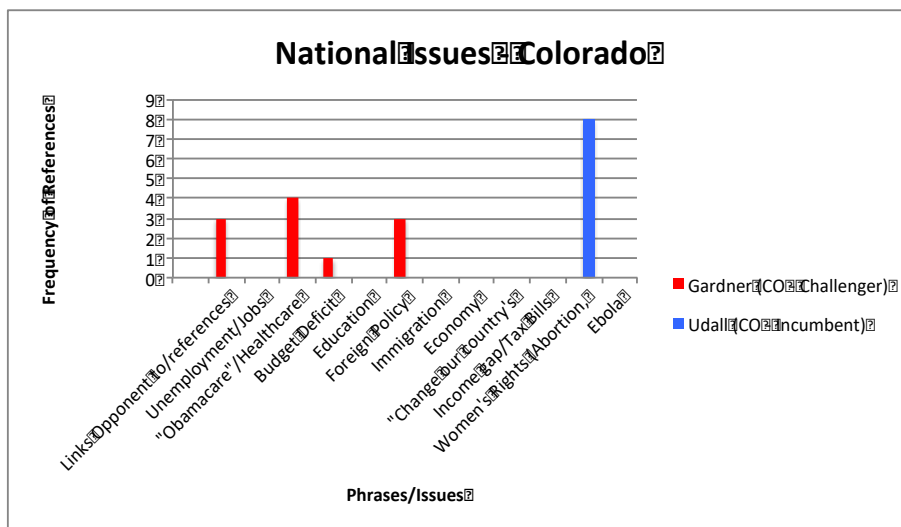
An interesting finding from this study was Udall's issue prioritization. He highly emphasized "Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay) with a score of eight. This issue is typically seen as a national issue. His ads also referenced two states issues: "federal overreach" and a specific ballot measure titled "parenthood" two times each. However, they were insignificant compared to his national issue references. There could be an argument made here about an issue with the data collection. A major challenge of this data collection was the vagueness of terminology in the political ads. "Women's Rights" is an issue that could be talked about in both a national and state perspective. For example, the political ad *"Backwards" | Mark Udall for Colorado* said, "…the only place Cory Gardner will take women's rights is backwards." This was one among many difficult statements to interpret as either a reference to national women's rights or in the perspective of women living in Colorado (Udall, 2014).
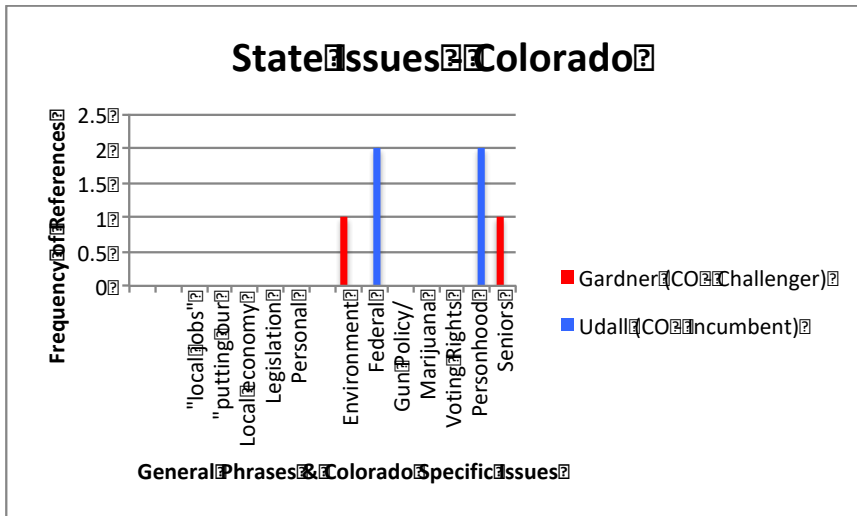
Cory Gardner served as the U.S. Representative for Colorado's 4th congressional district before running for senate against Mark Udall. This could have played a major factor in Udall's issue prioritization because he had a legislative record to attack. In numerous ads, Udall was frequently criticizing Gardner's voting record, claiming he supported certain national issues. For example, the political ad "*Backwards" | Mark Udall for Colorado* explicitly states, "Congressman Cory Gardner supported harsh anti-abortion laws and sponsored a bill to make abortion a felony including cases of rape and incest" (Udall, 2014).

The strategies of Gardner's campaign seemed to be similar with a majority of Republican challengers' tactics who attempted to exploit the opportunities presented from Obama's approval ratings and "call for change." However, polls indicated an average presidential approval rating (42.2% approval) within Colorado compared to the national average (42.4% approval) (Saad, 2015). This gives us an interesting example of a challenger continuing the trend of nationalizing campaigns despite an absence of severe presidential disapproval. Some might expect a challenger in this situation to evenly emphasize state issues and national issues to appeal to both groups of people who approve and disapprove of Obama's presidency.

Figure 1: Incumbent Challenger Differences in Colorado (see Table 2 Appendix F)

State Issues - Colorado

Frequency of References

2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0

"local jobs"
"putting our
Local economy
Legislation
Personal
Environment
Federal
Gun Policy/
Marijuana
Voting Rights
Personhood
Seniors

■ Gardner (CO - Challenger)

■ Udall (CO - Incumbent)

General Phrases & Colorado Specific Issues

North Carolina 2014 Senate Race

Thom Tillis (challenger) was born in Jacksonville, Florida and ran for the North Carolina House of Representatives in 2006 as a member of the Republican Party. After serving for four terms, he decided to challenge Kay Hagan in the 2014-midterm elections. Hagan (incumbent) was born in Shelby, North Carolina and is a member of the Democratic Party. In 1998, Hagan was elected to the North Carolina General Assembly as a state Senator. Hagan then ran for U.S. Senate in 2008 and defeated Jim Neal for the seat.

The North Carolina data was collected from ten political ads; four came from the Tillis campaign (challenger) and six came from Hagan's campaign (incumbent). This data further supports my hypothesis stipulating the general campaign strategies of incumbents and challengers. It is apparent that the incumbent made the decision to highly prioritize state issues. Hagan referenced "Education" (more specifically higher teacher salaries and increased school budgets) and "Women's Rights" five times each. "Veterans" and "Legislation supported/helped craft" were also mentioned (scored two and one). This is a clear indication of localizing an election and using the incumbency advantage to highlight her legislative record. In contrast, she rarely talked about national issues as she referenced "Income gap/ tax bills" twice and "foreign

policy" once. This signals her decision to disconnect herself from the Obama administration. It should also be noted that Hagan discussed her personal qualities once.

