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**THE ROLE OF COMPARATIVE INFORMATION IN ADVERTISING
EVALUATIONS, CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS, VOTING PREFERENCES
AND ELECTION INVOLVEMENT**

By
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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF COMPARATIVE INFORMATION IN ADVERTISING EVALUATIONS, CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS, VOTING PREFERENCES AND ELECTION INVOLVEMENT

By

Bruce E. Pinkleton

The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to a greater breadth of knowledge concerning comparative political advertising effects. In order to accomplish this purpose, an experiment was utilized to examine comparative print advertising in a pretest posttest design. Comparative stimuli contained a manipulation of their perceived negativity as rated by subjects in order to allow hypotheses to be tested across differing levels of negativity.

The results of the experiment indicate that noncomparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and moderate comparative advertising possess significantly more information credibility than complete comparative advertising. Noncomparative advertising also possesses significantly more information credibility than limited comparative advertising. Finally, complete comparative advertising possesses significantly more information utility than limited comparative advertising.

Findings also indicate that complete comparative advertising has a significantly more negative impact on targeted candidate evaluations than moderate comparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and

noncomparative advertising. These findings are consistent with research findings in both the negative political advertising and negative information effects literature. Additional analysis indicates that sponsoring candidate evaluations are significantly more positive in the noncomparative and moderate comparative advertising conditions than in the limited comparative advertising condition. Noncomparative advertising also significantly increases sponsoring candidate liking when controlling for the effects of testing.

This study also reveals evidence of a weak backlash effect. This effect is most notable in the analysis of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. Here, complete comparative advertising significantly increases perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness when compared with noncomparative and limited comparative advertising. Despite evidence of a backlash effect, it appears as if comparative advertising does not engender the strong backlash effects often associated with negative attack advertising.

Finally, both complete and moderate comparative advertising significantly increase involvement when compared with the decreases in involvement occurring in the noncomparative advertising condition and the control group. While this finding is preliminary, it is the first indication that negative political advertising can increase election involvement rather than decrease election involvement.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their
loving support and sacrifice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Charles Atkin for his insight, direction, and most importantly, patience. The author also wishes to thank Keith Adler, Richard Cole, Gina Garramone, and E. Lincoln James, for their constructive criticism, encouragement, and support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Political scientists have conventionally explained the outcome of elections through the distribution of voter loyalties to political parties. The majority of voters have historically identified with one of the two major political parties, maintained their partisan perspectives as they interpreted political events, and voted primarily along party lines (Salmore and Salmore, 1989). The mass media, however, have contributed to a radical transformation of political campaigns and electoral processes (Denton and Woodward, 1990). This transformation includes changes in the messages and methods of communication between candidates and voters, changes in the roles of media institutions and journalists in political campaign coverage, and changes in the flow of available information concerning events and occurrences preceding and subsequent to elections (Joslyn, 1984).

One of the most significant changes in the electoral process is the increased use of paid political communication in the form of political advertising. Political advertising has become so important that some social scientists have suggested that contemporary political campaigns are essentially waged through political advertising (Trent and Friedenberg, 1991). The messages that candidates place in

paid media generally include positive messages about themselves, negative messages about their opponents, responses to charges by opponents, and comparisons of the candidates (Salmore and Salmore, 1989).

Probably the most common, and controversial, development in political advertising involves the increasing use of negative advertising. A week before the 1988 presidential election, a Newsweek article declared: "Voters are fed up and turned off by a hail of mudslinging. But it's likely to get worse as both sides step up their attack-man ads (Martz, 1988)." Media attention during the election quickly faded from the positions of candidates on important national issues, to a discussion of candidate advertising strategies and tactics (Colford, 1988). Accordingly, the popular press proclaimed the 1988 presidential campaign to be the most negative in the history of the United States (Denton and Woodward, 1990).

The results of a variety of research, however, indicate that negative political advertising has become a quite common form of contemporary political communication. Sabato (1981) suggested that a third of all political spots in the 1970s were negative and that the proportion of negative ads being used was increasing. In the final week of a 1982 congressional campaign, over 75% of respondents in a mid-Michigan survey reported seeing television commercials in which one candidate criticized his opponent (Garramone, 1984). In 1986, two-thirds of respondents in six Southern states reported viewing negative political advertisements

(Johnson and Copeland, 1987). Finally, in a 1990 mid-Michigan survey, 92% of respondents recalled seeing televised advertising in which one gubernatorial candidate was criticized by his opposition (Pinkleton and Garramone, 1992). As Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991b) note, negative political advertising has become a staple of federal, state, and local campaign strategies.

Recent electoral outcomes, however, have contributed to significant changes in political campaigns. Currently, both incumbents and challengers are likely to employ a mix of strategies, particularly in highly competitive contests (Pfau, Kenski, Nitz, and Sorenson, 1990). Increasingly, these campaign strategies include comparative advertising as a means of communicating negative information about a candidate's opponent to voters while avoiding the stigma attached to purely negative "attack" advertising (Salmore and Salmore, 1989). In fact, the results of a recent content analysis of the political advertising used in three national elections reveals that almost half of the advertising used mentioned both candidates, and 22% of the ads contained explicit candidate comparisons (Boiney and Paletz, 1991).

Unfortunately, the research literature concerning comparative political advertising is extremely limited. Merritt (1984) and Gronbeck (1985) were among the first social scientists to recognize the role of comparative advertising in political campaigns. Both identified

comparative political advertising as one of the methods used by political candidates to communicate negative information to voters about an opponent.

Merritt (1984) suggests that comparative advertising is isused by one candidate in order to claim superiority over another candidate. This can be contrasted with the purpose of negative advertising which is to identify a competitor for purposes of imputing inferiority (Merritt, 1984). Gronbeck (1985) identifies three types of negative political advertising including: 1) implicative advertising containing an implication or innuendo regarding an opponent; 2) assaultive or attack advertising containing a direct, personal attack on an opponent; and, 3) comparative advertising containing an explicit comparison between candidates. Gronbeck suggests that comparative advertising focuses on both candidates, basing its effectiveness on the assumption that voters actively compare candidates when making voting decisions.

In a recent reconsideration of candidate-sponsored negative political advertising effects, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) describe comparative political advertising as advertising that specifically compares one candidate with another, with the competitive edge in the comparison given to the sponsoring candidate. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a, 1991b) identify two kinds of comparative political advertising. Direct comparative advertising features the sponsoring candidate in a point-by-point comparison with his or her opposition. Implied comparative advertising compares

the candidates using implicative comparisons rather than direct comparisons.

Johnson-Cartee and Copeland suggest that political advertising researchers have only examined "direct reference" or "assault ads." This operationalization is limited giving no consideration to implicative political advertising and comparative political advertising as suggested by Gronbeck (1985). In order to provide a more complete and accurate examination of negative political advertising effects, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) examined negative political advertising effects using direct attack, direct comparison, and implied comparison advertising. The results of their research indicate that direct comparison advertising produces a greater negative change in the targeted candidate's pretest to posttest evaluation means than does either direct attack or indirect comparison advertising. In addition, direct attack and direct comparison advertising scored significantly lower on candidate characteristic issue appeals than indirect comparison advertising.

While these findings represent a significant attempt at examining the effects of comparative political advertising, they are incomplete by themselves. One means of enhancing the research literature concerning comparative advertising effects is to employ a comprehensive operationalization of direct comparative advertising. This allows for a more complete examination of comparative advertising effects when

employed in an experimental research setting.

With this in mind, the purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to a greater breadth of knowledge concerning comparative political advertising effects. This will be accomplished through the utilization of a comprehensive array of direct comparative political advertising. This array will contain a manipulation of the perceived negativity of comparative advertising stimuli as rated by subjects. In this way, hypotheses concerning comparative political advertising effects are testable across differing levels of negativity.

In order to accomplish this purpose, Chapter One has provided an introduction to negative and comparative political advertising along with a justification of this research topic. Chapter Two contains reviews of the research literature concerning negative information effects and both negative and comparative political advertising effects. This chapter also includes an abbreviated review of the comparative product advertising research literature. Research hypotheses and their supporting arguments are discussed in Chapter Three, along with the methods used for testing them. Chapter Four contains the results of the study. Chapter Five contains a discussion of the study's findings including the implications and conclusions to be drawn from the study, research limitations, and recommendations for a future course of research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The traditional limited effects model of communication campaigns, based on research concerning the impact of campaign messages on political decision making by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948), is increasingly less applicable to contemporary political campaigns. In the late 1940s, social scientists contended that audience members were resistant to persuasive messages in the mass media because of apathy, attitudinal defensiveness, or cognitive ineptness (Atkin, 1981; Rogers and Storey, 1987). In the contemporary political era, however, political parties have declined in importance. Single-issue political activism and the prominence of the mass media have rapidly increased. Social scientists have become increasingly sophisticated in their use of research (Denton and Woodward, 1990).

As these changes have taken place, political campaigns have also changed, increasing in sophistication and effectiveness. Foremost among these changes is an increase in the use of negative campaigning, as previously discussed (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991b; Salmore and Salmore, 1989). The following review of literature is divided into three sections in order to provide a complete examination of the research findings concerning negative and comparative

information in political campaigns. The first section contains a broad review of research concerning the perceptual and behavioral effects of negative information, including a review of research by Lau (1982, 1985) concerning the impact of negative information on political perception and behavior. Following this review is an examination of the research literature concerning the perception and effects of negative political advertising. Finally, the research literature concerning comparative advertising is examined. This review contains a largely summary consideration of comparative product advertising research, with a more detailed consideration of the limited comparative political advertising literature.

Negative Information Effects

The social environment in which humans exist provides a seemingly infinite array of information which may be utilized when forming impressions and making judgments regarding social stimuli. While physiological and cognitive limitations prevent the utilization of all available information in processing tasks, the collection of mental processes used in perceiving, thinking, and remembering may be given to qualitative biases more often than quantitative restraints (Kellerman, 1984). Some of these qualitative biases are attributable to the role of negative information in information processing tasks, including impression formation and person perception.

Social scientists have examined the role of negative

information in a variety of information processing settings, including individual impression formation and judgmental decision making. The results of this body of research indicate that across different events, settings, and persons, negative experiences or negative aspects of stimuli tend to be more influential in information processing tasks than positive experiences or positive aspects of stimuli (Fiske, 1980; Kellerman, 1984; 1989).

Perhaps the most well documented effect of negative information concerns the tendency for individuals to weight negative information more heavily than positive information when forming evaluations of social stimuli. Research also indicates that negative information has a greater ability to alter previously existing judgments than positive information; that impressions based on negative information are more resistant to change than impressions based on positive information; and, that negative information may be more memorable than positive information.

Negative weighting

Social scientists have documented a consistent tendency for negative information to be weighted more heavily than positive information in individual evaluations of social stimuli. Here, comparable positive and negative information--experimentally defined as being equidistant from a psychological neutral point--are not weighted equally in decision making and impression formation. Instead, research findings suggest that subjects typically weight

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negative information disproportionately when compared with the weighting given to equidistantly valanced positive information.

In one of the first attempts to document the weighting given to negative information, Jordan (1965) observed that data obtained in three separate experiments provided evidence indicating that negative and positive information were not symmetrically opposite in their effects. In his review, Jordan noted that the data sets, collected by different researchers for different purposes, indicated an asymmetric effect between liking and disliking. This asymmetric effect was such that, under comparable conditions, negative information had a stronger impact on attitudes and behavior than did positive information. That same year, Anderson (1965) reported that negative adjectives had a stronger impact on impression formation than did positive adjectives when subjects rated their liking for persons described by sets of personality-trait adjectives.

In keeping with these findings, research by Feldman (1966) indicates that negative adjectives possess a stronger modifying capacity than positive adjectives. Feldman examined this capacity by measuring the extent to which negative adjectives pull the evaluation of pairs of adjectives in which they appear, toward themselves.

Additional research indicates that, given equidistant favorable, neutral, and unfavorable attributes, negative information tends to be weighted more heavily in subject assessments of individual likability (Hamilton and Huffman,

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1971; Hamilton and Zana, 1972). In a test of impression formation by Hamilton and Zana (1972), for example, subjects were presented with a series of stimulus persons created by combining positive and negative attributes with sets of neutral traits. The favorable and unfavorable attributes were not only equidistant from the neutral point on a scale of likableness, but were opposite in meaning. For each stimulus, subjects wrote a description of their impression of the person and rated the likableness of the person.

The results of the experiment indicated that not only was negative information weighted more heavily than positive information in impression formation, but that subjects were much more confident in their evaluative judgments of the negative stimulus persons when compared to the positive stimulus persons. Similar research findings have been obtained by Fiske (1980), Hodges (1974), Levin and Schmidt (1969), Warr and Jackson (1976), and Wyer (1970).

It is significant to note that documentation of the disproportionate weighting given to negative information is not necessarily tied to experimental settings. There is evidence indicating that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information when forming impressions of job applicants (Bolster and Springbett, 1961; Springbett, 1958; Webster, 1964), the police (Jacob, 1971; Walker, Richardson, Williams, Denyer, McGaughey, 1972), the courts (Walker et al., 1972), and bureaucratic governmental agencies (Katz, Gutek, Kahn, and Burton, 1975).

There is also research evidence indicating that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information in political perception and behavior. Specifically, Lau (1982) sought to examine the weighting given to negative information in the formation of impressions, and the weighting given to negative information as a consequence of impressions, in a series of three studies. In his first study, Lau (1982) replicated a 1977 analysis by Kernell.

Using data from Michigan's 1974 and 1978 congressional elections and controlling for party identification, Lau examined voter reports of presidential approval or disapproval and voter turnout. Lau hypothesized that voters who disapproved of the president's job performance would vote in larger numbers than voters who approved of the president's job performance. Underlying Lau's hypothesis was the theory that voters vote against congressional candidates aligned with the president's party as a means of registering their disapproval of the president's activities. Lau found evidence supportive of his hypothesis suggesting that the consequences of negative evaluations are greater than the consequences of positive evaluations.

In his next study, Lau (1982) examined the weighting given to negative information in the formation of political evaluations. Data were examined from the 1968, 1972, and 1980 NES/CPS American National Election Studies, in which a national sample of respondents was interviewed before and after each election. Open-ended questions containing the

reasons for voting for and against each major candidate were coded. Using regression analysis on positive and negative information indices, Lau found strong evidence for the hypothesis that negative information receives more weight than comparable positive information in the formation of evaluations of presidential candidates.

In his final study of the series, Lau (1982) examined data from the 1980 NES/CPS American National Election Studies. These data included a series of new items centered around affects and ascribed personality traits (see Kinder, 1978). These affect and trait measures were collected in a pre-election survey and treated separately. For purposes of analysis, Lau standardized the affect and trait measures using regressions to analyze first the positive and negative affect measures, and then the positive and negative trait measures. Lau's analysis indicated that negative affect and negative traits had much more influence than positive affect and positive traits in the formation of evaluations of presidential candidates. Lau took these results to be supportive of his hypothesis.

In 1985, Lau again undertook an examination of the role of negative information in political perception. In a continuation of his 1982 analyses, Lau attempted to provide evidence supportive of his earlier findings. In this study, Lau proposed two reasons for greater weighting being given to negative information than positive information in political perception. These are the "figure-ground" and

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"cost orientation" hypotheses.

According to the figure-ground hypothesis, negative information is made more perceptually salient to voters because it stands out against a largely positive background. Because negative information stands out, it is more easily noticed and processed than positive information. As a test of the figure-ground hypothesis, Lau calculated an overall trust-in-government score by summing scores from individual items in the 1968, 1972, 1974, 1978, and 1980 CPS National Election Studies. The data were then separated into thirds by scores to determine the most trusting third of the sample from the most distrusting third of the sample. The results of regression analysis indicated that, for those most trusting of the government, negative information was weighted much more heavily than positive information in congressional elections supporting the figure-ground hypothesis.

According to the cost orientation hypothesis, people are more strongly motivated to avoid costs than to approach gains. Because negative information is linked to the avoidance of costs, negative information has greater motivational sway than positive information. As a test of the cost orientation hypothesis, Lau calculated an overall score for "caring" (i.e., caring about the outcome of a presidential election) by summing individual item scores from the 1968, 1972, and 1980 National Election Surveys. This time, the data were separated into two groups in order to distinguish those who cared most about the outcome of

elections from those who cared least about the outcome of elections. The results of the study indicated that an increase in the importance of negative information was greater than the comparable increase in the importance of positive information among those who cared most about the outcome of the presidential elections. This finding is in support of the cost orientation hypothesis. Taken together, this series of studies by Lau (1982, 1985) provides evidence indicating that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information in political perception and behavior.

Impression Alteration

Negative information has been shown to exhibit a greater capacity to alter impressions, in addition to being weighted more heavily in perception and behavior. In a test of the role of negative information in impression alteration, Cusumano and Richey (1970) gave subjects incompatible positive and negative information to use in the evaluation of a stranger. Following a diversionary task, narrative descriptions of a low, medium, or high valence difference were administered in a positive-negative or negative-positive order. Subject ratings were made after each block of information was received, and then again, a week later.

The final results of the study indicated a disproportionate influence of negative information at all valence intensities. Impressions that were originally

negative, but had been revised upward by positive information reverted to a negative standing within a week. Originally positive impressions that had been revised downward remained negative.

These findings were replicated by Gray-Little (1973) in a study of Danish subjects. In this study, subjects increased the weight they ascribed to negative information in measurements taken seven to ten days after initial impression measurement. This effect was evident for conditions in which subjects originally received positive information and then received negative information, as well as conditions in which subjects originally received negative information and then received positive information.

As an additional note, documentation of the ability of negative information to alter already existing impressions exists outside of experimental research settings. Research concerning the impact of negative information on opinion formation in employment interviews, for example, indicates that negative information has a much greater capacity to alter previously positive evaluations than the ability of positive information to alter previously negative evaluations (Bolster and Springbett, 1961; Springbett, 1958).

Resistance to Change

Research evidence indicates that impressions based on negative information are more resistant to change than impressions based on positive information. Two experiments

by Briscoe, Woodyard, and Shaw (1967), for example, sought to test the hypothesis that an unfavorable first impression is more resistant to change than a favorable first impression. The design of the first experiment incorporated two orders of information (favorable-unfavorable vs. unfavorable-favorable), two modes of responding, and two control groups. The design of the second experiment was similar to the design of the first, however reversed forms of descriptions were used. The results of both experiments revealed substantial support for the authors' hypothesis, indicating that impressions based on negative information are more resistant to change than impressions based on positive information.