Tillis' campaign strategy was expected especially because North Carolina is notoriously known for being a swing state. As discussed earlier, a swing state is one in which there are generally a substantial amount of independents or voters who are located in the center of the political spectrum. This essentially means North Carolina can go either way in terms of party control. The data indicates that Tillis was trying to nationalize the election by creating public dissent towards the current administration. Tillis only referenced a general state phrase once ("putting our country first"), and discussed national issues an astonishing thirteen times. His highest score was "Links opponent/references Obama Administration" with a score of six. He also referenced "foreign policy" four times, "changing our country's direction" twice, and "budget deficit" once. This is a perfect example of a challenger primarily focusing on national issues to link the incumbent to the current administration. In contrast, only had one reference to local issues ("putting our state first"). This is a clear indication of nationalizing the election and neglecting local issues. It should also be noted that Tillis discussed his personal qualities once in the political ads analyzed.

It is very probable that a determining factor in both campaign strategies was presidential approval ratings. Obama's approval percentage in North Carolina during the 2014 election was slightly below average at 41.6 percent. A lower approval rating explains the decision by Hagan to distance herself from the Obama administration. In a simple majority election, a candidate only needs one more vote than the other candidates to win. Identifying yourself with the Obama agenda in a state where the approval rating is less than half the population would be catastrophic.

In contrast, connecting Senator Hagan to the Obama administration was the most practical option for Tillis, who won the election by a narrow 1.7 percent of the vote.

Figure 2: Incumbent Challenger Differences in North Carolina (see Appendix G Table 3)
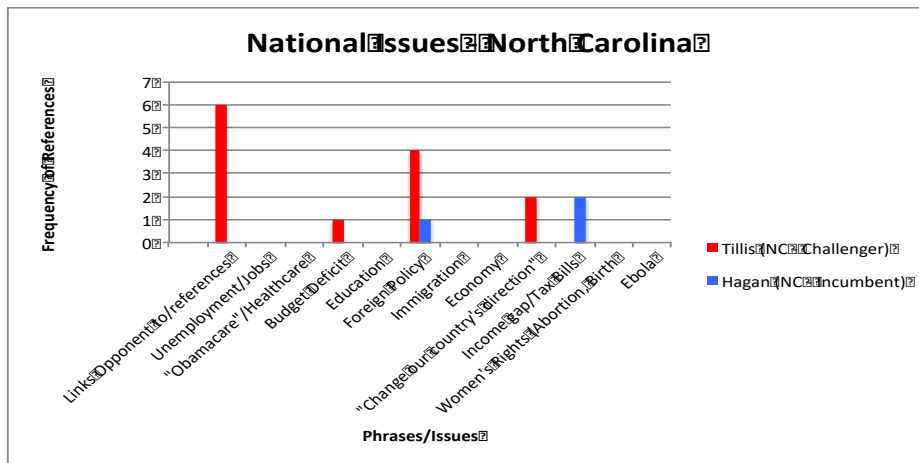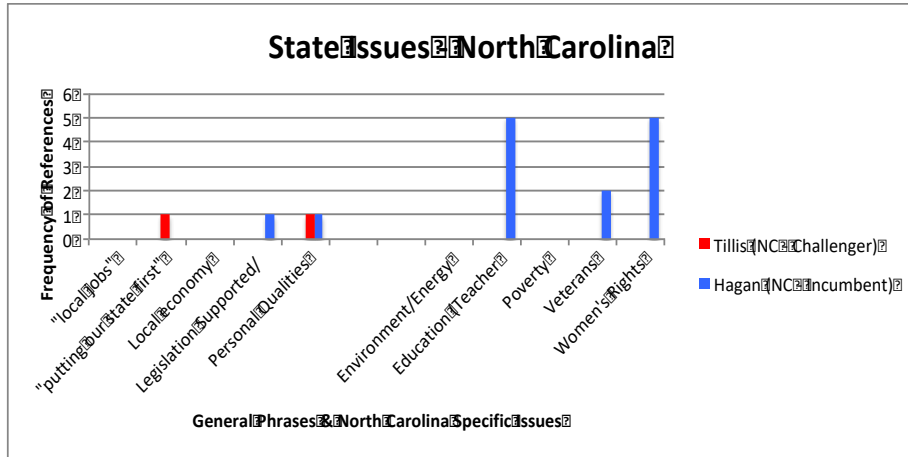
Arkansas 2014 Senate Race

Tom Cotton (Challenger) was born in Dardanelle, Arkansas and is a member of the Republican Party. Cotton enlisted in the United States Army in 2005 and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012, representing Arkansas' 4th district. Mark Pryor (incumbent) was born in Fayetteville, Arkansas and is a member of the Democratic Party. Pryor decided to run for Senate in 2002 and defeated Tim Hutchinson. He then defended his seat against Green Party candidate Rebekah Kennedy in 2008.

The issue prioritization from the candidates in the Arkansas election followed a similar trend to the previous two races discussed. However, Cotton's ads mentioned state issues and phrases a significant number of times compared to other challengers. For this election, I selected twenty political ads to be coded and each candidate had ten of them. To reiterate, Tom Cotton was the challenger and Mark Pryor was the incumbent. In terms of total references to state issues, Pryor had fourteen to Cotton's nine. Pryor's political ads highly discussed "Medicare" and "Seniors," scoring a four in the former and a three in the latter. Pryor's ads highlighted his "Legislation supported/crafted" three times, which is also very common among incumbents. Furthermore, Pryor referenced "Politicians/Politics" twice and "Taxes" once.

National issues had a backfire effect on Mark Pryor's campaign. While he mentioned "Ebola" a significant number of times (four), it did not have the intended effect. Pryor released a political ad that essentially blamed opponent Tom Cotton for the spread of Ebola because of legislation he sponsored. This ad was ridiculed in the media and had a contrary effect on his campaign. He also made two references to "Obamacare/healthcare" from a national perspective, which is reasonable considering his primary focus with state issues was "Medicare."

Tom Cotton discussed national issues fifteen times, which significantly outnumbered Pryor's six references. "Links opponent/references Obama Administration" was his highest score (six), which was common among most challengers in this study. He also mentioned "Obamacare/healthcare" four times and immigration two times. One interesting aspect of the data was his two references to "Ebola." However, these references were direct responses to Pryor's attack ad. Cotton also discussed "Budget Deficit" once. In contrast, Cotton had referenced state issues five times, scoring two in "putting our state first" and three in "Politicians/politics." It should also be noted that Cotton scored a four in "personal qualities" as

he constantly displayed his military background. His references to "Politicians/Politics" mainly came from his criticism of the established incumbents and the need for change.