It is significant to note that the findings of a number of previously discussed studies are generally supportive of the Briscoe, Woodyard, and Shaw (1967) findings. For example, in the previously discussed experiment conducted by Cusumano and Richey (1970), subject impressions that were originally negative but had been revised upward by positive information, reverted back to their original negative standing within a week. In the previously discussed experiment by Gray-Little (1973) subjects that received negative information and then positive information increased the weight they ascribed to negative information in measurements taken seven to ten days after initial impression measurement. Taken together, these studies provide evidence indicating that impressions based on

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negative information are more resistant to change than impressions based on positive information.

Memorability

The results of research concerning attitude formation and negative political advertising effects, to be discussed in greater detail in the following literature review, indicate that negative information may be more memorable than positive information. Specifically, research by Shapiro and Rieger (1989) indicates that the arguments used in negative political advertising may be more memorable than the arguments used in positive political advertising. In the Shapiro and Rieger (1989) study, subjects listened to recordings of six advertisements including positive and negative political spots for a fictitious mayoral/city council election. After performing a diversionary task, subjects were asked memory and attitude questions regarding the political advertising. The results of the study indicated that the negative political advertising was significantly more memorable than the positive political advertising.

It should be noted that not all research examining the memorability of negative information is supportive of the Shapiro and Rieger findings. Specifically, research by Beigel (1973) and research by Richey, McClelland, and Shimkunas (1967) failed to find results supportive of the claim that negative information is more memorable than positive information. Thus, the findings of the Shapiro and

Rieger (1989) study indicating that negative information may encourage greater memory retention than positive information are still incomplete.

Negative Political Advertising

The body of research literature available concerning negative political advertising is growing, though still incomplete (Aden, 1988). This literature review is divided into four sections in order to simplify the presentation of research findings and contribute to greater ease of understanding. The first section contains qualitative descriptions and rhetorical analyses of negative political advertising. This information is beneficial as an introduction to the conventions of negative campaigning. The next section contains mostly quantitative descriptions of the contents and usage of negative political advertising. The third section contains research findings concerning voters' perceptual and behavioral responses to negative political advertising. The final section contains research information concerning the effects of negative political advertising, both within specific contests and across the spectrum of the political process.

Qualitative Descriptions and Analyses

While there are several rhetorical/descriptive analyses of political advertising generally (e.g., Benson, 1981; Devlin, 1977, 1982, 1987; Larson, 1982), there are a very small number of studies concerning negative political advertising. The analyses that do exist tend to analyze the

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techniques and methods used in negative political advertising, rather than examining the broader effects such advertising has. These analyses are not without merit, however.

Despite a history of complaints regarding the use of smear tactics in campaigns, there is little rhetorical or descriptive analysis of negative political advertising until 1971. At that time the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, directed by Samuel J. Archibald, published a report entitled The Pollution of Politics. A substantial portion of the report is given to descriptions of "dirty politics" and campaign case studies, many of them containing a substantial portion of negative advertising.

In the report, Archibald (1971) and his colleagues decry the use of unfair political practices. This includes the use of "personal vilification, character defamation...(and) scurrilous attacks on any candidate or his personal or family life;" and, the use of campaign material which "misrepresents, distorts, or otherwise falsifies the facts regarding any candidate" including the use of unfounded accusations aimed at creating or exploiting voter doubts.

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a detailed discussion of the report's conclusions, it is interesting to note that the authors express particular concern with the potential abuses of televised political advertising. In particular, the report suggests

that the extensive use of televised political commercials may replace intelligent political debate and lead to a distortion of the issues. Among the few specific conclusions drawn in the report is the observation that sponsors of negative political advertising risk encouraging backlash effects whereby voters sympathize with the targets of negative political ads. Interestingly, this effect has been experimentally supported in research by Garramone (1985).

In a more recent attempt to rhetorically analyze negative senatorial advertising, Gronbeck (1985) identified three types of negative ads used by political candidates. The first type of ad is implicative in nature, using innuendo to undermine an opponent rather than a direct attack. Gronbeck suggests that the focus of implicative advertising is the sponsoring candidate. Implicative advertising assumes that voters want information to allow them to determine the candidate that most closely aligns with their own personal views.

The second type of negative political advertising Gronbeck identifies is comparative in nature, employing a direct comparison between political candidates. The comparative ad increases its focus to include two or more competing candidates and operates under the assumption that voters actively compare contestants in their political decision making process.

The final type of negative advertising identified by Gronbeck is assaultive in nature making use of a direct

personal attack on an opponent's character, motives, associates, or actions. Assaultive advertising focuses negative attention on an opposing candidate, operating under the assumption that voters actually vote against candidates, rather than for them. As is the case with the report of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, Gronbeck suggests little regarding the actual effects of negative political advertising.

Contents and Usage

One content analysis by Wadsworth and Kaid (1987) and two content analyses by Loudon (1987, 1990) provide a variety of information concerning the content and use of negative advertising in contemporary political campaigns. Wadsworth and Kaid (1987) content analyzed 805 television campaign commercials to investigate the advertising styles used by presidential incumbents and challengers. The commercials analyzed included nine presidential elections from 1952 to 1984, and included the advertising from the two major party candidates. The ads were coded for a variety of verbal, nonverbal, and production features including format, type of appeals, setting and staging of the commercial, and production techniques.

By way of general description, 44% of the ads analyzed were sponsored by incumbents with the remaining 56% of ads sponsored by challengers. The most popular advertising format was introspective in which the candidate offered personal views on issue positions or personal feelings for

both incumbents (23%) and challengers (28%). Incumbents also made significant use of testimonials (21%) and opposition-focused (21%) ads, while challengers made greater use of the question and answer format (17%) followed by opposition-focused ads (16%).

Challengers were more likely than incumbents to use a "call for change" as a means of attacking the record of an opponent. While incumbents were able to remind voters of past accomplishments, challengers tended to point out incumbent failures and advocate changes in administration policies (Wadsworth and Kaid, 1987). Of particular interest for the purposes of this paper, negative opponent-focused ads were slightly more likely to be used by challengers (31%) than by incumbents (27%). In attacking opposing candidates, both incumbents and challengers were more likely to attack the issue stands or consistency of an opponent. The use of humor or ridicule was most often used by candidates in their negative advertising. Incumbents employed this strategy in 21% of their ads and challengers used it in 20% of their ads. In addition, challengers were significantly more likely than incumbents to use negative association as an attack strategy.

In his first content analysis, Loudon (1987) examined 95 political advertisements from the 1984 North Carolina senate race between incumbent Senator Jesse Helms and Governor Jim Hunt. In his analysis Loudon attempted to determine the manner in which candidates appeared in their

own political advertising (presence), and the manner in which opponents were portrayed in each other's advertising (negative advertising). It is instructive to note that eighteen months before the election opinion polls placed Hunt comfortably ahead in the race with a 22% lead. By May of 1984, however, Helms enjoyed a 50% to 46% lead and won reelection. Loudon (1987) attributes much of the success of the Helms campaign to its use of negative spots.

By way of description, approximately 59% of the ads run by Hunt and 67% of the ads run by Helms were negative. Most of the Hunt spots were 30 seconds in length and involved either a policy statement or an attack on Helms' issue stands. Most of Helms' spots also lasted 30 seconds. In addition, Helms made use of a significant number of 10 second negative spots. Much of the Helms advertising attacked the specific issue stands of Hunt with a significantly smaller number of ads containing Helms endorsements.

Of particular importance to this dissertation, Loudon concludes on the basis of his analysis that negative advertising may be effectively used to undercut an opponent's views while increasing positive voter perceptions of the sponsoring candidate. Regarding the successful use of negative spots, Loudon suggests: 1) that negative ads may be successfully employed by political candidates when used to encourage incremental shifts in voter perceptions; 2) that negative spots work when they are in general agreement with voter beliefs; and, 3) that negative

advertising does not change voter beliefs as much as it offers alternative perspectives from which to view generally agreed upon "facts." Louden concludes his discussion of negative advertising in the Helms/Hunt race by noting the potential dangers of voter backlash.

Louden (1990) examined factors contributing to the efficacy of negative political spot advertising, in a second analysis of advertising in the 1984 Hunt/Helms senate race. In this study, Louden posits that academicians' distinctions between image and issue information in political advertising are false. That is, image and issue ads are not discrete message forms.

Instead, the formation of candidates' character information is best achieved through the embedding of image messages within advertising that is issue based (Louden, 1990). Such embedding allows candidates to demonstrate negative information concerning an opponent rather than employing "empty words." This is a more efficient means of establishing consistency of character and helps to explain why the Hunt/Helms advertising is more accurately identified in terms of character assessments rather than specific issues (Louden, 1990). The importance of emphasizing issues is heightened for negative spots, according to Louden, because commercials that are issue based provide a veneer of respectability. This allows them to maintain the perception among voters that they are fair and informative and helps to avoid backlash effects (Louden, 1990).

The results of Louden's analysis indicate that each candidate's campaigns utilized similar portions of negative to positive advertising. There were three distinct differences between the negative advertising employed by each candidate, however. First, Helms' spots were less complex, employing significantly fewer words than Hunt's commercials. Second, Helms' ads contained fewer policy issues per spot and most often contained information concerning a single issue. Hunt's ads, conversely, tended to contain multiple issues, often presented in a "laundry list" format. Finally, Helms' ads were found to be significantly more specific than were Hunt's ads.

Louden concludes his analysis with an examination of the existence of each candidate's presence in their negative advertising. The results indicate that Hunt's negative advertising is persistent in visualizing its sponsor. Helms, conversely, never appears in his negative advertising or personally expresses reservations about Hunt. From this analysis, Louden concludes that negative political advertising acts to converge voter decisions on an opponent's character. The presence of the sponsor in such advertising risks invoking unfavorable evaluations of the sponsoring candidate's actions (Louden, 1990).

Voter Perceptions and Responses

Voters are often surveyed in an attempt to understand the impact of negative political advertising on voter perceptions and behavior. In one of the first attempts to

explore the effects of negative political advertising, Surlin and Gordon (1977) assessed attitudes toward direct-reference "attacking" political advertising using racial class, socioeconomic status, and value system differences as dependent variables. For purposes of their telephone survey, systematic random samples were drawn from the 1972 metropolitan telephone directories for Atlanta and Philadelphia.

In the surveys, items designed to assess perceptions of direct-reference political advertising were constructed using agree-disagree statements. The results of the Surlin and Gordon (1977) survey indicated that lower socioeconomic status respondents perceived political direct-reference advertising to be more unethical, but also more informative than did middle socioeconomic respondents. In addition, blacks found the direct-reference political advertising to be more informative and affective than did whites. Gordon and Surlin (1977) concluded their study with a discussion of the issues surrounding their findings, including the suggestion that future research address the need for a code of conduct related to the use of political advertising.

In 1984, Merritt reported the results of a survey examining the impact of negative political advertising in a 1982 campaign for State Assembly Representative in California's 44th Assembly District. In her study, Merritt hypothesized that negative advertising would produce negative affect toward both the target and sponsor of the advertising; that party identification would influence

responses to media coverage and evaluations of candidates; and, that exposure to political advertising would affect voter evaluations of candidates and the criteria for making those evaluations.

For purposes of the survey, 314 telephone interviews were conducted with residents of the 44th Assembly District approximately a week before the election. The results of the survey indicated that negative political advertising evoked negative affect toward both the target and the sponsor of the negative advertising. Predispositions toward either candidate in the form of partisan affiliation had a limited affect, however. The survey's results indicated that prior partisan attitudes did not produce selective exposure or retention but did produce selective distortion, tending to influence affective responses toward the advertising.

Merritt (1984) interpreted the findings of her study as supportive of the suggestion that exposure to negative political advertising may cause negative evaluations of the sponsor and positive evaluations of the target, particularly among constituents who identify with the target's political party. At the same time, negative advertising may encourage counterarguing and source derogation among party loyalists. Merritt concluded by suggesting caution in the use of negative political advertising noting that party loyalists may reject negative messages and turn against the sponsor of such advertising.

Garramone (1984) attempted to determine voter responses to negative political advertising in a telephone survey of 211 mid-Michigan voters during the final week of the 1982 congressional campaign. In her survey Garramone found that more than 75% of the total sample interviewed reported seeing negative political advertising, with 77% of those having seen such advertising able to recall the ad's sponsor or target. Based on what they had seen, 75% of the survey's respondents expressed disapproval of the negative advertising while 19% expressed approval and the remainder had no opinion.

Only 10% of the sample evaluated the ads as "very" truthful, with 54% of respondents evaluating the ads as "somewhat" truthful, and 36% of respondents evaluating the ads as "not at all" truthful. Only 4% of respondents reported feeling more positive toward the campaign as a result of seeing the negative advertising, while 40% reported feeling more negative. Regarding the potential for backlash effects, 10% of respondents reported feeling more positive toward the target of negative political advertising while 15% reported feeling more negative. The remainder of the sample reported that the negative advertising had no influence on their perceptions.

Additional findings by Garramone (1984) indicate that of the demographic variables, age was the strongest predictor. Older voters tended to perceive the ads as being less truthful, were less approving of negative political advertising, and tended to be more favorably influenced

toward the target of negative advertising than younger voters. Not surprisingly, candidate preference was shown to be a better predictor of perception and impact than demographic variables. Here, voters favoring the sponsor of the negative advertising viewed the ads as being most truthful and were more positively influenced toward the sponsor and more negatively influenced toward the target, than voters favoring the target of negative advertising.

Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1989) conducted two surveys in order to make determinations regarding voter's conceptions of negative political advertising. In the first survey, citizens of Little Rock, Arkansas were asked two open-ended questions concerning the contents of negative political advertising. The open-ended format allowed respondents to explain their own perceptions of what makes a political ad "fair or acceptable" and "unfair or unacceptable." These responses were then used to create post hoc categories containing 10 types of political advertising content, including: Political record; personal life; issue stands; current or past marriages; criminal activities; family members; voting record; religion; medical history; and, sex life.

In a second survey, voters in six Southern states were asked to decide if political advertising containing content from each of the 10 previously identified categories was fair or unfair. The results of the study indicated a split between the 10 advertising content categories. Advertising

content concerning a candidate's stand on issues, criminal activities, political record, and voting record was rated as being fair by a majority of respondents. Conversely, advertising content concerning a candidate's medical history, personal life, religion, sex life, family members, and current or past marriages was rated as being unfair.

A confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine whether the ten items used in the second survey split into categories concerning personal characteristics versus political issues. The 10 items split as predicted with a personal characteristics factor composed of items concerning a candidate's personal life, marriage, family, religion, medical history, and sex life. A second, political issues, factor emerged containing political record, issue stands, criminal record, and voting record.

Perloff and Kinsey (1990) used a mail instrument to survey political consultants in an effort to probe their beliefs concerning the role of political advertising in campaigns. Although their response rate was low (37.5%), over 94% of respondents felt that negative advertising exerts a powerful influence on voters' attitudes, and 74% of respondents agreed that negative advertising intensifies voters' distrust of politicians.

Of perhaps greater interest, over 77% of political consultants believed that voters remember negative information better than positive information. Additionally, 75% of respondents suggested that negative ads are more likely to stir people's deepest emotions than positive ads.

As an additional note, 64% of respondents disagreed with the statement that "once a negative atmosphere is in place, positive media do not work (Perloff and Kinsey, 1990)."

Finally, Pinkleton and Garramone (1992) surveyed 405 voters in mid-Michigan the week preceding the November 1990 elections. Their purpose was to examine the effects of negative political advertising on voter cognition, affect and behavior. A response rate of approximately 70% was obtained. Approximately 92% of those sampled recalled seeing televised advertising in which one gubernatorial candidate was criticized by his opposition, while 81% of respondents recalled seeing televised advertising in which one senatorial candidate was criticized by his opposition. Approximately 72% of respondents found negative political advertising to be not very informative or not at all informative and 87% of those sampled disapproved somewhat or disapproved strongly of the use of negative political advertising.

Both positive and negative correlations existed between voter characteristics and cognitive and behavioral variables. Many of these correlations can be generally characterized as low but significant. Age and the extent to which voters found negative political advertising informative was negatively correlated ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$). Voting in the past gubernatorial election was negatively correlated with finding negative political advertising informative ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$) and approving of the use of

negative political advertising ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$).

Viewing a high number of negative gubernatorial ads correlated negatively with approval ($r = -.10$, $p < .05$), while viewing a high number of negative senatorial ads correlated negatively with informativeness ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$). Approval of the use of negative political advertising was significantly but weakly correlated with interest in the outcomes of both the gubernatorial ($r = .27$, $p < .01$) and senatorial elections ($r = .22$, $p < .01$).

Finding negative political advertising informative enjoyed a significant, moderate correlation with approval of the use of negative political advertising ($r = .47$, $p < .01$), indicating that those who found negative political advertising informative also tended to approve of its use. Informativeness was also correlated with interest in both the gubernatorial ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) and senatorial elections ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), to a weaker extent. Somewhat surprisingly, the informativeness of negative political advertising was weakly but negatively correlated with the likelihood of voting ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$).

Multiple regressions were used to partial variance aiding in the determination of the relative degree of contribution of variables. Both direct and interaction effects proved significant. In terms of likelihood of voting, total caring about the outcome of the elections generated a highly reliable beta coefficient when the effects other variables were partialled out and controlled for ($\beta = .29$, $p < .01$).

In the same way, an age by informativeness interaction effect also generated a significant beta coefficient when variable contributions were partialled ($\beta = -.41$, $p < .05$). A plot of the interaction effect between voter age (18-40; 41-91) and informativeness revealed that younger voters were likely to vote no matter how informative they found negative political advertising. Interestingly, older voters who found negative political advertising to be the most informative were less inclined to actually vote than older voters who found negative political advertising less informative. Finally, caring about the outcome of the elections ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$); approval of the use of negative political advertising ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$); and, finding negative political advertising interesting ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) generated reliable beta coefficients with respect to total interest in the outcome of the elections.

Perceptual and Behavioral Effects

There are several recent experiments examining the perceptual and behavioral effects of negative political advertising. These studies have examined a variety of topics including the roles of sponsor and rebuttal in negative political advertising, the appeals and strategies used in negative political advertising, and the effects of negative political advertising on the political process. In a 1985 study, Garramone examined the relationship between negative advertising sponsor and rebuttal factors, and Perceptions of the candidates and voting intentions. For

purposes of the experiment, communication arts undergraduates at a large Midwestern university were used as subjects. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: Candidate sponsor/no rebuttal; independent sponsor/no rebuttal; and, independent sponsor/rebuttal.

The results of the experiment revealed that subjects who viewed an independently sponsored negative ad held a more negative view of the target than subjects who viewed the negative ad with a sponsoring candidate. In addition, subjects who viewed an independently sponsored negative ad were less likely to vote for its target. At the same time, these subjects held a more positive view of the target's opponent, and were more likely to vote for this candidate. As an additional note, sponsor by party identification interactions emerged for all dependent variables such that, viewers who did not identify with the sponsor's political party were more sensitive to independent/candidate sponsor effects than were viewers who identified with the sponsoring candidate's party.

Subjects in the rebuttal condition demonstrated a significantly more negative perception of the target's opponent than did subjects in the no-rebuttal condition. Subjects in the rebuttal condition also demonstrated a lesser likelihood of voting for the target's opponent than did subjects in the no-rebuttal condition. Finally, analysis of variance indicated that there were no dependent variable interactions with the rebuttal manipulation.

In a study concerning negative advertising sponsor and party affiliation, Kaid and Boydston (1987) hypothesized: 1) that exposure to negative political advertising from an independent source would significantly reduce the image evaluation of a targeted candidate; and, 2) that the impact of negative political advertising would be significantly greater for members of the party of the sponsoring candidate. In order to test these hypotheses, Kaid and Boydston exposed members of civic groups in Oklahoma City to five ads used by the National Conservative Political Action Committee to discredit an Oklahoma politician (from another district) in a pretest-posttest design.

The results of the Kaid and Boydston (1987) study indicated that perceptions of the targeted politician were clearly more negative after exposure to the negative advertising than before exposure. A comparison between pre- and post-evaluation scores revealed that after exposure to the negative advertising, subjects rated the targeted politician as being less qualified, less honest, less serious, less sincere, less successful, less conservative, and less of a saver. While the impact of the negative advertising was greatest for members of the opposition party, it is interesting to note that members of the targeted candidate's party had a significantly more negative view of their candidate after exposure to the negative advertising, as well.

A factor analysis of rated items indicated that before exposure to the negative advertising respondents generally

viewed the candidate in two basic dimensions, one evaluative (e.g., qualified, honest, successful) and the other related to demeanor (e.g., serious, handsome, calm). After exposure to the negative advertising, however, a third dimension appeared consisting only of two adjective pairs (conservative/liberal and spender/saver). Kaid and Boydston (1987) suggest this third factor--indicating that the negative advertising may have changed the way in which respondents conceptualized of the politician--is factorially complex, probably surfacing as a result of the content of the negative advertising labeling the target as a big-spending liberal.

Roddy and Garramone (1988) conducted an experiment to determine the relative effectiveness of different types of negative political advertising appeals, and strategies for responding to the those appeals. Subjects were assigned to one of four treatment conditions including: Issue-attack/negative-issue response; issue-attack/positive-issue response; image-attack/negative-image response; and, image-attack/positive-image response. Three dependent variables were measured for both the sponsor and the target of the negative advertising including an evaluation of the candidate's commercial, an evaluation of the candidate's character, and the likelihood of voting for the candidate.

The results of the study indicated that subjects who viewed an issue-attack ad demonstrated a significantly more positive evaluation of the sponsor's commercial than did

subjects who viewed an image-attack ad. In addition, viewers of the negative issue ad were significantly less likely to vote for the target than viewers of the image ad. Additional analyses revealed that subjects who viewed the negative-response commercial evaluated the target's ad significantly more negatively than did subjects who viewed the positive-response commercial. Those who viewed the negative-response commercial were also significantly less likely to vote for the sponsor than those who viewed the positive-response commercial. There were no significant interactions between appeal type and response strategy.

In an experimental comparison of positive and negative political advertising, Shapiro and Rieger (1989) examined the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral relationships between ad valence (positive or negative), ad type (image or issue), and candidate position (sponsor or target). Subjects participating in the study were undergraduate students at an Eastern university receiving course credit for their participation. For purposes of the study, two image political ads and two issue political ads were written, each with a positive and negative version. To make listening to the political ads credible, subjects heard ads for two campaigns. Eight orders were used so that every combination of advertisement, valence, and campaign was accommodated in order to control for order effects.

The results of the study indicated that the main effects for both valence and candidate were significant. Overall, the positive advertising generated more positive

attitudes toward both candidates, while the negative advertising generated less favorable attitudes toward both candidates. While negative issue ads lowered evaluations of the sponsor, their relative impact was such that the target suffered in greater proportion than the sponsor. These findings change for negative image advertising, however. Here, attitude scores of subjects toward the sponsor were no better than attitude scores of subjects toward the target. In fact, given a less conservative level of significance, it appears that negative image advertising may alter attitudes toward the sponsor such that they are worse than attitudes toward the target.

Somewhat surprisingly, the relationship between expressed attitude and intended voting behavior appeared to be related to advertising valence. In the instance of positive advertising, the correlation between attitude and voting was relatively low. In the instance of negative advertising, however, the correlations were much higher. Here, the negative advertising was more likely to translate into an actual vote than the positive advertising. An additional analysis of advertising recall indicated that the negative advertising was significantly more memorable than the positive advertising. Shapiro and Rieger (1989) suggest that the greater memorability of the negative advertising may partly explain the stronger relationship between negative advertising, attitude, and voting.

Finally, Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton, and Cole, (1990)

conducted an experiment to explore the effects of negative political advertising on a number of variables considered significant to the democratic process. These variables included candidate image discrimination, candidate attitude polarization, voter involvement in an election, communication behavior regarding an election, and likelihood of turning out to vote in an election. The subjects in the experiment were communication arts undergraduate majors at a large Midwestern university. The experiment employed six conditions, manipulating the number of commercials viewed (one, or two) and the type of appeals (positive or negative) used in the advertising. The treatment message combinations were: Positive-positive; positive-only; negative-positive; negative-only; and, negative-negative. Four thirty-second spots were created for use within the study addressing two separate issues. For each issue, a positive-appeal version and a negative-appeal version of the spots were produced. In the five treatment conditions, subjects read brief biographic profiles of the two candidates plus viewed either one or two political commercials for the candidates.

To determine the effects of the five appeal combinations, a one-way analysis of variance was computed for each of the dependent variables. The results of analysis indicated that negative political advertising contributes to greater candidate image discrimination and greater attitude polarization than standard, positive political advertising. While no significant treatment effects emerged for the involvement, communication behavior,

or voter turnout variables, an examination of means revealed that the highest scores were obtained for the positive-only condition, followed by the negative-only condition.

In a discussion of the study's results, Garramone et al. suggested that the pattern of means for the image discrimination variable indicates that voters may find negative political advertising to be more informative than positive political advertising. A similar pattern of means concerning the attitude polarization variable, indicates that negative political advertising may also facilitate voter decision making more than its positive counterpart. The fact that no significant effects were found for the involvement, communication behavior, and voter turnout variables runs counter to what might normally be expected. Garramone et al. attribute this finding to the possibility of individual effects in opposite directions. Here, for example, negative advertising may motivate some people to vote while motivating others not to vote.

Comparative Advertising

Comparative advertising is used in both political campaign environments and product marketing environments. The use of comparative product advertising has grown steadily since 1972. At that time, the Federal Trade Commission suggested that restrictions on the use of comparative product advertising were preventing consumers from receiving potentially useful information in making informed product purchases (Lamb, Pride, and Pletcher, 1978;

Swayne and Stevenson, 1987). As the use of comparative product advertising has increased, the research efforts of social scientists examining such advertising have expanded (Turgeon and Barnaby, 1988). Comparative product advertising has been studied from a legal perspective (Meyerowitz, 1985; Posch, 1986), a conceptual perspective (Boddewyn and Marton, 1978; James and Hensel, 1991; Scammon, 1978), a strategic perspective (Byer and Cook, 1985; Wilson, 1978), and from the perspective of effects (McDougall, 1978; Ohanian and Cunningham, 1987; Shegula and Jacoby, 1978; Stack, 1978; Tashchian and Slama, 1984; and, Walker, Swasy, and Rethans, 1986).

Political campaigns employ comparative political advertising as a means of communicating negative information about a candidate's opponent to voters while avoiding the stigma attached to purely negative advertising (Salmore and Salmore, 1989). Many consultants suggest that voters are more accepting of the claims made in comparative advertising than the claims made in "attack" advertising due to increased perceptions of balance and fairness (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991b).

Comparative political advertising has the potential to benefit a sponsoring candidate by reducing negative sponsor liabilities and increasing positive sponsor features, relative to a candidate's opposition (see Trent and Friedenberg, 1991). Unfortunately, there is a very small body of empirical research concerning comparative political

advertising effects. In contrast, the research literature concerning comparative product advertising effects is extensive, though incomplete. Although research findings concerning comparative product advertising are not directly applicable to political advertising contexts, this body of research is instructive as a starting point from which to consider comparative political advertising effects (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991b). This is particularly significant in light of the inconsiderable body of research concerning comparative political advertising.

Comparative Product Advertising

The comparative product advertising literature is generally characterized by a lack of consistent findings (James and Hensel, 1991; Rogers and Williams, 1989). While comparative product advertising has been successfully used in a variety of marketing situations, there is little agreement concerning the relative effectiveness of comparative product advertising over noncomparative product advertising (Rogers and Williams, 1989). The body of research concerning comparative product advertising is divisible into those studies finding comparative advertising superior to noncomparative advertising, those studies finding no significant differences between comparative and noncomparative advertising, and those studies finding comparative advertising inferior to noncomparative advertising (Rogers and Williams, 1989). A discussion of the situational factors impacting comparative advertising

effects is also appropriate, given the lack of consistent findings.

Comparative Advertising Superior

Research indicates that comparative advertising utilizing an associative strategy is effective in reducing the perceived differences between a market leader and a market challenger (Gorn and Weinberg, 1984; Sujan and Dekleva, 1987). Gorn and Weinberg (1984), for example, used an experiment to test the effects of comparative versus noncomparative advertising across three product categories in an investigation of advertising perceptions, attitudes toward the advertising, and cognitive responses to the advertising. The results of their research indicated that comparative advertising by a challenger resulted in increased perceptions of brand similarity between a market leader and a market challenger across the three product categories (cigarettes, golf balls, toothpastes). Other research results indicate that comparative advertising can be successfully used to gain brand awareness and recall (Jain and Hackleman, 1978), improve brand attitudes and attitudes toward advertising (Goodwin and Etgar, 1980; Gorn and Weinberg, 1983), and increase purchase intentions (Gotlieb and Sarel, 1991; O'Connor, 1986).

Perhaps most importantly, research evidence indicates that comparative advertising is more effective than noncomparative advertising in increasing sales. Demirdjian (1983) sought to examine the sales effectiveness of

comparative advertising versus noncomparative advertising by measuring actual purchase behavior as opposed to intervening sales constructs such as intent to buy. In his study, 273 undergraduate marketing students were assigned to either a comparative or noncomparative advertising condition containing advertising for Paper Mate and Scripto ballpoint pens. The results of the study indicated that when noncomparative advertisements for both brands of pens were presented, Paper Mate pens were preferred to Scripto. When comparative advertising was used, however, purchases of Scripto pens increased by a significant amount, as did total sales. Demirdjian suggested that these findings were consistent with reports from the marketplace of the successful use of comparative advertising.

Comparative Advertising No Different

A number of studies show comparative advertising to be no different than standard advertising in terms of improving attitudes toward brands or advertising (Belch, 1981; Goodwin and Etgar, 1980; Shegula and Jacoby, 1978; Shimp and Dyer, 1978), or increasing purchase intentions (Belch, 1981; Golden, 1976, 1979; Swinyard, 1981). Belch (1981), for example, sought to examine the effects of claim variation and repetition on cognitive responses and message acceptance using comparative and noncomparative television commercials. Four commercials were produced for the study using toothpaste as a product class. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of 12 experimental conditions in a between-

subjects design. The results of the study indicated no significant differences in the relative effectiveness of comparative and noncomparative advertising for attitude toward the brand and purchase intention measures. Interestingly, subjects in the comparative message conditions generated significantly more negative thoughts than did subjects in the noncomparative conditions. These findings are consistent with those found by Wilson and Muderrisoglu (1979).

Comparative advertising has also been found to be no different than noncomparative advertising in increasing the perceived informativeness of advertising (McDougall, 1978, Wilson, 1976). McDougall (1978) sought to examine the perceived information value of comparative claims and brand loyalty. Using two product classes (deodorant and bleach), McDougall sought to measure participant reactions to comparative claim types using direct and indirect claims, and substantiated and unsubstantiated claims. Participants in the study were asked to evaluate the informational value of advertising claims on two dimensions, reliability and helpfulness to other consumers. The results of the study indicated that the perceived informational value of an advertising claim was a function of brand loyalty, and not a function of the comparative claims of the ad. Research evidence also indicates that no significant differences exist between comparative and noncomparative advertising in contributing to brand awareness (Levine, 1976), contributing to feature awareness (Pride, Lamb, and Pletcher, 1977), and

increasing advertising believability (Golden, 1976; 1979, O'Connor, 1986; Prasad, 1976).

Comparative Advertising Inferior

Finally, comparative advertising has been shown to be inferior to standard advertising, lacking in believability and credibility (Barry and Tremblay, 1975, Boddewyn and Marton, 1978; Levine, 1976; Prasad, 1976; Shimp and Dyer, 1978; Swinyard, 1981). Shimp and Dyer (1978), for example, conducted an experiment to test the impact and effectiveness of comparative advertising relative to noncomparative advertising. Approximately 400 subjects were randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions and exposed to mock print ads for fast food chains. The ads were presented in a simulated magazine model. The market position of the sponsoring brand was manipulated in both comparative and noncomparative formats.

The results of the experiment indicated that, on balance, noncomparative advertising was demonstrably more effective than comparative advertising. Noncomparative advertising generated greater recall of copy points than comparative advertising and was rated as being more believable and truthful than comparative advertising. No significant differences were found between noncomparative and comparative advertising in terms of impact on identification of the sponsoring brand, advertising informativeness, advertising convincingness, brand preference, and intent to patronize. Finally, comparative

advertising was rated as being significantly more interesting than noncomparative advertising.

As a final note, the results of research by Swinyard (1981), Belch (1981), and Levine (1976) indicate that comparative advertising generates more counterarguing than noncomparative advertising. Swinyard (1981) made use of a controlled field experiment using comparative print advertising for grocery stores. The results of the experiment indicated that comparative advertising significantly increased claim counterargumentation among subjects and that comparative advertising was perceived as being less credible than noncomparative advertising. These findings are in keeping with the results of research by Levine (1976). Additional findings by Levine indicate that comparative advertising may contribute to an increase in negative attitudes toward advertising and that comparative advertising generates more sponsor misidentification than noncomparative advertising.

Situational Factors

The complexity of comparative advertising effects makes it difficult to assess the impact of such advertising outside of a specific usage context (Rogers and Williams, 1989). Different products and different comparative advertising executions often yield different research results. Consumer reactions to comparative advertising have been found to be dependent upon product standing in the market, the advertising theme employed, product familiarity,

product attributes, brand loyalty, brand ownership, product knowledge and involvement, and claim substantiation (Turgeon and Barnaby, 1988). For example, the results of research conducted by Gorn and Weinberg (1983) indicate that a market challenger can increase attitude favorability and lessen the perceived distance between a market follower and a market leader by using comparative advertising to associate itself with a dominant market brand.

The results of research by Golden (1979) indicate that the relative effectiveness of comparative advertising is influenced by the theme employed in an ad, as well as the advertiser's competitive position. Comparative advertising using themes that contain a reason for a consumer's need and then demonstrate how the advertised brand meets the need may be more effective at increasing purchases than advertising which simply assumes a need and extols a product's characteristics. The results of Golden's (1976, 1979) research also indicate that a market leader may be able to use stronger, less traditional themes more effectively than a new brand or market follower to encourage purchase behavior.

In a related vein, the results of research by Pechmann and Ratneshwar (1991) indicate that a comparative ad containing claims that an unfamiliar brand is superior to a familiar brand on a typical product attribute enhances the perceived similarity between brands. These findings are in keeping with the results of research conducted by Droge and

Darmon (1987) and Gorn and Weinberg (1984). The study's results also indicate that after exposure to a direct comparative ad, subjects may infer that the unfamiliar brand has the desirable nonfeatured attributes associated with the comparison brand.

Pechmann and Ratneshwar (1991) also found evidence indicating that comparative advertising can be used to differentiate a familiar brand from a close competitor when the comparative attribute is perceived of as being typical of the product category. When the comparative attribute is perceived of as being atypical of the product category, direct comparative advertising appears to inadvertently reinforce consumer beliefs that the advertised and comparison brands are similar.

The results of research conducted by Villarreal-Camacho (1985) indicate that individuals possessing a high degree of product knowledge provide significantly higher advertisement evaluations, higher brand evaluations, and greater information search intention after exposure to a comparative ad than after exposure to a noncomparative ad. It should be noted that, in this particular study, the product category was complex (computers), and those high in product knowledge are likely to have been more highly involved consumers than subjects low in product knowledge. In fact, the results of research by Gotlieb and Sarel (1991) suggest that when higher involvement is activated and a source of higher credibility is included in the advertising, comparative advertising for a new brand has a significantly more

positive effect on purchase intentions than noncomparative advertising.

Jain and Hackleman (1978) used recall measurements to determine the relative effectiveness of comparative and noncomparative advertising across a variety of product categories. Recall measurements were made for the brands being advertised immediately after advertising exposure and again, a day after advertising exposure. The results of the study indicated that immediate brand recall was significantly higher for subjects exposed to comparative advertising than for subjects exposed to noncomparative advertising, particularly for convenience and speciality goods. This finding was not replicated in measurements taken a day later. Jain and Hackleman (1978) concluded on the basis of their findings, that comparative advertising may be particularly useful for convenience and speciality goods, for brands that are less well known, and for campaigns utilizing a high degree of repetition to reinforce comparative advertising claims.