According to a poll from Gallup, Obama had a very below average approval rating and was polling at 32 percent in Arkansas (Saad, 2015). This was evident while analyzing Cotton's political ads in which numerous produced condemned Pryor for supporting Obamacare. The approval rating also explains the large deficit in Mark Pryor's references to national issues (fourteen to six). This election further strengthens my argument by providing another example of a challenger nationalizing the election and the incumbent focusing on state issues. Despite this state being very competitive, Tom Cotton ended up winning by a large margin (17 percent). This is the only election analyzed that did not have election results with narrow margins.

Figure 3: Incumbent Challenger Differences in Arkansas (see Appendix H Table 4)

34
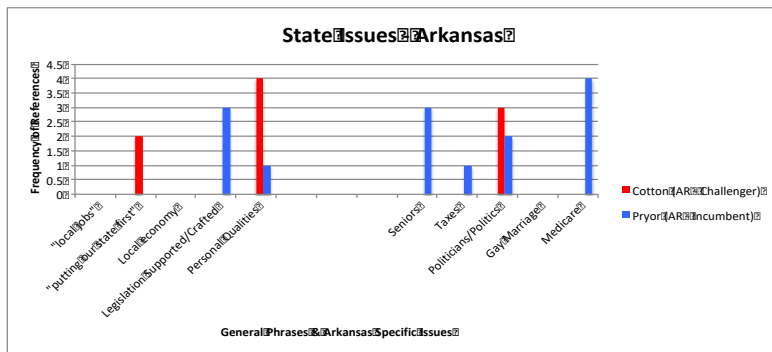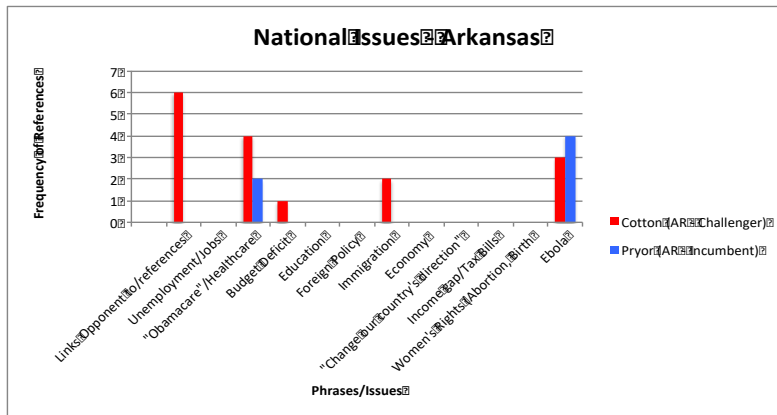
New Hampshire 2014 Senate Race

Scott Brown (challenger) was born in Kittery, Maine and joined the Massachusetts Army National Guard when he was nineteen. He is a member of the Republican Party and was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1998. In 2010, Brown successfully ran for the U.S. Senate, representing Massachusetts. However, he was defeated in 2012 by Elizabeth Warren. In 2014, Brown established residency and registered to vote in New Hampshire, enabling him to run against Jean Shaheen. Shaheen (incumbent) was born in St. Charles, Missouri and moved to New Hampshire in 1973. She is a member of the Democratic Party and was elected governor of New Hampshire in 1996, 1998, and 2000. She failed to get elected for the U.S. Senate in 2002 against John E. Sununu, but defeated him in the 2008 election.

The 2014 senatorial election in New Hampshire continues to support my hypothesis. Twenty-one total ads were selected for analysis with eleven of them chosen from the Brown campaign (challenger) and the other ten from Shaheen's campaign (incumbent). Shaheen clearly focused on state issues throughout her campaign. She scored the highest in "local jobs," referencing it six times. She also discussed "legislation supported/crafted" three times and "putting our state first," "local economy," and "education" two times each. She also discussed policies relating to "energy" once. Shaheen only mentioned national issues in her ads four times. The types of issues she referenced were "unemployment/jobs" (one), "foreign policy" (one), and "income gap/tax bill" (two). It is important to note that Shaheen's discussion of foreign policy was a direct response to an attack ad produced by Brown's campaign, which criticized her foreign policy positions. In her ad *Jeanne Shaheen – Safe at Home* the narrator says,

> "Scott Brown is attacking Jeanne Shaheen on National Security trying to score political points…On the armed services committee Shaheen is pushing to cut off money funding the terrorists, voting to arm the Syrian rebels" (Shaheen, 2014).

However, the most interesting finding in this study was the issue prioritization of Scott Brown.

Brown only referenced actual state issues concerning New Hampshire once. The red bar on the graph concerning New Hampshire issues shows his two mentions of his personal qualities (which does not qualify as a state issue) and his single reference to "local jobs." It is important to remember that not every political ad from the Brown campaign was coded. This data does not state or show that the Brown campaign only mentioned a single state issue within their political ads. However, it is remarkable that out of the eleven ads analyzed, only a single reference to New Hampshire specific issues was made. Nearly every ad analyzed from the Brown campaign linked Shaheen to the Obama administration. He scored a nine in "Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration," and a three in "Obamacare/healthcare." This is because a majority of his ads such as *Independent (Radio Ad)* constantly criticized Shaheen for "voting with Obama 99 percent of the time" (Brown, 2014). He also referenced "foreign policy" (two), "income gap/tax bills" (one), and "unemployment/jobs" (one).

Scott Brown's campaign strategy may seem irrational with a lack of discussion on state issues, but in reality it was a practical decision. New Hampshire's approval rating for President Obama was a dismal 38.8 percent, which is below the national average by about four percent (Saad, 2015). It appeared to be a common theme in the 2014 election for Republican challengers in competitive senate races to be focused on connecting their opponents to the Obama administration. This also helps explain Shaheen's attempts to disconnect her campaign from the Obama administration and for the most part, only discussed national issues to defend her campaign from attack ads.

Figure 4: Incumbent Challenger Differences in New Hampshire (see Appendix I Table 5)