The results of research conducted by McDougall (1978) indicate that brand loyalty can have a significant impact on the perceptions of comparative advertising claims. In his research, McDougall found that respondents loyal to the advertised brand rated the claims for their brand significantly more favorably in terms of reliability and helpfulness than did uncommitted respondents and respondents committed to a competing brand. Respondents who were loyal

to a competing brand named in a comparative claim reacted more negatively than uncommitted respondents or respondents loyal to other brands. In the same way, the results of research conducted by Stutts (1982) indicates that owners of a competing brand engage in significantly more counterargumentation than nonowners of a competing brand. These findings are in keeping with findings by Prasad (1976) indicating that perceptions of believability for a comparative claim are significantly lower for those who prefer the competition named in a comparative ad than for uncommitted consumers or consumers of another brand.

Comparative advertising offering no factual substantiation may be at a relative disadvantage to noncomparative advertising offering no factual substantiation. The results of research by Wilson (1976) indicate that subjective comparative advertising is evaluated as being less believable and more offensive relative to subjective noncomparative advertising. The results of research by Golden (1979) indicate that substantiated claims may be more effective for the market leader while unsubstantiated claims may be more beneficial for new brands and the number three brand. It is significant to note that when claims are not believable or are perceived to be based on motivations other than to benefit the receiver, counterargumentation is likely to increase reducing message acceptance (Belch, 1981; Gorn and Weinberg, 1983; Swinyard, 1981; Wilson and Muderrisoglu, 1979).

As a final note, message sidedness has been examined for its role in comparative advertising perceptions and effects with unclear results. Earl and Pride (1980) examined the role of comparative and noncomparative advertising utilizing either a one-sided or two-sided message and differing levels of claim substantiation. The authors were interested in examining perceptions of advertising informativeness and awareness of product features. The results of their experiment indicated that comparative advertising was significantly more informative than noncomparative advertising. It should be noted that Earl and Pride used a less stringent level of probability ($p < .10$) than is commonly required for findings of significance. Message sidedness did not significantly impact advertising perceptions.

Swinyard (1981) examined the role of one- and two-sided comparative and noncomparative advertising claims on perceptions of advertising credibility, counterarguing, and advertising effectiveness. The results of his research supported previous findings that comparative claims evoke significantly more counterarguing than noncomparative claims and are perceived as being less credible than noncomparative advertising (Wilson and Muderrisoglu, 1979). The use of two-sided claims, however, significantly reduced counterargumentation, both for comparative advertising and for noncomparative advertising. It is significant to note that advertising containing two-sided claims was evaluated

as being significantly more truthful than advertising containing one-sided claims.

Finally, Etgar and Goodwin (1982) examined the role of message sidedness in the utilization of comparative advertising for a new product introduction. The purpose of their research was to determine the relative effectiveness of comparative advertising utilizing one- versus two-sided advertising appeals, in instances in which no prior attitudes existed. The results of their research indicated that two-sided comparative advertising was significantly more effective than one-sided comparative advertising in increasing product knowledge, increasing perceptions of product quality, and increasing purchase intentions. Two-sided comparative advertising also generated more positive evaluations of a new brand than one-sided comparative advertising. In this instance, the use of two-sided comparative advertising offered clear benefits over the use of one-sided comparative advertising.

Comparative Political Advertising

Comparative political advertising is assuming an increasingly important role in contemporary political campaigns, as previously discussed. Unfortunately, the research literature concerning comparative political advertising is extremely limited. The available research findings concerning comparative political advertising are divisible into qualitative and quantitative descriptions, and empirical research findings.

Qualitative and Quantitative Descriptions

Merritt (1984) and Gronbeck (1985) were among the first social scientists to recognize the role of comparative advertising in political campaigns, as previously discussed. Both identified comparative political advertising as one of the methods used by political candidates to communicate negative information to voters about an opponent. Merritt (1984) suggests that comparative advertising is used by one candidate in order to claim superiority over another candidate. This can be contrasted with the purpose of negative advertising which is to identify a competitor for purposes of imputing inferiority (Merritt, 1984). In keeping with this reasoning, Merritt suggests that negative political advertising is most usefully viewed as a variant of comparative political advertising. When advertising focuses on enhancing perceptions of the sponsor at the expense of the competitor, it is correctly classified as "comparative," according to Merritt (1984), rather than negative.

Implied in this reasoning is the notion that comparative advertising is not necessarily negative. There are, in fact, likely to be times when political advertising is comparative without being perceived by voters as being negative (Colford, 1986; Merritt, 1984). At the same time, however, negative advertising may employ a comparative execution. According to Merritt (1984), negative advertising focuses on degrading perceptions of the target

to the advantage of the sponsor. Ultimately, however, perceptions of the negativity of political advertising rest with voters, regardless of the specific advertising execution employed.

Gronbeck (1985) identified three types of negative political advertising including: 1) implicative advertising containing an implication or innuendo regarding an opponent; 2) assaultive advertising containing a direct, personal attack on an opponent; and, 3) comparative advertising containing an explicit comparison between candidates.

Gronbeck suggests that the differences between the types of advertising exist in their focus. Implicative advertising focuses on self assuming that voters seek information in order to identify the candidate most closely aligned with their own political and personal positions. Assaultive advertising focuses on opposing candidates assuming that voters mark their ballots against candidates rather than for them. Comparative advertising focuses on both candidates, basing its effectiveness on the assumption that voters actively compare candidates when making voting decisions.

In order to quantify descriptions of political advertising content, Boiney and Paletz (1991) content analyzed 196 televised political commercials from three election levels of the 1984 general election. Their analysis included commercials used in the campaign for president (Reagan versus Mondale), commercials used in the campaign for senator of North Carolina (Jesse Helms versus Jim Hunt), and commercials used in the campaign for third

district representative of Connecticut (Bruce Morrison versus Larry DeNardis).

Of particular importance to the purpose of this paper, almost half of the commercials analyzed mentioned both candidates implying some type of comparison. Of these, 22% contained an explicit comparison of the candidates, mentioning both the sponsoring candidate and the opposing candidate with approximately the same frequency. Boiney and Paletz note that the advertising analyzed employed a variety of techniques in order to encourage differing degrees of candidate comparisons. Some advertising merely mentioned an opposing candidate, while other advertising contained a point-by-point comparison of both candidates with the advantage in the comparison given to the sponsoring candidate. Boiney and Paletz (1991) suggest that even advertising containing a largely positive candidate characterization may invite comparisons by using taglines that in effect ask, "Isn't the choice obvious?" Or, as was used in many of the 1984 Republican ads, "Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?"

Empirical Research Findings

Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) examined the effects of direct comparative advertising, implied comparative advertising, and negative advertising in a study of candidate-sponsored negative political advertising effects. The authors suggest that political advertising

utilizing devices such as taglines to invite candidate comparisons are implied comparative advertising. Implied comparative advertising does not mention an opposing candidate either specifically or euphemistically. Instead, these ads discuss the sponsoring candidate's position, record, or some other characteristic that is of significance to the campaign. In this way, implied comparative advertising lures voters into making comparisons between the candidates based on information the audience already possess concerning an opponent's issue positions, voting record, and character. Implied comparative advertisements are not negative in and of themselves, according to Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a, 1991b) but it is the public's interpretation of them that makes them negative.

It should be noted that, in order to succeed, implied comparative advertising requires a viewer to have a previously existing knowledge base concerning a candidate's issue positions, background, voting record, and the like (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991b). Because of this, the successful use of implied comparative advertising requires that each of the candidates be clearly identified in a campaign. Implied comparative advertising is rarely used in state and local campaigns due to their low visibility and lack of voter involvement. When election visibility becomes significant, implied comparative advertising enjoys a greater likelihood of usage (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991b).

Implied comparative advertising stands in contrast to direct comparative advertising in which both the sponsoring candidate and his or her opposition are prominently featured for the specific purpose of contrasting records, experience, or issue positions. Direct comparative advertising explicitly identifies a candidate's competition for purposes of claiming superiority. It is worth noting, as previously discussed, that some political observers and academicians have suggested that comparative advertising is not necessarily negative due to the fact that it presents both candidates' issue stands or voting records (Colford, 1986; Merritt, 1984). It the position of Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991b), however, that advertising containing a direct comparison clearly claims superiority over a competing candidate, while at the same time, imputing the competing candidate's inferiority. This type of advertising is implicitly negative, according to the authors, because the sponsor of the advertising will not present an opposing candidate's record or issue stands in an impartial manner. For this reason, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland suggest that direct comparative advertising is negative advertising.

In their examination of comparative and negative political advertising, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) assert that past research efforts examining the effects of candidate-sponsored negative advertising have failed to find significant effects because of incomplete operationalizations. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland suggest, in particular, that social scientists examining political

advertising have only examined "direct reference" or "assault ads." This operationalization is limited, giving no consideration to implicative political advertising and comparative political advertising, according to the researchers.

In order to provide a more complete and accurate examination of negative political advertising effects, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) examined negative political advertising using direct attack, direct comparison, and implied comparison advertising. For purposes of the experiment, undergraduate subjects were randomly assigned to one of four conditions and exposed to broadcast commercials taken from the 1986 Cranston-Zschau senatorial campaign in California. The dependent variables in the study included candidate rating scales, measures of voting intentions, evaluations of the commercials, and evaluations of the candidates.

The results of the Johnson-Cartee and Copeland study indicate that direct comparison advertising produces a greater negative change in the targeted candidate's pretest to posttest evaluation means than does either the direct attack or the implied comparison advertising. Although the ads influenced candidate ratings, none of the commercials appeared to impact voting intentions. In terms of commercial evaluations, direct attack and direct comparison advertising scored significantly lower on candidate characteristic issue appeals than did implied comparative

advertising. Respondents did not differ significantly in their evaluation of the spots in terms of political issue appeals.

Finally, Hill (1989) examined the reactions of voters to positive, negative, and comparative political advertisements within the context of the 1988 presidential campaign. For purposes of the experiment, Hill created advertising with a sponsor-positive focus (positive), an opponent-negative focus (negative), and a sponsor-positive/opponent-negative focus (comparative). Subjects were student volunteers who were eligible to vote in the 1984 election and intended to vote in the 1988 election.

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions representing the three different advertising executions for the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. After exposure to the advertising stimuli, subjects completed a thought listing procedure, a series of measures containing five-point bipolar scales, and a series of questions concerning political party affiliation and past voting behavior.

The results of the study indicated that subject's overall responses--determined through written protocols--were significantly more positive for sponsor-positive advertising than for comparative or opponent-negative advertising. There were no significant response differences between the comparative and opponent-negative advertising conditions. Subject evaluations of the sponsoring candidate were also significantly more positive

in the sponsor-positive condition, than for either the comparative or opponent-negative conditions. As before, there were no significant sponsor evaluation differences between the comparative and opponent-negative conditions. Subject evaluations of the opponents did not differ significantly across the different conditions.

Finally, subjects exposed to comparative and negative advertising reported a significantly more positive attitude toward the advertising than did subjects exposed to sponsor-positive advertising. The reason for these results may stem from the negative tenor of the 1988 presidential campaign, according to Hill. Since the experiment was conducted during the campaign (between the first and second debates), it is entirely possible that subjects' attitudes toward the advertising were impacted by their general perceptions of campaign negativity. In this way, subject responses might be better explained as a form of cognitive consistency, rather than as a true representation of subject's attitudes toward the advertising.

Based on the results of his study, Hill (1989) recommends that politicians frequently utilize advertising containing a positive discussion of candidate issue positions. In this way, candidates may be able to establish a positive "brand" image without alienating voters. Hill also suggests the judicious use of opponent-negative, or comparative, advertising with such advertising clearly focused on a small number of key issues.

Summary of Relevant Findings

A summary of relevant findings is in order given the length and complexity of the previous review. As before, this review is divided into research findings concerning negative information, research findings concerning negative political advertising, and research findings concerning comparative product and comparative political advertising.

Negative Information

In brief, the results of research concerning the role of negative information in individual impression formation, person perception, and various other information processing tasks, indicate that individuals tend to weight negative information disproportionately when compared with the weighting given to positive information. Perhaps the most thoroughly documented effect of negative information concerns the tendency for individuals to weight negative information more heavily than comparable positive information when forming evaluations of social stimuli (Anderson, 1965; Feldman, 1966; Jordon, 1965).

Research evidence indicates that negative information tends to be weighted more heavily than positive information in assessments of individual likability (Hamilton and Huffman, 1971; Hamilton and Zana, 1972), and that subjects are more confident of individual evaluations when based on negative information rather than positive information (Fisk, 1980; Hodges, 1974; Levin and Schmidt, 1969; Warr and Jackson, 1976; Wyer, 1970). There is also evidence

indicating that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information in employment interviews (Bolster and Springbett, 1961; Crissy and Regan, 1951; Springbett, 1958; Webster, 1964), when evaluating the police (Jacob, 1971; Walker, Richardson, Williams, Denyer, and McGaughey, 1972), when evaluating the courts (Walker, et al., 1972), and when evaluating government agencies (Katz, Gutek, Kahn, and Burton, 1975).

Finally, research evidence indicates that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information in political perception and behavior. Specifically, the results of a series of studies by Lau (1982, 1985) indicate that, for political candidates, the consequences of negative evaluations are greater than the consequences of positive evaluations.

Negative Political Advertising

Research concerning negative political advertising indicates that voters generally dislike negative ads, finding them uninformative, unethical, and deceptive (Garramone, 1984; Johnson and Copeland, 1987; Merritt, 1984; Pinkleton and Garramone, 1992; Steward, 1975; Surlin and Gordon, 1977). Voters' perceptions of what is fair to include in political advertising are split between 10 content categories. A candidate's issue stands, criminal activities, political record, and voting record are considered appropriate and fair to include in political advertising. Conversely, content concerning a candidate's

medical history, personal life, religion, sex life, family members, and current or past marriages is perceived as being unfair and inappropriate to include in political advertising (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1989).

Negative political advertising has been shown to have a detrimental impact on voter perceptions of targeted candidates, despite widespread dislike for such advertising. Voters have rated candidates as being less qualified, less honest, less serious, less sincere, less successful, and less of a saver, after exposure to negative political advertising. It is also interesting to note that even members of a targeted candidate's own party have a significantly more negative view of their candidate after exposure to negative advertising (Kaid and Boydston, 1987).

As intuition suggests, however, the impact of political advertising on candidate perceptions is impacted by political partiality. Voters favoring the sponsor of negative advertising perceive such advertising to be more truthful and are more positively influenced toward the advertising's sponsor than voters favoring the advertising's target. As would be expected, these voters are also more negatively influenced toward the target of the advertising (Garramone, 1984).

Journalists and political observers have voiced concerns regarding the detrimental impact of negative political advertising on political participation and the democratic process (Colford, 1986; Garfield, 1990; Hinds,

1990; Martz, 1988; "Much Ado," 1985). The precise effects of negative political advertising are often elusive and difficult to predict, however. For example, while the purpose of negative advertising is to undermine a targeted candidate's reputation, research evidence suggests that negative political advertising can have a backlash effect on perceptions of attacking candidates (Garrazone, 1985; Merritt, 1984; Shapiro and Rieger, 1989). Within specific political contests, voters may become more sympathetic toward the target of negative ads, deeming the negative advertising unfair. This is particularly apt to be the case when the negative advertising is image- rather than issue-oriented (Roddy and Garrazone, 1988). Additional research evidence indicates that negative advertising can be effectively used to attack an opponent if the advertising is independently sponsored, rather than directly sponsored by an opposing candidate (Garrazone, 1985).

The relationship between attitude and reported voting behavior appears to be related to advertising valence. Research evidence indicates a relatively low correlation between attitude and expressed voting behavior after exposure to positive political advertising. In the instance of negative political advertising, however, the correlations between attitude and expressed voting behavior are much higher. Here, negative advertising appears to be more likely to influence actual voting behavior than positive advertising (Shapiro and Rieger, 1989).

Academicians have proposed that negative political

advertising possesses considerable educative appeal, often containing information of importance to voters (Joslyn, 1986; Salmore and Salmore, 1989). In keeping with these suggestions, research evidence indicates that negative advertising may be more informative than positive advertising helping to enhance voter image discrimination and helping to facilitate voter decision making (Garrazone, et al., 1990).

Other findings concerning the informational effects of negative political advertising indicate that different effects may be based on audience characteristics. Specifically, research evidence indicates that older voters who find negative political advertising to be the most informative are less inclined to actually vote. Conversely, older voters who find negative political advertising to be less informative appear to be more inclined to actually vote (Pinkleton and Garrazone, 1992). In addition, lower socioeconomic respondents and black respondents tend to perceive negative political advertising as being informative (Surlin and Gordon, 1977).

Finally, an analysis of advertising recall indicates that negative advertising is more memorable than positive advertising (Shapiro and Rieger, 1989; see also Garrazone, 1984; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1989). Additional research indicates that this belief is also widely held among political consultants (Perloff and Kinsey, 1990). The greater memorability of negative advertising may help to

explain the stronger relationship between attitude and voting behavior after exposure to negative political advertising (Shapiro and Rieger, 1989).

Comparative Advertising

The research literature concerning comparative product advertising effects is extensive, particularly when compared with the limited research literature available concerning comparative political advertising. The comparative product advertising literature indicates that comparative advertising may be successfully used in a variety of marketing situations. There is no general agreement, however, concerning the relative effectiveness of comparative advertising (Rogers and Williams, 1989).

Research indicates that comparative advertising utilizing an associative strategy is effective in reducing the perceived differences between a market leader and a market challenger (Gorn, 1984; Sujan and Dekleva, 1987). Comparative advertising has also been successfully used to elicit sales (Demirijian, 1983), gain brand awareness and recall (Jain and Hackleman, 1978), improve brand attitudes and attitudes toward advertising (Goodwin and Etgar, 1980; Gorn and Weinberg, 1983), and increase purchase intentions (O'Connor, 1986).

A number of studies show comparative advertising to be no different than standard advertising in terms of improving attitudes toward brands or advertising (Belch, 1981; Goodwin and Etgar, 1980; Shegula and Jacoby, 1978; Shimp and Dyer,

1978), contributing to brand awareness (Levine, 1976), contributing to feature awareness (Pride, Lamb, and Pletcher, 1977), increasing purchase intentions (Belch, 1981; Golden, 1976, 1979; Swinyard, 1981), increasing advertising believability (Golden, 1976; 1979, O'Connor, 1986; Prasad, 1976), or increasing perceived informativeness (McDougall, 1978, Wilson, 1976).

Finally, comparative advertising has been shown to be inferior to standard advertising in generating brand preference (Williams, 1978) and providing information to consumers (Levine, 1976; Shimp and Dyer, 1978), lacking in believability and credibility (Barry and Tremblay, 1975, Boddewyn and Marton, 1978; Prasad, 1976; Shimp and Dyer, 1978; Swinyard, 1981).

It is significant to note that different products and different comparative advertising executions often yield different research results. Consumer reactions to comparative advertising have been found to be dependent upon product standing in the market (Gorn and Weinberg, 1983), the advertising theme employed (Golden, 1979), product familiarity (Droge and Darmon, 1987; Gorn and Weinberg, 1984; Pechmann and Ratneshwar, 1991), product attributes (Jain and Hackleman, 1978), brand loyalty (McDougall, 1978), brand ownership (Stuts, 1982), product knowledge and involvement (Gotlieb and Sarel, 1991; Villarreal-Camacho, 1985), and claim substantiation (Golden, 1979; Wilson, 1976).

The research literature concerning comparative

political advertising is extremely limited. Merritt (1984) and Gronbeck (1985) were among the first social scientists to recognize the role of comparative advertising in political campaigns. Both identified comparative political advertising as one of the methods used by political candidates to communicate negative information to voters about an opponent.

The results of a content analysis of televised political commercials from the 1984 general election indicate that almost half of the commercials analyzed mentioned both candidates. Of these, 22% contained an explicit comparison of the candidates, mentioning both the sponsoring candidate and the opposing candidate with approximately the same frequency. The advertising analyzed employed a variety of techniques in order to encourage differing degrees of candidate comparisons. Some advertising merely mentioned an opposing candidate, while other advertising contained a point-by-point comparison of both candidates (Boiney and Paletz, 1991).

The results of research examining direct attack, direct comparison, and implied comparison advertising indicates that direct comparison advertising produces a greater negative change in the targeted candidate's pretest to posttest evaluation means than does either direct attack or indirect comparison advertising (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a). In addition, direct attack and direct comparison advertising scores significantly lower on

candidate characteristic issue appeals than indirect comparison advertising.

Finally, an analysis of the reactions of voters to positive, negative, and comparative political advertisements indicates that subject's overall responses are significantly more positive for sponsor-positive advertising than for comparative or opponent-negative advertising (Hill, 1989). Subjects' evaluations of the sponsoring candidate are also significantly more positive in the sponsor-positive condition, than in either the comparative condition or opponent-negative condition. Finally, subjects report a significantly more positive attitude toward comparative and negative advertising than toward positive advertising.

CHAPTER THREE

HYPOTHESES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Many questions remain unanswered concerning the impact of comparative political advertising on political perception and behavior. In order to provide empirical answers to these questions, the conceptual and operational dimensions of experimental stimuli are presented initially, followed by a discussion of the conceptualization of dependent variables. Hypotheses and research questions, along with their rationale, are presented next. Finally, research methods are discussed including the research design and subjects used in the study, the stimuli and results of pretesting, dependent variable measurement, and the methods of analysis to be used.

Conceptual and Operational Dimensions of Stimuli

The conceptual and operational dimensions of the stimuli created for this experiment are grounded in political advertising practice, empirical research methods, and communication theory. The role of comparative political advertising in contemporary political campaigns has already been established. Merritt (1984) and Gronbeck (1985) were the first social scientists to recognize the role of comparative political advertising in political campaigns, as previously discussed. Boiney and Paltez (1990) suggest that 22% of political commercials from three election levels

broadcast during the 1984 general election contained explicit candidate comparisons.

Social scientists have largely ignored the role of comparative advertising in political campaigns, however. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a, 1991b) note the operationalization controversy existing in negative political advertising research. They assert that political advertising researchers have ignored comparative political advertising, primarily utilizing direct attack/direct reference advertising for research purposes. Such an operationalization limits both the internal and external validity of empirical research findings.

With this in mind, the advertising stimuli utilized in this experiment were created in order to provide both a broader and more narrow operationalization of political advertising than has been used by social scientists in the past. The experimental stimuli used in this study are broader than typical negative political advertising stimuli in that they expand the conceptualization of negative political advertising to include comparative political advertising. This operationalization is narrow, however, in that all negative advertising stimuli are directly comparative in nature. By operationalizing experimental stimuli in this fashion, new information may be gathered concerning a narrowly defined, but important aspect of political communication that has been largely ignored.

Conceptually, it is significant to note that

experimental advertising stimuli are operationalized in such a manner as to reflect the array of direct comparative advertising currently used in political campaigns.

Advertising stimuli are not designed to encompass the realm of all comparative political advertising, but contain differing amounts of negative material that is directly comparative in order to examine the range of direct comparative political advertising.

From a theoretical standpoint, it is significant to note that comparative experimental stimuli are rooted in research findings and theory based on the effects of negative information in impression formation, person perception, political information processing, and various other information processing tasks. As already discussed, a variety of research findings indicate that negative information is weighted more heavily than comparable positive information when making evaluations of social stimuli. With this in mind, the purpose of comparative experimental stimuli is not so much to build support of the sponsoring candidate, as to erode support of the targeted candidate. In order to erode support of the targeted candidate, differing executions contain differing amounts of negative, comparative information.

Complete Comparative Advertising

The complete comparative advertising execution contains the greatest amount of negative, comparative information concerning the targeted candidate (see Appendix A). In this

advertising execution, voters are asked to "check out" the sponsoring candidate. Following the headline, six statements are presented in support of the sponsoring candidate and six divergent statements are presented concerning the targeted candidate. A manipulation check, to be discussed later, indicates that this stimulus is perceived by subjects as being significantly more negative than all other stimuli at the .05 level. The complete comparative advertising stimulus, therefore, is the most negative and comparative of the advertising stimuli.

Moderate Comparative Advertising

The moderate comparative advertising stimulus is in a form parallel to that of the complete comparative advertising stimulus, but contains a moderate amount of negative, comparative information (see Appendix A). Following the headline asking voters to check out the sponsoring candidate, the six statements used in the complete comparative execution are presented in support of the sponsoring candidate. In the moderate execution, however, four divergent statements are presented concerning the targeted candidate. The remaining two statements are presented in support of the targeted candidate. In this way, the moderate stimulus represents a middle ground in terms of negative, comparative information. The results of the manipulation check indicate that the moderate advertising stimulus is perceived as being significantly more negative than the noncomparative stimulus, but not as

negative as the complete comparative stimulus, at the .05 level.

Limited Comparative Advertising

The limited comparative advertising stimulus is in a form parallel to that of the complete and moderate comparative advertising stimuli, but contains a limited amount of negative, comparative information (see Appendix A). Following the headline asking voters to check out the sponsoring candidate, the six statements used in the complete comparative execution are presented in support of the sponsoring candidate. In the limited execution, however, two divergent statements are presented concerning the targeted candidate. The remaining four statements are presented in support of the targeted candidate. In this way, the limited stimulus also represents a middle ground in terms of negative, comparative information. The results of the manipulation check indicate that the moderate advertising stimulus is perceived as being significantly more negative than the noncomparative stimulus, but not as negative as the complete comparative stimulus, at the .05 level.

While the mean negativity rating of the moderate comparative stimulus is greater than the mean negativity rating of the limited comparative stimulus, the difference is not statistically significant at the .05 level. Although originally conceived as engendering differing levels of perceived negativity, difficulties in creating negative

distinctions between these stimuli prevented this occurrence. Despite operationalization difficulties, to be discussed shortly, both moderate and limited comparative stimuli are retained for use in this study. Using both advertising stimuli allows the maintenance of the comparative advertising continuum which is in keeping with the original conceptualization of the study. These operationalizations are also consistent with political advertising examples used in contemporary campaigns. Finally, this usage allows for exploratory comparisons to be made between moderate and limited stimuli.

Noncomparative Advertising

The final treatment stimulus is the noncomparative advertisement (see Appendix A). The noncomparative stimulus is in a form parallel to that of the complete, moderate, and limited comparative stimuli. Following the headline asking voters to check out the sponsoring candidate, six statements are presented in support of the sponsoring candidate. There are no statements presented in the noncomparative advertising stimulus concerning the targeted candidate, however. In this way, the noncomparative execution is positive and noncomparative; directly opposite of the complete comparative advertising stimulus. As already mentioned, the results of the manipulation check indicate that complete, moderate, and limited comparative advertising are all perceived as being significantly more negative than the noncomparative stimulus at the .05 level.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables used in this study have been selected on the basis of their significance to the research topic and their use in other studies of political advertising. These variables include advertising evaluations, aggregate candidate evaluations, candidate liking, candidate mean spiritedness, subject voting preferences, and election involvement (see Appendix B).

Advertising Evaluations

Advertising stimuli and the control essay are evaluated using six attributes of importance to the success of political advertising and appropriate for the purpose of the experiment. These attributes are believable, biased, fair, informative, interesting, and useful. In a general sense, these attributes represent a compromise between the efforts of political scientists examining political advertising, and the efforts of business and marketing researchers examining comparative product advertising.

It is interesting to note that many of the advertising evaluation items used in comparative product advertising research are based on the hierarchy of effects model developed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961) for predictive measurement of advertising effectiveness. In their conceptual framework of comparative advertising, for example, Ash and Wee (1983) suggest that advertising believability and informativeness are variables linked to the cognitive component of advertising effects suggested by

Lavidge and Steiner (1961).

While not all of the stages of the Lavidge and Steiner model transfer from a product marketing context to a political campaign context, several of these variables have been identified as contributing to political advertising success and have been used in studies of political advertising effects. Items such as believable, fair, and informative, for example, have been used in a variety of negative political advertising research to measure subject evaluations of advertising stimuli (Garrazone and Smith, 1984; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a; Roddy and Garrazone, 1988).

It is worth noting that Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) report a low alpha reliability (.54) for their advertising evaluation scale consisting of believable, fair, annoying, convincing, tasteful, informative, and persuasive. A factor analysis of the Johnson-Cartee and Copeland scale indicates the existence of two subscales. The first subscale, deemed the political issue appeal subscale, contains the items convincing, informative, and persuasive. The second subscale, deemed the personal characteristic issue appeal subscale, contains the items fair, tasteful, and believable. The existence of subscales in the Johnson-Cartee and Copeland study raise the possibility of the existence of subscales within the items used to evaluate advertising stimuli in the present study.

In addition, items used to evaluate advertising in the

present study roughly fit into two different dimensions of the Lavidge and Steiner (1961) model. Items such as informative and useful are reflective of the cognitive dimension of the model. Items such as fair and unbiased are reflective of the affective dimension of the model. Given these facts, it is reasonable to expect that a factor analysis of the six items will indicate the existence of two subscales. One subscale, reflective of Johnson-Cartee and Copeland's political issue appeal subscale and the affective dimension of the Lavidge and Steiner model, should contain fair and unbiased. The other subscale, reflective of Johnson-Cartee and Copeland's personal characteristic appeal subscale and the cognitive dimension of the Lavidge and Steiner model, should contain informative and useful. In anticipation of these scales, hypotheses concerning advertising evaluations are based on the two components of advertising evaluations just identified.

Candidate Evaluations and Liking

Both the sponsoring and targeted candidates are evaluated using nine attributes selected on the basis of their usefulness in previous studies of political advertising and on their relevance to the purpose of the experiment. These items include believable, concerned, honest, intelligent, persuasive, sincere, qualified, good, and ethical. These candidate evaluation items are reflective of a group of items that have been used extensively in political advertising research and are

generally taken from the work of Garramone, et al., (1990), Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a), Kaid and Boydston (1987), and Roddy and Garramone (1988), among others.

The use of candidate evaluations provides a multi-dimensional measure of subjects' perceptions of both the sponsoring and targeted candidates. Candidate evaluations represent an aggregate measure of candidate traits that, when combined, provide a range of candidate assessments in a single measure. Candidate trait evaluations are made on the basis of subject's cognitive judgement of a candidate's abilities and characteristics and may be separated from affective candidate evaluations (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, and Fiske, 1982).

A measure of candidate liking is included in the research instrument to serve as an indication of impression formation. It is recognized that a single measure of candidate liking cannot accurately measure subjects' attitudes toward candidates. In addition, it is doubtful that subjects have well developed candidate attitudes given their general lack of campaign exposure and low levels of involvement. Given these circumstances, measures of candidate liking provide a pre-attitudinal indication of impression formation. Any positive or negative changes in candidate liking provide an indication of impression change or alteration. While this measure does not accurately reflect subjects' attitudes toward candidates, candidate liking is used to provide an indication of impression formation and provides an added dimension to regular

candidate evaluations.

Candidate Mean Spiritedness

Subjects evaluate the mean spiritedness of both the sponsoring and targeted candidates. This measure has not been used previously in political advertising research. It is included in this instrument in an attempt to provide a single measure of possible backlash effects resulting from comparative advertising. There are various manifestations of backlash effects previously identified in political advertising research. In general, any political advertising that creates negative feelings toward its sponsor rather than toward its target creates a backlash, or boomerang, effect (Garrazone, 1984; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a; Shapiro and Rieger, 1989).

In the present study, a variety of measures are useful for examining the existence of backlash effects, including candidate voting preferences, candidate liking and general candidate evaluations (Garrazone, 1984; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a). An additional measure of voter backlash is provided by the mean spiritedness item. When an attack on a targeted candidate is perceived as being unjustified or mean spirited, evaluations of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness will increase indicating the existence of a backlash effect. Here, the mean spiritedness measure provides an additional measure of voter backlash resulting from comparative political advertising.

Candidate Voting Preferences

Subjects provide pretest and posttest measures of candidate voting preferences for both the sponsor and target of advertising stimuli. This item is perhaps the most commonly used measure in political advertising research. It should be noted that voting preference measures provide a closer approximation of actual political behavior than other items in the test instrument. At the same time, however, the importance of the voting preference measure should not be overstated due to its largely abstract nature. In this usage, voting preference measures are best thought of as an indication of voting choice rather than true voting behavior.

Election Involvement

The election involvement of subjects is measured using four items summed into a single score. These items include measures of election interest and caring, as well as items assessing how stimulating and exciting subjects find the election. Election involvement items are included in this study on the basis of their relevance to the topic, as well as their previous use in studies of political advertising effects (Garrazone et al., 1990).

The election involvement variable has received limited research attention but is of potentially great importance. Conventional wisdom suggests that political advertising creates disinterest in elections among voters (Colford, 1986; Hinds, 1990; Martz, 1988). In addition, election

involvement has the potential to mediate political advertising effects (Rothschild and Ray, 1974), as already discussed. With this in mind, measures of election involvement are included in this study in an attempt to determine the impact of comparative political advertising on the election involvement levels of subjects. Although elementary in nature, measures of election involvement will provide empirical research information on a variable of great interest and importance.

Justification of Hypotheses and Research Questions

The hypotheses and research questions addressed in this study are discussed in the following sections. Brief schematic diagrams are provided concerning each hypothesis for ease of reference. The key to the diagrams is presented here:

COMP = political advertising containing a complete amount of comparative material (six of six statements in the advertising stimuli contain comparative material differentiating the targeted candidate from the sponsoring candidate);

MOD = political advertising containing a moderate amount of comparative material (four of six statements in the advertising stimuli contain comparative information differentiating the targeted candidate from the sponsoring candidate);

LIM = political advertising containing a limited amount of comparative material (two of six statements in the advertising stimuli contain comparative information differentiating the targeted candidate from the sponsoring candidate);

NON = political advertising containing no comparative material (there are no statements concerning the targeted candidate in the advertising stimuli).

Advertising Evaluations

The use of negative advertising in political campaigns, and voters' disapproval and distrust of such advertising, is well documented. There is a large body of survey research, in particular, that indicates that voters dislike negative ads finding them uninformative, unethical, and deceptive, as previously discussed. In general, voters strongly disagree with the use of negative political advertising and consider much of the content of negative ads to be unfair (Garrazone, 1984; Johnson and Copeland, 1987; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1989; Nix, Nein, 1984; Pinkleton and Garrazone, 1992; Surlin and Gordon, 1977).

Hill (1989) examined subjects' attitudes toward political advertising (Aad) using positive, negative, and comparative advertising, as previously discussed. The results of Hill's research indicated that subjects experienced a significantly more favorable global Aad and emotional Aad for comparative and negative advertising than for positive advertising. Contrasts between comparative and negative advertising were not significant for either global Aad or emotional Aad. These findings were not predicted. In explaining these outcomes, Hill (1989) suggested that subjects may have been maintaining a sort of cognitive consistency. The time of data collection, between the first and second Bush/Dukakis debates, occurred during the apex of the presidential campaign. Since the stimuli used for the experiment were based on the campaign, and the campaign was

perceived as being extremely negative, it is reasonable to expect that subjects' perceptions of the advertising were influenced by their perceptions of the campaign.

The results of the Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) study already discussed, indicate that subjects did not significantly differ in their evaluation of direct attack, direct comparison, and implied comparison advertising in terms of political issue appeals. Significant differences did emerge, however, in terms of personal characteristic issue appeals. Here, direct attack and direct comparison ads were rated significantly lower on personal characteristic issue appeals than indirect comparison ads. Respondents rated the direct attack and direct comparison ads as being less fair, less tasteful, and less believable than the implied comparison and control ads.

In the present study, it is reasonable to expect that the fair and unbiased items will load into a single factor due to their similarity to items in the personal characteristic issue appeal scale discovered by Johnson-Cartee and Copeland. Given this fact, moderate and limited comparative advertising are likely to be rated more fair and unbiased than noncomparative and complete comparative advertising due to the balance of material contained in the moderate and limited stimuli. The noncomparative advertisement will likely generate some perceptions of bias due to the one-sided nature of the stimuli. The negativity of the complete comparative advertisement, however, should generate the greatest perceptions of bias and unfairness

among subjects, as hypothesized (fair and unbiased: MOD, LIM > NON > COMP).