State Issues - New Hampshire

National Issues - New Hampshire
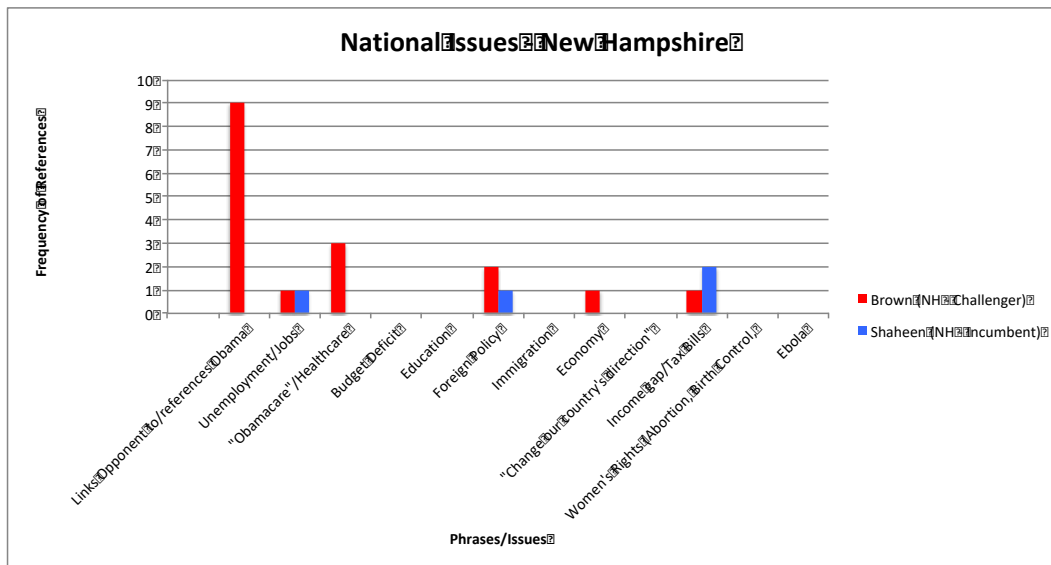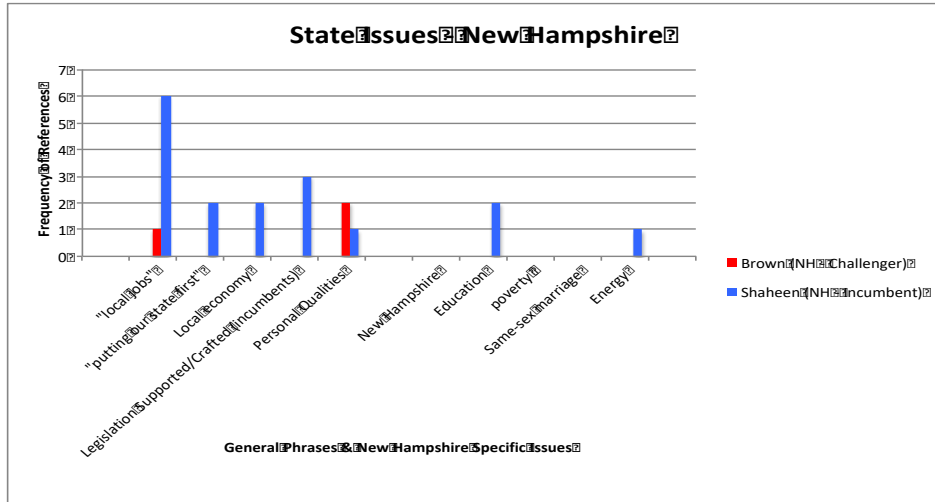
Alaska 2014 Senate Race

Dan Sullivan was born in Fairview Park, Ohio and is a member of the Republican Party. He enlisted in the military in 1993 and later moved to Anchorage, Alaska where he has military history. Mark Begich (incumbent) was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska and was elected Mayor of Anchorage from 2003 to 2009, representing the Democratic Party. He narrowly defeated Republican candidate Ted Stevens in the 2008 U.S. Alaska Senate Election.

The findings from the political ads in the Alaska Senate race was different from the other four elections, but still provided some support for my hypothesis. A total of eighteen political ads were coded; six of them came from the Begich campaign (incumbent) and the other twelve came from the Sullivan campaign (challenger). At first glance, it is astounding to see Dan Sullivan have more references to both national and state issues than Mark Begich. However, it is important to be cognizant of the number of ads selected for each campaign. The selection method of picking every third political ad resulted in Begich having half of the political ads coded that Sullivan had. Although the results may be skewed by this factor, the data still presents an interesting finding: Sullivan's campaign has a significant number of state issue references. Sullivan's campaign had a total of twelve state issue references and scored fours in "Privacy Rights (federal overreach)" and "Oil and Gas industry." Additionally, he scored a three in "Gun control laws/2nd amendment" and a one in "local economy."

In terms of national issues, Sullivan made more references than state issues with nineteen compared to twelve. Similar to the other challengers, his highest score was in "Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration" (seven). He also mentioned "Obamacare/healthcare" four times, "change our country's direction" three times, "Women's Rights (abortion, birth control, and equal pay)" three times, "Budget Deficit" once, and "income gap/tax bills" once. The issue prioritization for this campaign is different from other challengers. While it is evident that he placed a higher priority on national issues, he also certainly prioritized state issues as well. An interesting finding during the data collection process was the pattern of a majority of Sullivan's advertisements. Most of them followed this trend of connecting Begich to Obama in the beginning and dedicating the last fifteen seconds to quickly discuss state issues. For example, below is a transcription of his political ad *Dan Sullivan for Senate: Second Amendment*:

"Mark Begich's liberal DC friends are lying about Dan Sullivan, The truth? Begich supports Obama's anti-gun judges and votes with Obama 90% of the time. That's not independent. As your attorney general I led Alaska's efforts in the Supreme Court to protect our Second Amendment rights. We won, and for the first time the Supreme Court declared that the right to bear arms is an individual right. I'm Dan Sullivan and I approve this message because I will defend the second amendment always" (Sullivan, 2014).

The beginning of the ad focuses on criticizing Begich for supporting Obama's policy agenda and the end emphasized his efforts to protect the Alaskan people's second amendment rights. It should also be noted that Sullivan highly referenced his personal qualities (scored a four), which entailed his service in the military.

Mark Begich's issue prioritization aligns with the other incumbents with a total of eight state issue references compared to his two national issue mentions. He scored a two in "Legislation supported/crafted" and "Oil and Gas industry." He also had one reference each to "putting our state first," "local economy," "Gun control laws/2nd amendment," and "Aviation Industry." In contrast, his two national issue references were to "Obamacare/healthcare" and "Education" (once each). This is a clear indication of the types of issues Begich chose to prioritize in this election. Alaska is also traditionally a red state and had a 35.3 percent presidential approval rating, which made dissociating from the Obama administration the most sensible strategy (Saad, 2015).

All five of the elections provided data that supports my hypothesis. There were interesting findings within the data, but there were also some flaws during the process. The findings, flaws, and suggestions for future research are discussed in the next section.

Figure 5: Incumbent Challenger Differences in Alaska (see Appendix J Table 6)

National Issues - Alaska

State Issues - Alaska
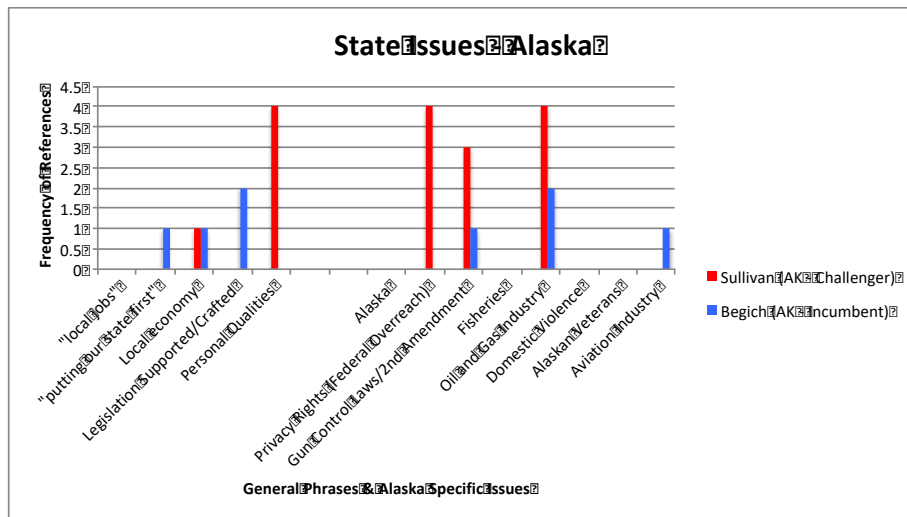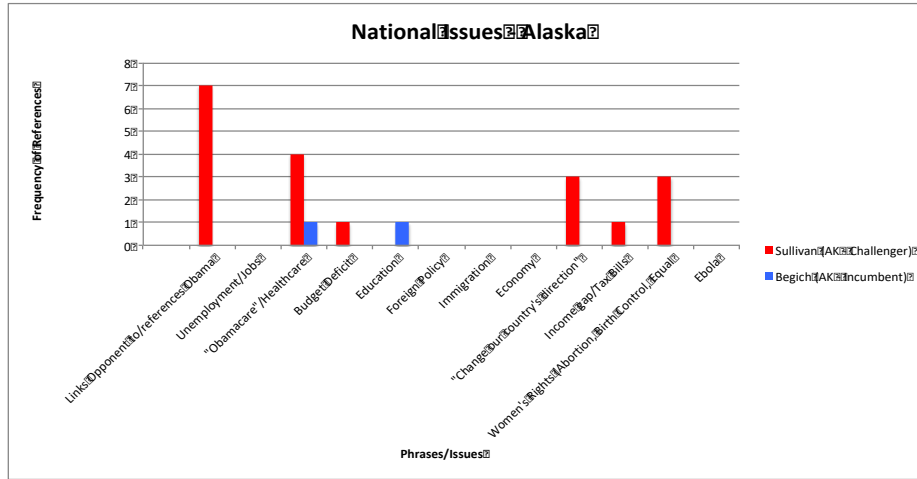
Findings/Obstacles

After a thorough analysis of the data, it has become more evident that challengers generally attempt to nationalize elections by focusing on prominent national issues and linking the opponent to the opposite party. The data for each challenger shows more references to national issues than state issues. The data also supports the notion of incumbents utilizing the incumbency advantage and focusing on state issues. They do this typically for two reasons: 1) they have a legislative record to emphasize and publicize the benefits they have brought to their state, 2) they want to be dissociated from the current administration if it is from the same party

and has low approval ratings in their respective states. The graphs revealed that each incumbent (with the exception of Mark Udall, Democrat, Colorado) chose to focus primarily on state issues over national issues.

There were a few unexpected factors that seemed to affect the issue prioritization of incumbents. First, as we saw in the New Hampshire election, incumbents are more inclined to focus on national issues if they are attacked on their legislative records. For example, if a challenger attacks an incumbent for supporting Obamacare, an incumbent may be more pressured to produce an ad in response especially if Obamacare is a salient issue to the constituents. Second, the political experience of challengers could affect an incumbent's campaign strategies. It is very common for members from the House of Representatives to seek higher office and run for a Senate seat. An incumbent may focus on national issues by criticizing the challenger's legislative record during his time as a U.S. Representative.

There were definitely some obstacles encountered throughout the completion of this study. First, this study is not conclusive nor does it prove causation. It simply creates correlations between issue prioritization and senate candidates that align with political conventional wisdom. There are also numerous factors that affect a candidate's issue prioritization and focusing on one specific election does not prove a trend. Factors such as presidential approval ratings, political experience, the state of the national economy, and constituency demographics could all affect campaign strategies. A candidate's race, gender, religion, age, and etc. could also potentially influence his or her issue prioritization. Additional studies correlating these factors with issue emphasis need to be conducted. Additionally, the top national issues could be the same as the top state issues, which would make interpreting the language of the political ads difficult to code

them as a national or state reference. Terms would need to be created that completely distinguish between state and national aspects of the same issue, which is very difficult.

Another issue was the abundance of political ads that each candidate had on their website. It would have been challenging to examine every ad from each candidate in a timely manner, which is why the data collection method was a selection of every third ad. The issue with this method is the possibility of skewed results. For example, the data could show that the incumbent from North Carolina prioritized state issues, but there could have been numerous ads focused on national issues and were not selected. The results could have been very different if every ad was examined from each candidate.

There is something to be learned from this study, which could prove beneficial for future research on a similar or the same topic. First, a more diverse sample is highly recommended to be more representative. The method in this study included choosing the most competitive elections, which coincidentally selected five elections with five Republican challengers and five Democratic incumbents. To control for purely partisan strategies, having both Republican incumbents and challengers or Democratic incumbents and challengers would help eliminate partisan bias. For example, nationalizing elections could be a central strategy to the GOP, but this information cannot be found from this study. Additionally, studies from other election years on issue prioritization are needed to prove a trend.

Although minor flaws in the research exists because of limitations in the data extraction, consistencies in the sample clearly supported my hypothesis. This is an area in political research that has very little literature. There is something to be learned from this study that applies to more than just American politics. The manner in which politicians manipulate the information

provided to their constituents to get elected to public office has implications for any democratic

system around the world.