H1: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than noncomparative advertising and complete comparative advertising.

H1a: Noncomparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than complete comparative advertising.

Subject perceptions of the informativeness and usefulness of advertising stimuli are more difficult to predict. These items are reflective of the political issue appeal subscale used by Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) and should emerge as a single factor in the present study. Unfortunately, existing research evidence concerning the informativeness of political advertising is not entirely clear.

As previously mentioned, survey research indicates that voters generally find negative political advertising to be uninformative (Pinkleton and Garramone, 1992). The results of experimental research conducted by Garramone, et al., (1990) however, indicate that negative political advertising may be more informative than positive political advertising, helping to enhance voter image discrimination and facilitating voter decision making. In addition, Hill's (1989) finding that negative and comparative advertising were rated more highly on a cognitively based global Aad is of some use. This use is limited, however, due to the confounding variables already discussed.

An examination of existing product advertising

literature provides some additional research findings concerning comparative advertising informativeness. In 1983, Harmon, Razzouk, and Stern conducted a study examining the information content of comparative magazine advertisements. Their research focused on the presence of information cues existing in comparative and noncomparative print advertising. The results of their research indicated that comparative advertising did, in fact, contain more objective information cues than noncomparative advertising.

Earl and Pride (1980) examined the role of ad structure, message sidedness, and performance test results on ratings of print advertising informativeness. The results of their study indicated that respondents exposed to comparative advertising rated the ads as being significantly more informative than did respondents exposed to noncomparative advertising. Taken together, these studies provide support, although somewhat sporadic, for the notion that comparative advertising stimuli will be viewed as being more informative than other advertising stimuli. This is most likely to be true for the complete comparative stimuli, since this advertisement contains the greatest amount of comparative material. In the same way, moderate and limited comparative advertising are likely to be viewed as being more informative than noncomparative advertising, as hypothesized (informative and useful: $COMP > MOD, LIM > NON$).

H2: Complete comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than moderate comparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and noncomparative advertising.

H2a: Moderate comparative advertising and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than noncomparative advertising.

Candidate Evaluations, Liking, and Backlash

Aggregate evaluations of sponsoring and targeted candidates are initially addressed in this section. Sponsoring and targeted candidate liking is addressed next, followed by discussions of the backlash effect.

Candidate Evaluations

As previously discussed, a variety of research exists concerning the impact of negative information, negative political advertising, and comparative political advertising on candidate evaluations. Voters have rated candidates as being less qualified, less honest, less serious, less sincere, less successful, and less of a saver, after exposure to negative political advertising (Kaid and Boydston, 1987).

The results of research by Shapiro and Rieger (1989) indicate that the relative impact of negative issue advertising is such that evaluations of the target of the advertising worsen in greater proportion than the evaluations of the sponsor of the advertising. Research findings concerning negative image advertising, however, indicate that subjects evaluate the sponsor no better than they evaluate the target.

In the research conducted by Johnson-Cartee and

Copeland (1991a), direct comparative advertising produced the greatest significant negative change in a targeted candidate's pretest to posttest evaluation means.

Interestingly, both direct attack advertising and implied comparative advertising also significantly lowered the targeted candidate's mean evaluation scores.

Finally, mention should be made of the negative information effects literature. As previously discussed, the results of research concerning the role of negative information in individual impression formation, person perception, and various other information processing tasks, indicates that negative information tends to be weighted more heavily than positive information when forming evaluations of social stimuli (Anderson, 1965; Feldman, 1966; Jordon, 1965). Research by Lau (1982, 1985) has provided evidence supportive of this effect in political perception and behavior.

Based on the above research findings, it is reasonable to expect that complete comparative advertising will produce the greatest negative change in evaluations of the target, due to its negative information content. It is also reasonable to expect that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce negative change in evaluations of the target to a lesser extent, as hypothesized (target evaluations: $COMP > MOD$, $LIM > NON$).

H3: Complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising.

H3a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than noncomparative advertising.

Unfortunately, insufficient research evidence exists to make reasonably sound predictions concerning the potentially positive impact of comparative advertising on targeted candidate evaluations. This result would be indicative of a backlash effect and will be discussed in greater detail shortly. In addition, research evidence is lacking concerning the impact of comparative advertising on subject evaluations of sponsoring candidates. These facts lead to research questions 1 and 2.

RQ1: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in targeted candidate evaluations?

RQ2: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative change in sponsoring candidate evaluations?

Liking

Another area worthy of research attention involves the ability of political advertising to alter subjects' impressions of political candidates. As previously discussed, the results of research concerning the role of negative information in individual impression formation, person perception, and various other information processing tasks, indicate that individuals tend to weight negative information disproportionately when compared with the

weighting given to positive information.

For purposes of this study, it is of particular importance to note that negative information tends to be weighted more heavily than positive information in assessments of individual likability (Hamilton and Huffman, 1971; Hamilton and Zana, 1972). It should also be noted that subjects are more confident of individual evaluations when based on negative information rather than positive information (Fisk, 1980; Hodges, 1974; Levin and Schmidt, 1969; Warr and Jackson, 1976; Wyer, 1970).

Finally, research by Garramone, et al., (1990) indicates that negative political advertising significantly contributes to the polarization of voters' attitudes toward candidates as measured by expressed candidate liking. Attitude polarization in the experiment was greatest when negative advertising from the sponsor provided a contrast to an opponent's positive advertising, or lack of advertising. Based on these research findings, it is reasonable to expect that comparative advertising will negatively impact targeted candidate liking, to the extent that such advertising communicates negative information concerning the target to subjects. Complete comparative advertising should have the greatest negative effect on targeted candidate liking, given its negative information content. The same should also be true of moderate and limited comparative advertising to a lesser extent, as hypothesized (targeted candidate liking: $COMP > MOD, LIM > NON$).

H4: Complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising.

H4a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than noncomparative advertising.

Unfortunately, little research evidence is available concerning the impact of comparative advertising on perceptions of the sponsor. This leads to research question 3.

RQ3: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking?

Backlash

Research evidence indicates that negative political advertising can have a backlash, or boomerang, effect on perceptions of attacking candidates when voters become more sympathetic toward the target of negative ads, as previously discussed (Garrazone, 1985; Merritt, 1984; Shapiro and Rieger, 1989). This is particularly apt to be the case when the negative advertising is image- rather than issue-oriented (Roddy and Garrazone, 1988).

An examination of the influence of comparative political advertising on voter backlash leads to inconclusive results, however. Hill's (1989) examination of comparative, positive, and negative political advertising indicates that voters' written protocols concerning the sponsor of the advertising were more positive for positive advertising than for negative or comparative advertising. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) found no significant

evidence of a backlash effect for direct attack advertising, direct comparative advertising, or implied comparative advertising. The authors suggest that these findings are in keeping with the findings of political consultants rather than the conclusions of academicians.

Given these research findings, a question addressing the possible backlash effects resulting from exposure to comparative advertising stimuli is in order. As previously discussed, researchers have examined a number of variables in order to detect the existence of voter backlash, including candidate evaluations and voting preferences. One important aspect of backlash involves voters' perceptions of mean spiritedness. When a strong attack on a candidate is perceived by voters as being mean spirited or unjustified, the ad may generate more negative feelings toward the sponsor than toward the target. Research question 4 was developed in order to address this aspect of voter backlash.

RQ4: Do any of the four types of advertising produce a positive change in (increase) perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness?

As an additional note, subjects' evaluations of candidates, evaluations of candidate liking, and voting preferences will also be examined for evidence of backlash effects.

Voting Preferences

The available research evidence concerning the impact of political advertising on subject voting preferences is characterized by a lack of consistent findings. From the

outset, it should be noted that there is an apparent contradiction in the research findings of political consultants and academicians. The proprietary research of political consultants has provided evidence indicating that negative political advertising is effective in its intended purpose of influencing the behavior of voters (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a). These findings are supportive of political consultants' positions that negative commercials exert a powerful influence over the attitudes and behavior of voters (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991b; Perloff and Kinsey, 1990).

In contrast, the research efforts of academicians examining political advertising have failed to show that negative political advertising consistently results in its intended impact. Academic research indicates, as previously discussed, that negative political advertising may increase positive perceptions of the target rather than positive perceptions of the sponsor. This is particularly apt to be the case when voters perceive negative advertising to be unfair. In this instance, a backlash effect may result from negative political advertising (Garramone, 1984; Garramone and Smith, 1984). In instances in which a target rebuts the claims made in negative advertising, subjects have demonstrated a significantly lessor likelihood of voting for the target's opponent than subjects who did not view a rebuttal (Garramone, 1985).

The results of research by Roddy and Garramone (1988)

indicate that subjects exposed to an issue-oriented negative political commercial expressed a significantly lessor likelihood of voting for the target than subjects exposed to a negative image-oriented commercial. The results of research by Shapiro and Rieger (1989) indicate that when subjects are exposed to a negative image ad, more subjects vote for the target than for the sponsor, indicative of a backlash effect.

As a final note, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) examined the impact of negative and comparative political advertising on subject voting preferences. An analysis of the pretest/posttest candidate voting preference scales indicated that the sponsor's direct attack ad significantly lowered the target's candidate voting preference score. In the direct and implied comparison advertising conditions, however, the voting preference means did not differ significantly from that of the control group.

Despite these findings, it is reasonable to expect that complete comparative advertising will have the greatest negative impact on targeted candidate voting preferences. In this instance, complete comparative advertising contains sufficient negative information to act like direct attack advertising in negatively impacting voting preferences for the targeted candidate. At the same time, the complete comparative stimulus is less likely to engender a backlash effect due to its comparative nature and heightened perceptions of fairness. To a lessor extent, the same should be true of moderate and limited comparative

advertising due to their negative content and comparative nature, as hypothesized (voting preferences: COMP > MOD, LIM > NON).

H5: Complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising.

H5a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than noncomparative advertising.

Unfortunately, little research evidence is available concerning the impact of comparative advertising on voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. This fact contributes to research question 5.

RQ5: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative change in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate?

Moderate and Limited Comparative Advertising Differences

There is no existing research information concerning the differences between moderate and limited comparative advertising. These stimuli were created for purposes of this experiment, and will be discussed shortly in greater detail. While these operationalizations are generally representative of the different kinds of comparative political advertising used in contemporary campaigns, there is no significant difference between these executions in terms of perceived negativity.

The lack of perceived negativity between the stimuli is the primary reason that no differences are hypothesized to exist between moderate and limited comparative advertising

in this study. This should not be taken as an absolute indication of null differences, however. Instead, using moderate and limited stimuli allows for exploratory comparisons to be made between the executions, as presented in research question 6.

RQ6: Do moderate and limited comparative advertising differ in their abilities to:

- produce positive change in sponsoring candidate evaluations or negative change in targeted candidate evaluations?
- produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking or negative change in targeted candidate liking?
- produce positive change in (increase) sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness?
- produce positive change in sponsoring candidate voting preferences or negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences?
- produce positive change in election involvement?

Election Involvement

There is little research information available concerning the impact of negative and comparative political advertising on election involvement. There is, however, research evidence concerning the influence of positive political advertising on voter behavior across high and low levels of election involvement. The results of research by Rothschild and Ray (1974) indicate that innocuous political advertising has a strong effect on voting intention in low-level elections (state or local), but not in high-level elections (national). Further, this shift occurs equally among those subjects who are high in election involvement

and those subjects who are low in election involvement.

In a rare consideration of negative political advertising and election involvement, Garramone (1984) examined the interaction of involvement with a variety of respondent variables, as previously discussed. The results of her analysis indicated that, contrary to expectations, voters high in involvement were more likely to be negatively influenced toward the target of negative advertising than voters low in involvement. An examination of this relationship by candidate preference and by education level, however, indicated that this relationship was primarily true for voters favoring neither candidate and for voters high in education.

Finally, Garramone, et al., (1990) examined the potential for negative political advertising to increase voter involvement in an election. The authors suggested that negative political advertising may act to increase the election involvement of voters by emphasizing the contest aspect of campaigns. The results of their study, however, indicated that viewing negative political advertising did not significantly increase subject involvement. Research question 7 is in order, given the lack of consistent research findings.

RQ7: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in election involvement?

Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions

The hypotheses and research questions to be examined in this study are summarized here for greater ease of reference.

H1: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than noncomparative and complete comparative advertising.

H1a: Noncomparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than complete comparative advertising.

(fair/unbiased: MOD, LIM > NON > COMP)

H2: Complete comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising.

H2a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than noncomparative advertising.

(informative/useful: COMP > MOD, LIM > NON)

H3: Complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising.

H3a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than noncomparative advertising.

(target evaluations: COMP > MOD, LIM > NON)

RQ1: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in targeted candidate evaluations?

RQ2: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative change in sponsoring candidate evaluations?

H4: Complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than moderate, limited and noncomparative advertising.

H4a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than noncomparative advertising.

(target liking: COMP > MOD, LIM > NON)

RQ3: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking?

RQ4: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in (increase) perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness?

H5: Complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising.

H5a: Moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than noncomparative advertising.

(voting preferences: COMP > MOD, LIM > NON)

RQ5: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative change in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate?

RQ6: Do moderate and limited comparative advertising differ in their abilities to:

-produce positive change in sponsoring candidate evaluations or negative change in targeted candidate evaluations?

-produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking or negative change in targeted candidate liking?

-produce positive change in (increase) sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness?

-produce positive change in sponsoring candidate voting preferences or negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences?

-produce positive change in election involvement?

RQ7: Do any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in election involvement?

Method

An experiment was conducted in order to test hypotheses and provide answers to research questions. The methods used to conduct the experiment are discussed in the following sections. They include subjects and design, stimuli and pretesting, experimental procedures, and dependent variable measures. This section concludes with a discussion of issues related to data analysis.

Subjects and Design

Subjects in the experiment were undergraduate students at a large university in the Southwest. Subjects were primarily juniors and sophomores majoring in communications related fields including public relations, advertising, telecommunications, and journalism. A smaller number of subjects were in business related majors including marketing, accounting, management, and management information systems. All subjects participating in the study were enrolled in sophomore- or junior-level mass communications courses and received extra course credit for participating in the study. Approval of all experimental procedures was obtained from the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects prior to the collection of data.

Care was taken to select subjects in courses that did not include lectures or readings pertaining to political campaigns or political advertising. In addition, principle and introductory courses were used to provide the majority

of subjects for the study to help ensure that subjects would be unsophisticated regarding mass communication theory, consumer behavior, and other subject matter pertaining to techniques of interpersonal and mass persuasion. All subjects were of legal voting age and the sample was approximately equally divided between females and males.

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions or the control group in a 1 x 5 pretest-posttest design. The subjects in each condition were exposed to different stimuli concerning fictional candidates for a state Senate seat in Idaho. The campaign was presented as an election occurring outside of subjects' home states in order to make the hypothetical election appear realistic. In each condition and the control, subjects read brief biographic sketches of the competing candidates and completed a set of scales before being exposed to experimental stimuli or the neutral control essay.

A total of 228 subjects participated in the study. Twenty instruments were thrown out due to contamination resulting from participation in a pretest or previous participation in the study through another course. One additional instrument was not included in data analysis due to the failure of the subject to complete a substantial portion of the scales. A total of 207 instruments were included in data analysis. No treatment condition contained less than 40 subjects and cell size was approximately equal, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Cell sizes for treatment conditions and control group

<u>Condition</u>	<u>subjects</u>
complete comparative	40
moderate comparative	40
limited comparative	42
noncomparative	42
control	43

Stimuli and Pretesting

The stimuli used in the experiment consisted of print advertising utilizing either a complete comparative execution, a moderate comparative execution, a limited comparative execution, or a noncomparative execution, as previously discussed. The control group read a neutral essay concerning the geography, natural resources, and economy of Idaho. In addition, subjects were exposed to a brief biography of each candidate. Each of these will now be discussed.

Biographic Profiles

Biographic profiles of approximately 160 words were created for each of the candidates (see Appendix C). The profiles were developed specifically for use in the experiment and were based on similar biographies used in other studies examining political advertising. The information contained in each profile was approximately

equivalent and contained general information concerning the candidate's age, education, employment background and volunteer work. The profiles also contained limited discussions of the candidate's political accomplishments. The results of a t-test between pretest evaluations of the sponsoring and targeted candidate indicated that subjects' initial perceptions of the candidates were not significantly different based on candidate biographies.

Advertisements

Four print advertisements were created for the experiment. Each advertisement utilized a similar execution of a different creative strategy, as previously discussed (see Appendix A). The creation of the stimuli involved several steps and required a total of six pretests. The initial conceptualization of the stimuli was based upon real-world examples of comparative political advertising. Issue positions were gleaned from a variety of sources including examples of comparative political advertising, academic research findings (i.e., Hellweg, 1979; Shyles, 1986), discussions of political advertising with research experts, and social issues of the day receiving news coverage. Since the political campaign and candidates being used were hypothetical, information contained in the advertising was selected on the basis of its universal appeal as being a desirable candidate issue position or quality (see Hellweg, 1979).

The stimuli were intended to be significantly different

from each other in terms of their perceived negativity, based on the amount of comparative material each execution contained. The complete comparative stimulus contained the most comparative material (six comparative statements) and was intended to be the most negative. The moderate comparative stimulus contained a moderate amount of comparative material (four comparative statements). The moderate stimulus was intended to be less negative than the complete execution, but more negative than the remaining executions. The limited stimulus contained a limited amount of comparative material (two comparative statements). The limited stimulus was intended to be less negative than the complete and moderate stimuli, but more negative than the noncomparative stimulus. The noncomparative stimulus was not intended to be negative and contained no comparative material.

The results of pretest 1 were indicative of the problems encountered in creating experimental stimuli containing significantly different amounts of negative information in a linear relationship. The negativity ratings of the stimuli revealed that the noncomparative execution was rated more positively than the remaining stimuli on a seven-point bipolar scale. The negativity ratings of the remaining three stimuli, however, indicated that the comparative executions bunched together near the midpoint of the scale, within a single standard deviation of each other.

In order to make determinations regarding issue positions to include in additional executions of advertising stimuli, subjects rated the value and plausibility of 33 issue stands as part of the initial pretest. For purposes of the ratings, value was defined as the extent to which a quality or issue stand was important, valuable, or beneficial for a candidate to possess. Plausibility was defined as the extent to which it was believable or realistic to expect that one candidate would possess a certain quality while a competing candidate would not possess that same quality.

Based on the results of subject ratings, discussions of advertising executions and the test instrument with pretest subjects, and additional research findings, the stimuli were executed a second time with new issue positions. The results of the second pretest were nearly identical to the results of the first pretest. Following the second pretest, the aggregate group of issue positions, including additional issue stances, were re-evaluated by a different group of subjects in order to gain further information regarding issue positions to include in advertising stimuli. As before, new comparative information was included in the third execution of experimental stimuli, in an effort to generate greater negative ratings. The results of the third pretest revealed a significant increase in negative ratings of comparative stimuli. The three comparative executions continued to group together, however.

Pretests 4 and 5 were undertaken in an effort to find

the correct combination of negative, comparative information required to produce the desired effect with respect to the linearity and significance of negativity ratings. The results of the fifth pretest indicated that the stimuli were near to providing the desired results. The noncomparative execution was significantly more positive than the moderate and limited executions, which were significantly more positive than the complete execution. Although the moderate and limited executions continued to group together, both stimuli were retained for use in the experiment for reasons previously discussed.

Small changes were made in each of the stimuli and a final pretest was conducted before use of the stimuli in the study. The results of the final pretest revealed an acceptable negativity rating for each of the advertisements using a seven-point bipolar scale, with one indicating not at all negative and seven indicating very negative. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Negativity ratings of advertising stimuli

<u>Execution</u>	<u>mean</u>	<u>standard deviation</u>
noncomparative advertising	2.07	1.15
limited comparative advertising	3.27	1.53
moderate comparative advertising	3.82	1.63
complete comparative advertising	5.3	1.57

Control Essay

The neutral essay used in the control condition was created using encyclopedic information concerning the state of Idaho (see Appendix D). The essay was approximately one double-spaced page in length and required approximately one minute to read. The majority of information contained in the essay concerned the geographic properties of Idaho. A smaller portion of the essay also addressed the state's economy. Care was taken not to include any information in the essay which would negatively or positively impact subject responses to independent variables.

Procedures

The experiment was conducted using a double-exposure design. At the beginning of the experiment, subjects were handed instruments turned upside down. Subjects were instructed to leave the instruments upside down until after receiving further instructions. Once all of the instruments

were handed out, subjects were instructed to turn their questionnaires over and read and sign the consent form which made up the first page of the instrument (see Appendix B).

After signing the consent form, subjects were instructed to turn to the candidate profiles on page two and to read them. Subjects were given approximately three minutes to read the candidate profiles. After three minutes elapsed, subjects were instructed to turn to page three and complete the scales through page five. Subjects were told not to turn past page five until instructed to do so. Subjects were given four minutes to complete the scales.

After four minutes elapsed, subjects were instructed to turn the page and follow the printed instructions. The instruction page, which simply asked subjects to turn to the next page and read the advertisement (or essay), served two purposes. First, it prevented subjects from seeing through the paper to the experimental stimuli while filling out pretest scales. Second, it allowed instructions to be customized for the control condition in which subjects were instructed to read an essay instead of an advertisement. Subjects were given two minutes to read the advertisement or essay.

Following this exposure, subjects were instructed to turn the page and write the thoughts they had concerning each of the candidates. The thought listing exercise served as a diversion between the first and second exposures to experimental stimuli. Thought listing was selected in an

attempt to encourage subjects to cognitively process the information to which they had been exposed in the advertisement. Subjects were given approximately four minutes to complete the thought listing exercise.

After four minutes elapsed, subjects were again instructed to turn the page and follow the printed instructions. The double exposure design of the experiment was used to help ensure that subjects cognitively processed the information to which they were exposed. In addition, the second exposure helped to provide a closer approximation of a natural exposure pattern than would otherwise be obtained in an experimental laboratory setting. In this instance, the second exposure approximated the multiple exposures of voters to political advertisements that often occur during political campaigns. Subjects were given approximately two minutes to read the advertisement or essay.

Finally, subjects were instructed to turn the page and complete the scales. These posttest scales were identical to the pretest scales, with the exception of items related to advertising evaluations. Subjects were given four minutes to complete the posttest scales.

Subjects were debriefed after the instruments were collected. The debriefing contained information relating to the purpose of the study, the various experimental stimuli to which subjects were exposed, and the procedures to be followed in data analysis.

Dependent Variable Measurement

Dependent variables were measured for advertisements, candidates, candidate liking, voting preferences and involvement in the election (see Appendix B). Only brief descriptions of dependent variable measures will be provided here, since the dependent variables have already been discussed conceptually and operationally in some detail.

Advertising Evaluations

Subjects evaluated each advertisement using seven-point scales with bipolar adjectives as anchors. Advertisements were evaluated on six attributes considered important to both political advertising and comparative product advertising success. These attributes include believable, unbiased, informative, interesting, fair, and useful. The contents of each stimulus were also rated for their perceived negativity, in order to provide a manipulation check.

Aggregate Candidate Evaluations

Both the sponsor and target of experimental stimuli were rated on a series of seven attributes. These attributes were selected on the basis of their usefulness in previous studies investigating the impact of political advertising on candidate evaluations. Each characteristic was evaluated utilizing a seven-point scale with bipolar adjectives as anchors. The candidate characteristics evaluated were: Intelligent, sincere, believable, honest,

persuasive, concerned, qualified, good, and ethical.

Candidate Liking

Candidate liking was measured for both sponsoring and targeted candidates by utilizing seven-point scales with bipolar adjectives as anchors. Subjects provided a measure of impression formation by indicating how much they liked or disliked each of the candidates.

Mean Spiritedness

The mean spiritedness of both the sponsoring and targeted candidates were measured utilizing seven-point scales with bipolar adjectives as anchors. Subject's perceptions of candidate mean spiritedness were measured to provide an indication of voter backlash.

Voting Preference

Voting preferences for the sponsoring and targeted candidates were measured utilizing seven-point scales with bipolar adjectives as anchors. Subjects were asked to indicate if they definitely would or definitely would not vote for the sponsoring candidate and the targeted candidate.

Election Involvement

Election involvement was measured utilizing seven-point scales with bipolar adjectives as anchors. Subjects indicated how interesting they found the election, how much they cared who won the election, how stimulating they found the election, and how exciting they found the election.

Analysis of Hypotheses

It is significant to note that all of the hypotheses proposed in this study allow the use of preplanned contrasts for purposes of data analysis. Preplanned contrasts increase statistical power by allowing the statistical comparison of specific treatment means, rather than an overall analysis all treatment means (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985). By definition, any linear combination of treatment means employing fixed lambda weights is a contrast (or comparison) if the sum of the lambda weights is equal to zero (Snedecor and Cochran, 1967). In this instance, polynomial coefficients used to weight treatment means result in a linear combination, or weighted sum of the means (Keppel, 1973).

It should be noted that the pairing of a coefficient with a mean is determined by the particular comparison desired. To qualify as a comparison, at least two of the coefficients must be numbers other than zero and the sum of the coefficients must be equal to zero (Keppel, 1973). A distinction should also be made between linear contrasts using orthogonal polynomials, and a set of orthogonal contrasts. A set of orthogonal contrasts is defined by three criteria. The first criterion is that the coefficients used to weight the means sum to zero. The second criterion is that the product of the weights for each pair of contrasts sum to zero. The third criterion is that the total number of contrasts be no greater than $n-1$, where

n equals the number of treatment conditions (Collyer and Enns, 1986). When these criteria are met, each comparison provides independent, nonredundant, and uncorrelated pieces of information concerning the results of an experiment (Keppel, 1973). Contrasts that meet these criteria are orthogonal as a set, or group.

In the instance of nonorthogonal contrasts, only the first criterion has been met. That is, only the coefficients used to weight the means sum to zero. The second and third criteria are no longer necessary (Collyer and Enns, 1986). It is significant to note that orthogonality is not a requirement of meaningful contrasts (Winer, 1971). In fact, the distinctions between orthogonal and nonorthogonal contrasts are relatively minor. Contrasts that are not mutually orthogonal are likely to be used frequently in the analysis of variance (Guenther, 1964). Contrasts should be determined on the basis of their relevance to the research purpose and not on the basis of their orthogonality or nonorthogonality (Guenther, 1964; Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985).

With this in mind, the statistical methods used for testing hypotheses in this dissertation include contrasts based on the weighting of treatment means using polynomial coefficients summing to zero. These contrasts meet the criterion required for nonorthogonal contrasts but do not meet the criteria required for orthogonal contrasts. In its simplest form, this experiment contains linear, nonorthogonal contrasts, designed to examine the direction

and statistical significance of linear relationships according to the hypotheses presented.

Specified Contrasts and Type I Error

The use of specified contrasts within the umbrella of an omnibus F test presents potential problems concerning the overall alpha reliability of significance tests and Type I error. The danger of Type I error--rejecting a null hypothesis when it is true--increases as the number of specified comparisons increase per experiment (Snedecor and Cochran, 1967). In order to better examine this concern, it is useful to distinguish between the Type 1 error rate for a single comparison versus the Type I error rate for the entire experiment.

The per comparison error rate uses a single comparison as the conceptual unit for the error rate (Winer, 1971). If several specified comparisons are evaluated in an experiment with an alpha of .05, then the probability of making a Type I error for each specified contrast would be .05 (Keppel, 1973). This can be contrasted with the error rate for the entire experiment which tests the probability of making one or more Type I errors for a set of specified contrasts (Keppel, 1973). It is significant to note that when a large number of comparisons are conducted, even if these comparisons are specified in advance and supported by the results of previous research and theory, the possibilities of experimentwise Type I error increase.

An important distinction must be made at this point

between planned (a priori) contrasts and unplanned (a posteriori) tests. In the instance of unplanned, or post hoc analyses, researchers examine mean differences after an omnibus ANOVA has determined that significant differences exist between treatment means. These mean differences may or may not have been expected before an experiment was conducted, but now have relevance to the purposes of the research based on their significance. In this instance, it is necessary to protect against mean differences that appear significant due to error resulting from random comparisons. The protection against making false claims of significance is obtained by decreasing the ability of a statistic to detect real differences between means with a known level of probability after an omnibus ANOVA has determined that significant treatment mean differences exist (Snedecor and Cochran, 1967).

This is often accomplished using methods developed by Tukey or Scheffe, for example. It is appropriate in this study to use Scheffe's test in the examination of research questions and any additional post hoc analyses that are required. Scheffe's test is appropriate because it is conservative for the pairwise comparison of means. The Scheffe's test requires larger mean differences for significance than other analytic methods providing a high degree of protection against Type I error (Keppel, 1973; Snedecor and Cochran, 1967; Winer, 1971).

The levels of protection from Type I error demanded by

unplanned contrasts are not necessary for most planned contrasts (Keppel, 1973; Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985; Snedecor and Cochran, 1967; Winer, 1971). When comparisons are planned, researchers are not examining a simultaneous test of all comparisons, but are examining only those comparisons possessing experimental relevance. These are the comparisons for which the experiment was planned, typically based on theory and/or previous research findings (Keppel, 1973). In fact, planned comparisons are appropriate whether an omnibus F is significant or not (Keppel, 1973; Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985; Winer, 1971).

When an unusually large number of contrasts have been planned, additional protection against Type I error may be provided by use of the Bonferroni approach, the Dunn test, or other methods designed to provide Type I error protection (Keppel, 1973; Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985). It should be noted, however, that this is clearly a special case of additional protection due to an abnormally high number of planned contrasts. When planned contrasts fall within normal usage patterns, additional protection against Type I error is unnecessarily harsh and burdensome (Keppel, 1973; Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985; Winer, 1971). As a final note, this is particularly true when planned contrasts fall under the umbrella of an omnibus F with a reasonable probability of statistical significance (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985; Snedecor and Cochran, 1967). In this instance, the extra protection provided by a Scheffe's test, for example, has been likened to "sending out a rowboat to determine if the

oceans are calm enough for an ocean liner (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1985, pg. 46)." In instances of normal usage, it is best to treat all planned comparisons the same way and evaluate each at the same per comparison error rate (Keppel, 1973).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The results of the experiment are presented in several sections. The first section contains a manipulation check for subject's perceptions of the negativity of advertising stimuli. The second section contains reliability measures for the scales used in the experiment. This section includes the results of a factor analysis of the advertising evaluation scales and the resulting subscales. Hypotheses are tested in order following the manipulation check and presentation of scale reliabilities. The results of post hoc analysis are presented next in order to address questions raised through hypothesis testing. Finally, research questions are addressed and findings are summarized.

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was used to test subjects' perceptions of the negativity of each advertising stimulus. A seven-point scale was utilized with one indicating not at all negative and seven indicating very negative. It should be noted that no subject was exposed to more than one advertising execution. Therefore, subjects' ratings reflect their perceptions of the absolute negativity of an advertisement, rather than the relative negativity of an advertisement. As an additional note, subjects in the

control condition also rated the "negativity" of the neutral essay to which they were exposed.

A oneway ANOVA was used to examine subjects' perceptions of the negativity of experimental stimuli to confirm the success of the manipulation. The results of analysis of variance indicate that there are statistically significant differences in subjects' perceptions of the negativity of the stimuli and essay ($F(4, 202) = 71.38, p < .001$), as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

ANOVA for experimental stimuli negativity

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	438.03	109.50	71.38	< .001
within groups	202	309.88	1.53		
total	206	747.91			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used in order to examine specific differences in the negative perceptions of experimental stimuli. The Scheffe method provides a conservative measure of protection against Type I error for pairwise comparisons of means (Keppel, 1973). An examination of means reveals a linear effect with respect to negative perceptions of experimental stimuli, as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean ratings of experimental stimuli negativity

<u>Condition</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
noncomparative	1.57	.887
control	1.67	.919
limited comparative	3.88*	1.31
moderate comparative	4.02*	1.49
complete comparative	5.32**	1.47

*

Significantly different from noncomparative advertising and the control at the .05 level.

**

Significantly different from all other experimental stimuli and the control at the .05 level.

The result of the Scheffe's test indicates that the complete comparative advertising stimulus is perceived more negatively than each of the remaining stimuli and the control essay at the .05 level. In addition, both the limited and moderate experimental stimuli are perceived more negatively than the noncomparative and control stimuli, also at the .05 level. It should be noted, as previously discussed, that the differences in negative perceptions between the moderate and limited advertising executions are not statistically significant. This is important because it helps to explain a lack of significant differences that emerge between these stimuli in an examination of hypotheses

and research questions.

Reliability Measurements

Multi-item composite scales were used to measure evaluations of experimental stimuli. Composite scales were also used to provide aggregate evaluations of the fictitious political candidates before and after exposure to experimental stimuli, and to provide comprehensive measures of election involvement before and after exposure to experimental stimuli. Each item in a composite measure consisted of a seven-point semantic differential scale with one indicating less of a characteristic and seven indicating more of a characteristic. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were used in order to determine the reliability of each scale.

The reliability of the advertising evaluation scale proved somewhat problematic. As previously discussed, two subscales were expected to emerge based on the results of research by Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a). In fact, an analysis of the overall reliability of the scale (consisting of believable, unbiased, fair, informative, interesting, and useful) revealed a moderate alpha of .72. Given the moderate nature of this alpha, and in order to determine if subscales existed, advertising evaluation scores were submitted to a principal components factor analysis. Criteria for factor retention were a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 and a minimum variance accounted for of 10%. Two factors emerged as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5

Factor analysis of advertising evaluation scores

	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
believable	.5758	.6100
unbiased	-.0232	.8101
fair	.1241	.8794
informative	.7326	.2898
interesting	.8324	-.2615
useful	.7782	.1621

Factor 1 reflects an information utility dimension. This factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 2.65 explaining 44.2% of the variance. Items that loaded high on this factor included informative, interesting, and useful. In addition, factor 1 contained a borderline loading on believability. Factor 2 reflects an information credibility dimension. This factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 1.51 explaining 25.2% of the variance. Items that loaded high on this factor included fair and unbiased. As before, believability appeared with a (stronger) borderline loading.

In order to determine the final scales to be used in advertising evaluations, alpha reliabilities were computed for the two factors, each with and without believability. The reliability of the information utility factor without believability was .71. When believability was added to the information utility scale, the alpha reliability improved to .75. In the same way, the reliability of the information

credibility scale improved from .70 without believability to .73 with believability. While none of these reliabilities are ideal, the highest reliabilities for each subscale--higher than the overall reliability obtained for the single composite scale--are obtained when believability is included in both subscales.

The role of believability in each of the subscales makes sense from a conceptual standpoint, as well. It is reasonable to expect that information that is perceived as fair and unbiased is also likely to be perceived as believable. In the same way, it is reasonable to expect that information that is interesting, useful, and informative will also be believable. The believability measure adds depth of meaning and increased reliability to both scales. For this reason, the final subscales used to evaluate the advertising stimuli are the information utility subscale consisting of informative, interesting, useful, and believable ($\alpha = .75$); and the information credibility subscale consisting of fair, unbiased, and believable ($\alpha = .73$).

The remainder of the alpha reliabilities for both pretest and posttest measures were reasonably strong. The alpha reliabilities for the sponsor rating scales were .81 for the pretest measure and .90 for the posttest measure. The alpha reliabilities for the target rating scales were .83 for the pretest measure and .87 for the posttest measure. Finally, the alpha reliabilities for the election involvement scale were .85 for the pretest measure and .93

for the posttest measure.

Hypothesis Testing

Tests of hypotheses are conducted in numerical order, followed by post hoc analyses of data related to hypotheses and tests of numerically ordered research questions.

Hypotheses One and One(a)

Hypothesis 1 proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than noncomparative and complete comparative advertising. Hypothesis 1a proposes that noncomparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than complete comparative advertising (MOD, LIM > NON > COMP). Hypotheses 1 and 1a were examined by specifying orthogonal polynomial contrasts to be tested following the application of an omnibus F test for the combined means of fair, unbiased, and believable (see Appendix E for weighting specifications). These form the information credibility subscale. The results of analysis of variance suggest the existence of statistically significant mean differences among treatment conditions ($F(3, 159) = 10.10, p < .001$), as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6

ANOVA for information credibility

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	3	388.75	129.58	10.10	<.001
within groups	159	2039.56	12.82		
total	162	2428.31			

An examination of means using contrast analysis indicates that significant differences exist for specified contrasts, as exhibited in Table 7.