Appendix A: Coding Sheet – Colorado

State _____
Candidate _____
Party _____
Date/Election _____
Name/Title of Ad _____
Length of Ad _____

Issues   **National**
　　_____ **Links Opponent/References Obama Admin.**
　　_____ **Unemployment/Jobs**
　　_____ **Obamacare/Healthcare**
　　_____ **Budget Deficit**
　　_____ **Education**
　　_____ **Foreign Policy**
　　_____ **Immigration**
　　_____ **Economy**
　　_____ **"Change in direction"**
　　_____ **Income gap/Tax Bills**
　　_____ **Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)**
　　_____ **Veterans**
　　_____ **Ebola**

          General State
　　_____ **"local jobs"**
　　_____ **"putting our state first"**
　　_____ **Local economy**
　　_____ **Legislation Supported/Crafted (incumbents)**
　　_____ **Personal Qualities**

          Colorado
　　_____ **Environment (coal, energy, fracking)**
　　_____ **Federal Overreach**
　　_____ **Gun Policy/Control**
　　_____ **Marijuana**
　　_____ **Voting Rights**
　　_____ **Personhood (Abortion Ballot Measure)**
　　_____ **Seniors**

Appendix B: Coding Sheet – North Carolina

Code Sheet – North Carolina

State _____

Candidate _____

Party _____

Date/Election _____

Name/Title of Ad _____

Length of Ad _____

Issues   **National**

_____ **Links Opponent/References Obama Admin.**

_____ **Unemployment/Jobs**

_____ **Obamacare/Healthcare**

_____ **Budget Deficit**

_____ **Education**

_____ **Foreign Policy**

_____ **Immigration**

_____ **Economy**

_____ **"Change in direction"**

_____ **Income gap/Tax Bills**

_____ **Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)**

_____ **Veterans**

_____ **Ebola**

   General State

_____ **"local jobs"**

_____ **"putting our state first"**

_____ **Local economy**

_____ **Legislation Supported/Crafted (incumbents)**

_____ **Personal Qualities**

North Carolina

_____ **Environment/Energy**

_____ **Education (Higher Teacher Salary/Education Budget)**

_____ **Poverty**

_____ **Veterans**

_____ **Women's Rights**

Appendix C: Coding Sheet – Arkansas

Code Sheet – Arkansas

State _____

Candidate _____

Party _____

Date/Election _____

Name/Title of Ad _____

Length of Ad _____

Issues　　　　**National**

_____ **Links Opponent/References Obama Admin.**

_____ **Unemployment/Jobs**

_____ **Obamacare/Healthcare**

_____ **Budget Deficit**

_____ **Education**

_____ **Foreign Policy**

_____ **Immigration**

_____ **Economy**

_____ **"Change in direction"**

_____ **Income gap/Tax Bills**

_____ **Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)**

_____ **Abortion (National perspective)**

_____ **Veterans**

_____ **Ebola**

　　　　General State

_____ **"local jobs"**

_____ **"putting our state first"**

_____ **Local economy**

_____ **Legislation Supported/Crafted (incumbents)**

_____ **Personal Qualities**

Arkansas

_____ **Seniors**

_____ **Taxes**

_____ **Politicians/Politics**

_____ **Gay Marriage**

_____ **Medicare**

Appendix D: Coding Sheet – New Hampshire

<div align="center">

Code Sheet – New Hampshire

</div>

State _____
Candidate _____
Party _____
Date/Election _____
Name/Title of Ad _____
Length of Ad _____

Issues   **National**
_____ **Links Opponent/References Obama Admin.**
_____ **Unemployment/Jobs**
_____ **Obamacare/Healthcare**
_____ **Budget Deficit**
_____ **Education**
_____ **Foreign Policy**
_____ **Immigration**
_____ **Economy**
_____ **"Change in direction"**
_____ **Income gap/Tax Bills**
_____ **Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)**
_____ **Veterans**
_____ **Ebola**

        General State
_____ **"local jobs"**
_____ **"putting our state first"**
_____ **Local economy**
_____ **Legislation Supported/Crafted (incumbents)**
_____ **Personal Qualities**

New Hampshire
_____ **Drugs**
_____ **Poverty**
_____ **Same-Sex Marriage**
_____ **Energy**
_____ **Education**

Appendix E – Coding Sheet – Alaska

Code Sheet – Alaska

Issues   **National**

_____ **Links Opponent/References Obama Admin.**

_____ **Unemployment/Jobs**

_____ **Obamacare/Healthcare**

_____ **Budget Deficit**

_____ **Education**

_____ **Foreign Policy**

_____ **Immigration**

_____ **Economy**

_____ **"Change in direction"**

_____ **Income gap/Tax Bills**

_____ **Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)**

_____ **Veterans**

_____ **Ebola**

General State

_____ **"local jobs"**

_____ **"putting our state first"**

_____ **Local economy**

_____ **Legislation Supported/Crafted (incumbents)**

_____ **Personal Qualities**

Alaska

_____ **Privacy Rights (Federal Overreach)**

_____ **Gun Control Laws/2nd Amendment**

_____ **Fisheries**

_____ **Oil, Gas, & Energy Industries**

_____ **Domestic Violence**

_____ **Alaskan Veterans**

_____ **Aviation Industry**

Appendix F – Table 2 – Colorado State and National Issues

National Issues	Gardner (CO – R Challenger)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)	Udall (CO – D Incumbent)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)
Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration	3	75%	0	0%
Unemployment/Jobs	0	0%	0	0%
"Obamacare"/Healthcare	4	100%	0	0%
Budget Deficit	1	25%	0	0%
Education	0	0%	0	0%
Foreign Policy	3	75%	0	0%
Immigration	0	0%	0	0%
Economy	0	0%	0	0%
"Change our country's direction"	0	0%	0	0%
Income gap/Tax Bills	0	0%	0	0%
Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)	0	0%	8	133%
Ebola	0	0%	0	0%
General State Issue References				
"local jobs"	0	0%	0	0%
"putting our state first"	0	0%	0	0%
Local Economy	0	0%	0	0%
Legislation Supported/Crafted	0	0%	0	0%
Personal Qualities	0	0%	0	0%
Colorado				
Environment (coal, energy, fracking)	1	25%	0	0%
Federal Overreach	0	0%	2	25%
Gun Policy/Control	0	0%	0	0%
Marijuana	0	0%	0	0%
Voting Rights	0	0%	0	0%
Personhood (Abortion)	0	0%	2	25%
Seniors	1	25%	0	0%

Appendix G – Table 3 – North Carolina State and National Issues

National Issues	Tillis (NC – R Challenger)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)	Hagan (NC-D Incumbent)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)
Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration	6	150%	0	0%
Unemployment/Jobs	0	0%	0	0%
"Obamacare"/Healthcare	0	0%	0	0%
Budget Deficit	1	25%	0	0%
Education	0	0%	0	0%
Foreign Policy	4	100%	1	17%
Immigration	0	0%	0	0%
Economy	0	0%	0	0%
"Change our country's direction"	2	50%	0	0%
Income gap/Tax Bills	0	0%	2	33%
Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)	0	0%	0	0%
Ebola	0	0%	0	0%
General State Issue References				
"local jobs"	0	0%	0	0%
"putting our state first"	1	25%	0	0%
Local Economy	0	0%	0	0%
Legislation Supported/Crafted	0	0%	1	17%
Personal Qualities	1	25%	1	17%
North Carolina				
Environment/Energy	1	25%	0	0%
Education (Teacher Salary, School Budget)	0	0%	5	83%
Poverty	0	0%	0	0%
Veterans	0	0%	2	33%
Women's Rights	0	0%	5	83%

Appendix H – Table 4 – Arkansas State and National Issues

National Issues	Cotton (AR – R Challenger)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)	Pryor (AR – D Incumbent)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)
Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration	6	60%	0	0%
Unemployment/Jobs	0	0%	0	0%
"Obamacare"/Healthcare	4	40%	2	20%
Budget Deficit	1	10%	0	0%
Education	0	0%	0	0%
Foreign Policy	0	0%	0	0%
Immigration	2	20%	0	0%
Economy	0	0%	0	0%
"Change our country's direction"	0	0%	0	0%
Income gap/Tax Bills	0	0%	0	0%
Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)	0	0%	0	0%
Ebola	3	30%	4	40%
General State Issue References				
"local jobs"	0	0%	1	10%
"putting our state first"	2	20%	0	0%
Local Economy	0	0%	0	0%
Legislation Supported/Crafted	0	0%	3	30%
Personal Qualities	4	40%	1	10%
Arkansas				
Seniors	1	10%	3	30%
Taxes	0	0%	1	10%
Politicians/Politics	3	30%	2	20%
Gay Marriage	0	0%	0	0%
Medicare	0	0%	4	40%

Appendix I – Table 5 – New Hampshire State and National Issues

National Issues	Brown (NH – R Challenger)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)	Shaheen (NH – D Incumbent)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)
Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration	9	82%	0	0%
Unemployment/Jobs	1	9%	1	10%
"Obamacare"/Healthcare	3	27%	0	0%
Budget Deficit	0	0%	0	0%
Education	0	0%	0	0%
Foreign Policy	2	18%	1	10%
Immigration	0	0%	0	0%
Economy	1	9%	0	0%
"Change our country's direction"	0	0%	0	0%
Income gap/Tax Bills	1	9%	2	20%
Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)	0	0%	0	0%
Ebola	0	0%	0	0%
General State Issue References				
"local jobs"	1	9%	6	60%
"putting our state first"	0	0%	2	20%
Local Economy	0	0%	2	20%
Legislation Supported/Crafted	0	0%	3	30%
Personal Qualities	2	18%	1	10%
New Hampshire				
Education	0	0%	2	20%
Poverty	0	0%	0	0%
Same Sex Marriage	0	0%	0	0%
Energy	0	0%	1	10%

Appendix J – Table 6 – Alaska State and National Issues

National Issues	Sullivan (AK – R Challenger)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)	Begich (AK – D Incumbent)	Percentage referenced (references/total ads)
Links Opponent to/references Obama Administration	7	58%	0	0%
Unemployment/Jobs	0	0%	0	0%
"Obamacare"/Healthcare	4	33%	1	17%
Budget Deficit	1	8%	0	0%
Education	0	0%	1	17%
Foreign Policy	0	0%	0	0%
Immigration	0	0%	0	0%
Economy	0	0%	0	0%
"Change our country's direction"	3	25%	0	0%
Income gap/Tax Bills	1	8%	0	0%
Women's Rights (Abortion, Birth Control, Equal Pay)	3	25%	0	0%
Ebola	0	0%	0	0%
General State Issue References				
"local jobs"	4	33%	2	33%
"putting our state first"	0	0%	1	17%
Local Economy	1	8%	1	0%
Legislation Supported/Crafted	0	0%	2	33%
Personal Qualities	4	33%	0	0%
Alaska				
Privacy Rights (Federal Overreach)	4	33%	0	0%
Gun Control Laws/2nd Amendment	3	25%	1	17%
Fisheries	0	0%	0	0%
Oil, Gas, and Energy Industries	4	33%	2	33%
Domestic Violence	0	0%	0	0%
Alaskan Veterans	0	0%	0	0%
Aviation Industry	0	0%	1	17%

Bibliography

Abramowitz, A. J. (1975). Name Familiarity, Reputation, and the Incumbency Effect in a
    Congressional Election. *Political Research Quarterly*, *28*(4).

Arnn, L. P. (2014). Wave Elections: What They Mean. *Imprimis*, *43*. Retrieved from
    https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/wave-elections-what-they-mean/.

Behr, R. L. & Iyengar, S. (1985). "Television News, Real-World Cues, and Changes in
    the Public Agenda." *Public Opinion Quarterly 49: 38-57*.

Boyer, P. C., Konrad, K. A., & Roberson, B. (2017). Targeted campaign competition, loyal
    voters, and supermajorities. *Journal Of Mathematical Economics*, *71*49-62.
    doi:10.1016/j.jmateco.2017.04.002.

Brader, T. (2005). Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and
    Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(2),
    388-405. doi:10.2307/3647684.

Bratu, S. (2013). The Impact of Political Advertising on Vote Choice. *Geopolitics, History &*
    International Relations, *5*(1), 124-129.

Cain, B. E., Ferejohn, J. A., & Fiorina, M. P. (1987). *The personal vote: Constituency service*
    and electoral independence. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Candidates share their views on the top issues facing Alaska. (2014, October 30). *The Seward*
    Phoenix LOG. Retrieved from
    http://www.thesewardphoenixlog.com/home/cms_data/dfault/photos/stories/id/5/8/3058/8
    805558.pdf#page=1.

Casey, K. L. (2015). Surf's up! Republicans riding the wave, but to where?. In S. D. Foreman &
    R. Dewhirst (Ed.), *The Roads to Congress 2014* (pp. 391-396). Lanham, MD: Lexington
    Books.

Dang, M. C., & Hioki, S. T. (1975). A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERSUASIVE
    STRATEGIES USED IN A STATE SENATE CAMPAIGN IN
    HAWAII. *Communication*, *4*(1), 103-118.

Dugan, A. (2014, August 27). North Carolina's Political and Economic Environment in 2014.
    Retrieved from http://news.gallup.com/poll/175505/north-carolina-political-economic-
    environment-2014.aspx.

Duggan, E. (2004). Why do incumbent senators win? *The Source*. Retrieved from
    https://source.wustl.edu/2004/09/why-do-incumbent-senators-win/.

Eaves, C. (2013). *Candidate Quality, Electoral Competition, and the Incumbency*
    Advantage in the U.S. Senate. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Georgia,
    Athens, Georgia.

Erikson, R. S. (2016). Congressional Elections in Presidential Years: Presidential Coattails and
    Strategic Voting. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *41*(3), 551-574. doi:10.1111/lsq.12127/.

Goodliffe, J. (2011). Campaign War Chests and Challenger Quality in Senate
    Elections. *Legislative Studies Quarterly, 32*(1). Retrieved from
    http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3162/036298007X202010/pdf.

Gowrisankaran, G., Mitchell, M. F., & Moro, A. (2004). Why do Incumbent Senators Win?
    Evidence From a Dynamic Selection Model. *National Bureau of Economic Research*.

Greenberg, J. A. (2015). Murphy vs. Domino in Florida's 18th Congressional District: A
    Case Study in Localizing Congressional Elections to Survive a Political
    Wave. *Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal*, *10*1-14.

Guillory, F. (2016, April 15). Education Tops List of Most Important
  Issues Facing NC. Retrieved from http://ncinsight.nccppr.org/2016/04/education-most-
  important-issue/.

Harpuder, B. (2003) *Electoral Behavior in US. Senate Elections, A Simultaneous Choice*
  Model. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Herrick, R. (2016). Gender themes in state legislative candidates' websites. *The Social Science*
  Journal, *53*282-290. doi:10.1016/j.soscij.2016.05.001.

Herrnson, P. S. (2016). *Congressional elections: Campaigning at home and in Washington*. Los
  Angeles, CA: CQ Press, an Imprint of SAGE Publications.

Holman, M. R., Schneider, M. C., & Pondel, K. (2015). Gender Targeting in Political
  Advertisements. *Political Research Quarterly*, *68*(4), 816-829.
  doi:10.1177/1065912915605182.

Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1985). *News that matters: television and American opinion*.
  Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jacobson, G. C. (2016). *The politics of congressional elections*. Maryland: Rowman &
  Littlefield.

Jacobson, G. C., & Kernell, S. (1983). *Strategy and choice in congressional elections*. New
  Haven: Yale University Press.

Kam, C., & Zechmeister, E. (2013). Name Recognition and Candidate Support. *American*
  Journal of Political Science, 57(4), 971-986. Retrieved from
  http://www.jstor.org/stable/23496668.

Keyes, S. (2014, February 12). 6 Reasons Colorado is the Left's Political Epicenter. Retrieved
  from https://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2014/02/12/marijuana-immigration-and-
  why-colorado-is-2014s-most-important-state.

King, G. (1991) Constituency Service and Incumbency Advantage. *British Journal of Political*
  Science, 119-128. doi:10.1017/S0007123400006062.

Krippendorf, K. (2012) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. California, CA:
  SAGE Publications Inc.

Lapinski, J., Levendusky, M., Winneg, Ken., & Jamieson, K. (2016). What do Citizens
  Want from Their Member of Congress? *Political Research Quarterly, 1-11*. doi:
  10.1177/1065912916652240.

Mahtesian, C. (2012, December 13). 2012 reelection rate: 90 percent. Retrieved from
  https://www.politico.com/blogs/charlie-mahtesian/2012/12/2012-reelection-rate-90-
  percent-151898.

Malloy, T. (2014, February 5). Colorado Gov's Job Score, Reelect Prospects Are Up, Quinnipiac
  University Poll Finds; Economy/Jobs, Education, Guns Are Top Priorities. Retrieved
  from https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/co/co02052014_su4p7rr.pdf/.

Miller, J. (2014, September 29). In N.H. Senate race, a fight over women's issues, business
  concerns. Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/09/29/senate-race-
  fight-over-women-issues-business-concerns/lHYfpZGoElLkPlWi5O923I/story.html.

Morwitz, V. G., & Pluzinski, C. (1996). Do Polls Reflect Opinions or Do Opinions Reflect Polls?
  The Impact of Political Polling on Voter's Expectations, Preferences, and
  Behavior. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, *23*(1), 53-67.

Nicole, K. (2007). *Battleground Blog: Analyzing the 2006 U.S. Senate Campaign Blogs*
  through the Lenses of Issue Ownership, Agenda setting, and Gender Differences.
  (Master's Thesis). Retrieved from https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/42708.

Nielsen, E. (2007). What Is Public Opinion Polling and Why Is It Important? Retrieved from http://media.gallup.com/muslimwestfacts/pdf/pollingandhowtouseitr1dreveng.pdf.

Pew Research Center. (2014). *Midterm Election Indicators Daunting for Democrats*. Retrieved from http://www.people-press.org/2014/05/05/the-2014-midterm-congressional-vote-top-issues/.

Pons, V. (2016). Has Social science Taken Over Electoral Campaigns and should we Regret it?. *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 34(1), 34-47.

Roarty, A. (2014, October 26). You Could Run a 'Perfect' Campaign and Lose Anyway. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/10/kay-hagan-has-run-a-perfect-campaignshe-could-lose-anyway/381886/.

Rothenberg, S. (2014, October 28). What Counts As a GOP Wave in 2014? Retrieved from http://insideelections.com/news/article/what-counts-as-a-gop-wave-in-2014.

Saad, L. (2015, February 02). Majorities in Five States Approved of Obama in 2014. Retrieved from http://news.gallup.com/poll/181463/majorities-five-states-approved-obama-2014.aspx.

Shaheen, J. [JeanneShaheenNH]. (2014, October 9). *Safe at Home* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBxOzgYpGA4.

Shea, D. M., & Medvic, S. K. (2009). All Politics Is Local...Except When It Isn't. *American Review of Politics, 30*. Retrieved from https://journals.shareok.org/arp/article/view/247/226.

Simpson, J. (2011) Midterm Wave Elections: The Effects of Candidate Quality and Ideology on Reelection. *Xavier Journal of Politics, 2(1)*. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/88f0/5884b4bf8fe41931ed1ba5fc15513d86771f.pdf.

Smith, A., & Azem, Z. (2014, July 23). *What Election? Family Finances, Jobs Most Common Topic of Discussion in NH* [Scholarly project]. In *The University of New Hampshire Survey Center*. Retrieved from https://cola.unh.edu/sites/cola.unh.edu/files/research_publications/gsp2014_summer_electattn072314.pdf.

Sullivan, D. [Dan Sullivan]. (2014, June 6). *Dan Sullivan for Senate: Second Amendment* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EoAn6fO5qw.

Stein, R., & Bickers, K. (1994). Congressional Elections and the Pork Barrel. *The Journal Of Politics*, (2), 377. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.

Trent, J.S. and Friedenberg, R.V. (2004). Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices. Lanham, MD:Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc..

Udall, M. [Udall for Colorado]. (2014, August 5). *"Backwards" | Mark Udall for Colorado* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26sbLmONB2Y.

Vandenbroek, M. (2011). "Lost Our Lease": Issue Attention and Partisan Defection in the 2008 Presidential Election. *American Politics Research, 39(6), 1045-1071*. doi: 10.1177/1532673X11416305.

Windett, J. H. (2014). Gendered Campaign Strategies in U.S. Elections. *American Politics Research*, *42*(4), 628. doi:10.1177/1532673X13507101.