Table 7

Contrasts for information credibility

<u>Contrast</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>p</u>
contrast 1 (mod w/ non)	-2.42	.79	-3.06	159	.99
contrast 2 (mod w/ comp)	1.90	.80	2.37	159	.009
contrast 3 (non w/ comp)	4.32	.79	5.46	159	<.001
contrast 4 (lim w/ non)	-2.56	.78	-3.25	159	.99
contrast 5 (lim w/ comp)	1.76	.79	2.21	159	.014

The results of contrast analysis indicate a modest level of support for hypothesis 1 and full support for hypothesis 1a. While contrasts 1 and 4 in Table 7 appear to possess extremely low levels of statistical probability, these alphas are due to contrast values in the opposite directions of those predicted. These findings suggest the

need for post hoc analysis. In this instance, an ANOVA used in conjunction with Scheffe's multiple comparison test will provide a conservative pairwise examination of the contrast between noncomparative and moderate comparative advertising, and the contrast between limited comparative and moderate comparative advertising (see Keppel, 1973; Winer, 1971).

Contrasts 2, 3, and 5 indicate the existence of statistically significant mean differences in the directions predicted. In the instance of these contrasts, moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising, are perceived as being significantly higher in information credibility than complete comparative advertising (MOD, LIM, NON > COMP). Unfortunately, these contrasts do not provide as much information as might normally be expected due to the presence of mean differences in directions opposite of those predicted.

With this in mind, hypothesis 1 enjoys partial support, and hypothesis 1a enjoys full support, based on the results of contrast analysis. While some linear relationships emerge as predicted, the overall linearity suggested in hypotheses 1 and 1a appears to be violated by noncomparative advertising. Post hoc analyses will provide additional information concerning the dependent and independent variable relationships addressed in hypotheses 1 and 1a, particularly where noncomparative advertising is concerned.

Hypotheses Two and Two(a)

Hypothesis 2 proposes that complete comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 2a proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than noncomparative advertising (COMP > MOD, LIM > NON). Hypotheses 2 and 2a were tested by specifying orthogonal polynomial contrasts to be tested following the application of an omnibus F test for the combined means of informative, interesting, useful, and believable (see Appendix E for weighting specifications). These form the information utility subscale. The results of analysis of variance suggest the existence of statistically significant mean differences among treatment conditions ($F(3, 159) = 3.24, p = .02$), as indicated in Table 8.

Table 8

ANOVA for information utility

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	3	214.64	71.55	3.24	.02
within groups	159	3514.26	22.10		
total	162	3728.90			

An examination of specified contrasts indicates that a significant mean difference exists for contrast 1, as exhibited in Table 9.

Table 9

Contrasts for information utility

<u>Contrast</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>P</u>
contrast 1 (comp w/ lim)	2.11	1.04	2.02	159	.02
contrast 2 (comp w/ non)	-1.04	1.04	-1.00	159	.84
contrast 3 (lim w/ non)	-3.15	1.03	-3.06	159	.99
contrast 4 (comp w/ mod)	.52	1.05	.41	159	.30
contrast 5 (mod w/ non)	-1.57	1.03	-1.51	159	.93

In general, statistical support for hypothesis 2 is weak and there is no statistical support for hypothesis 2a. Contrast 1 possesses a statistically significant alpha and the relationship is in the direction predicted. Here, complete comparative advertising is perceived as containing significantly more information utility than limited comparative advertising.

Contrasts 2, 3, and 5 possess extremely low levels of statistical probability. As before, these alphas are due to contrast values in the opposite directions of those predicted. Contrast 4 is the remaining contrast. While the direction of this contrast is consistent with hypothesis 2, it possess a very low level of statistical probability.

The results of these contrasts indicate weak support for hypothesis 2 and no support for hypothesis 2a. In the instance of contrast 1, complete comparative advertising

does contain significantly more perceived information utility than limited comparative advertising. The remaining contrasts are either in a direction opposite of that predicted, or simply do not enjoy a significant level of statistical support. Post hoc analysis may provide additional information concerning the independent and dependent variable relationships addressed by hypotheses 2 and 2a.

Hypotheses Three and Three(a)

Hypothesis 3 proposes that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 3a proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than noncomparative advertising ($COMP > MOD$, $LIM > NON$). In order to assess change in evaluations of the targeted candidate, evaluation scales were summed and the pretest mean was subtracted from the posttest mean to create change scores. The differences between treatment change scores were tested first using an omnibus F test. The results of analysis of variance indicate the existence of statistically significant mean differences among treatment conditions ($F(3, 157) = 5.79$, $p < .001$), as indicated in Table 10.

Table 10

ANOVA for targeted candidate evaluations

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	3	946.49	315.50	5.79	<.001
within groups	157	8554.26	54.48		
total	160	9500.76			

Following the ANOVA, hypotheses 3 and 3a were tested by specifying orthogonal polynomial contrasts (see Appendix E for weighting specifications). An examination of change score contrasts indicates that significant differences exist, as presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Contrasts for targeted candidate evaluations

<u>Contrasts</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>p</u>
contrast 1 (comp w/ lim)	-5.65	1.64	-3.44	157	<.001
contrast 2 (comp w/ non)	-6.25	1.65	-3.78	157	<.001
contrast 3 (lim w/ non)	-.60	1.62	-.37	157	.356
contrast 4 (comp w/ mod)	-4.00	1.67	-2.39	157	.009
contrast 5 (mod w/ non)	-2.25	1.65	-1.36	157	.087

Hypothesis 3 enjoys full statistical support, while hypothesis 3a enjoys no statistical support. It is significant to note that all means are in the directions predicted. However, not all mean differences are

statistically significant. Contrasts 1, 2, and 4 enjoy a high level of statistical significance indicating that complete comparative advertising has a significantly more negative impact on targeted candidate evaluations than limited comparative advertising, moderate comparative advertising, and noncomparative advertising.

Contrasts 3 and 5 are not statistically significant. While the direction and pattern of change scores indicate support for the linear relationship predicted by hypothesis 3a, the mean differences are not significant. In this instance, complete comparative advertising encourages greater negative change in targeted candidate evaluations than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising, as predicted. Moderate and limited comparative advertising, however, are not significantly different from noncomparative advertising in their impact on targeted candidate evaluations.

Hypotheses Four and Four(a)

Hypothesis 4 proposes that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of targeted candidate liking than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 4a proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of targeted candidate liking than noncomparative advertising ($COMP > MOD$, $LIM > NON$). In order to evaluate hypotheses 4 and 4a, pretest candidate liking means were subtracted from

posttest candidate liking means to create change scores. The differences between treatment change scores were initially tested using an omnibus F test. The results of analysis of variance suggest that no statistically significant differences exist between treatment means ($F(3, 160) = 1.45, p = .23$), as indicated in Table 12.

Table 12

ANOVA for targeted candidate liking

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	3	6.56	2.188	1.45	.23
within groups	160	240.56	1.50		
total	163	247.12			

Despite the lack of overall significance, individual specified contrasts between treatment means are still appropriate, as previously discussed (Keppel, 1973; Ronsethal and Rosnow, 1985; Winer, 1971). For this reason, hypotheses 4 and 4a were tested by specifying orthogonal polynomial contrasts (see Appendix E for weighting specifications). An examination of specified contrasts indicates that no statistically significant differences exist among treatment change scores, as exhibited in Table 13.

Table 13

Contrasts for targeted candidate liking

<u>Contrasts</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>p</u>
contrast 1 (comp w/ lim)	-.34	.27	-1.27	160	.10
contrast 2 (comp w/ non)	-.34	.27	-1.27	160	.10
contrast 3 (lim w/non)	.00	.26	.00	160	.95
contrast 4 (comp w/ mod)	.10	.27	.36	160	.64
contrast 5 (mod w/ non)	-.44	.27	-1.64	160	.052

Statistical support for hypotheses 4 and 4a does not exist at the .05 level. The results of contrasts 1, 2, and 5 indicate that mean differences are in the direction predicted but are not statistically significant. Contrasts 3 and 4 do not exhibit the directionality predicted and so possess an extremely low level of statistical probability. In addition, post hoc analysis appears unlikely to offer any further information concerning significant change score differences addressed by hypotheses 4 and 4a. With this in mind, the predicted effects of comparative advertising on targeted candidate liking are unsubstantiated.

Hypotheses Five and Five(a)

Hypothesis 5 proposes that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 5a proposes that

moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than noncomparative advertising (COMP > MOD, LIM > NON). In order to address hypotheses 5 and 5a, pretest voting preference means were subtracted from posttest voting preference means to create change scores. The differences between change scores were tested for statistical significance using an omnibus F test. The results of analysis of variance indicate that no statistically significant differences exist between treatment means ($F(3, 160) = .93, p = .43$), as exhibited in Table 14.

Table 14

ANOVA for targeted candidate voting preferences

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	3	6.73	2.24	.93	.43
within groups	160	386.39	2.41		
total	163	393.12			

As previously discussed, it is appropriate to examine planned contrasts between treatment means despite the lack of statistically significant mean differences (Keppel, 1973; Ronsethal and Rosnow, 1985; Winer, 1971). Therefore, orthogonal polynomial contrasts were specified for testing following the application of an omnibus F test (see Appendix E for weighting specifications). An examination of specified contrasts suggests that no significant differences exist among treatment means, as indicated in Table 15.

Table 15

Contrasts for targeted candidate voting preferences

<u>Contrasts</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>p</u>
contrast 1 (comp w/ lim)	-.56	.34	-1.64	160	.052
contrast 2 (comp w/ non)	-.23	.34	-.67	160	.25
contrast 3 (lim w/ non)	.33	.34	.98	160	.84
contrast 4 (comp w/ mod)	-.20	.35	-.57	160	.28
contrast 5 (mod w/ non)	-.03	.34	-.08	160	.46

There is no statistical support for hypotheses 5 and 5a at the .05 level. Contrasts 1, 2, 4, and 5 contain mean differences in the directions predicted but are not statistically significant. Contrast 3 has a very low level of statistical reliability because the mean is not in the direction predicted. As was the case with targeted candidate liking, the predicted effects of comparative advertising on targeted candidate voting preferences are unsubstantiated. As an additional note, post hoc analyses conducted on targeted candidate voting preferences do not appear promising given the range of contrast reliabilities.

Post Hoc Analysis of Hypotheses

Post hoc analyses are conducted in order to gain a complete understanding of potentially significant treatment condition differences. These analyses are particularly

important for contrasts containing score differences in the opposite directions of those predicted. As previously discussed, the Scheffe method is appropriate to use in post hoc analyses because it provides a conservative measure of protection against Type I error for the pairwise comparison of means (Keppel, 1973; Snedecor and Cochran, 1967; Winer, 1971).

Hypotheses One and One(a)

Hypothesis 1 proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than noncomparative and complete comparative advertising. Hypothesis 1a proposes that noncomparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than complete comparative advertising. The fair and unbiased items were combined with believable to form the information credibility subscale. The results of contrast analysis indicate a modest level of support for hypothesis 1 and full support for hypothesis 1a.

An omnibus F test was conducted for purposes of post hoc analysis, utilizing all conditions and the control group. The purpose of this analysis was to examine the possibility of statistically significant mean differences in directions opposite of those predicted. The results of analysis of variance indicated the existence of significant mean differences ($F(4, 201) = 19.27, p < .001$), as exhibited in Table 16.

Table 16

ANOVA for post hoc analysis of information credibility

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	983.01	245.75	19.27	<.001
within groups	201	2562.54	12.75		
total	205	3545.55			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used to determine the location of significant mean differences. A number of significant differences emerged, as indicated in Table 17.

Table 17

Mean ratings of information credibility

<u>Condition</u>	<u>mean</u>
complete comparative	9.77*
limited comparative	11.54*
moderate comparative	11.67*
noncomparative	14.09**
control	15.97

*

Significantly different from the control at the .05 level.

**

Significantly different from complete and limited comparative advertising at the .05 level.

The results of Scheffe's multiple comparison test, along with the pattern of mean ratings for information credibility, indicate that noncomparative advertising is

perceived as being significantly higher in information credibility than both complete comparative advertising and limited comparative advertising. When combined with the analysis of contrasts specified for hypotheses 1 and 1a, these findings indicate that moderate comparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and noncomparative advertising are all perceived as being significantly higher in information credibility than complete comparative advertising. In addition, noncomparative advertising is perceived as being significantly higher in information credibility than limited comparative advertising. These findings provide no additional support for hypothesis 1 or hypothesis 1a.

Hypotheses Two and Two(a)

Hypothesis 2 proposes that complete comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 2a proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than noncomparative advertising. The informative and useful items were combined with interesting and believable to form the information utility subscale. The results of contrast analysis indicate little statistical support for hypothesis 2. Although complete comparative advertising is perceived as containing significantly more information utility than limited comparative advertising, none of the other contrasts are significant at the .05 level. In addition, hypothesis

2a is not statistically supported.

An omnibus F test was conducted for purposes of post hoc analysis. This test utilized all conditions and the control group in order to examine statistically significant mean differences. The results of analysis of variance indicated the existence of significant mean differences ($F(4, 201) = 3.09, p = .017$), as exhibited in Table 18.

Table 18

ANOVA for post hoc analysis of information utility

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	272.41	68.10	3.09	.017
within groups	201	4433.00	22.05		
total	205	4705.41			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used in order to determine the location of significant differences. The results of the test indicated that no mean differences existed that were statistically significant at the .05 level of reliability. It is worth noting that a less conservative test of pairwise mean comparisons would likely reveal significant mean differences. Given the extremely conservative nature of Scheffe's test, however, no mean differences exhibited statistical significance. This post hoc analysis contributes no additional information to the contrasts of means already conducted. Hypothesis 2 possesses little statistical support and hypothesis 2a possesses no statistical support.

Hypotheses Three and Three(a)

Hypothesis 3 proposes that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 3a proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the target than noncomparative advertising. The results of contrast analysis indicate full support for hypothesis 3 and no support for hypothesis 3a.

In this instance, post hoc analysis is unnecessary. The Scheffe's method will not uncover any additional mean differences that will be statistically significant since this test provides a more conservative level of protection against Type I error than the contrast analysis already used (Keppel, 1973, Snedecor and Cochran, 1967, Winer, 1971). In addition, all contrast differences are in the directions predicted so no differences are statistically significant in directions opposite of those predicted. For these reasons, post hoc analysis concerning hypotheses 3 and 3a is unnecessary.

Hypotheses Four and Four(a)

Hypothesis 4 proposes that complete comparative advertising will produce a greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 4a

proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce a greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than noncomparative advertising. In order to test these hypotheses, pretest evaluations of targeted candidate liking were subtracted from posttest evaluations of targeted candidate liking to create change scores. The results of contrast analysis indicate no statistically significant support of hypotheses 4 or 4a at the .05 level.

An omnibus F test was conducted for purposes of post hoc analysis. This analysis is of potential benefit in examining contrast differences in directions opposite of those predicted. The results of analysis of variance were significant ($F(4, 201) = 5.18, p < .001$), as indicated in Table 19.

Table 19

ANOVA for post hoc analysis of targeted candidate liking

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	28.04	7.01	5.18	<.001
within groups	202	273.21	1.35		
total	206	301.25			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used to determine the location of significant differences. The results of the test revealed significant change score differences, as indicated in Table 20.

Table 20

Change scores for targeted candidate liking

<u>Condition</u>	<u>change score</u>
moderate comparative	-1.32*
complete comparative	-1.22*
moderate comparative	-.88
noncomparative	-.88
control	-.28

*Significantly different from the control at the .05 level.

Unfortunately, the results of the Scheffe's test are of limited use given the purpose of this analysis. While moderate and complete comparative advertising produce significantly greater negative change than the control in evaluations of targeted candidate liking, these findings provide no additional information concerning specific contrast differences. Hypotheses 4 and 4a remain unsupported.

Hypotheses Five and Five(a)

Hypothesis 5 predicts that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 5a predicts that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than noncomparative advertising. In order to test these hypotheses, pretest evaluations of targeted

candidate voting preferences were subtracted from posttest evaluations of targeted candidate voting preferences to create change scores. The results of contrast analysis indicate no statistically significant support of hypotheses 5 or 5a at the .05 level.

An omnibus F test was conducted for purposes of post hoc analysis. The results of analysis of variance indicated the existence of significant change score differences ($F(4, 202) = 4.16, p = .003$), as exhibited in Table 21.

Table 21

ANOVA for post hoc analysis of targeted
candidate voting preferences

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	36.43	9.11	4.16	.003
within groups	202	441.55	2.18		
total	206	477.98			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used to determine the exact location of significant mean differences. The results of the test revealed a significant difference between the complete comparative advertising score and the control group score, as indicated in Table 22.

Table 22

Change scores for targeted candidate voting preferences

<u>Condition</u>	<u>change score</u>
complete comparative	-1.32*
moderate comparative	-1.12
noncomparative	-1.09
limited comparative	-.76
control	-.14

*Significantly different from the control at the .05 level.

Once again, the results of the Scheffe's test are of limited use given the purpose of this analysis. While complete comparative advertising produces significantly greater negative change than the control in evaluations of targeted candidate voting preferences, this finding provides no additional information concerning hypotheses 5 or 5a.

Research Questions

Research questions are asked in instances in which theoretical support is weak, research findings are nonexistent or contradictory, and no clear rationale exists in support of specific hypotheses. Each research question is addressed here in numerical order.

Research Question One

Research question 1 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive change in evaluations of the targeted candidate. Advertising that results in positive target evaluations, rather than negative target evaluations

as intended, is indicative of a backlash effect. In order to examine changes in targeted candidate evaluations, change scores were created by summing candidate evaluation scales and subtracting pretest means from posttest means. An examination of scores indicates that in each condition, evaluations of the targeted candidate change in a negative direction. Since none of the advertising stimuli result in positive evaluations of the targeted candidate, the answer to research question one is negative, and no additional analysis is necessary.

Research Question Two

Research question 2 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative changes in sponsoring candidate evaluations. In order to answer this question, sponsoring candidate evaluation scores were summed and the pretest mean was subtracted from the posttest mean to create change scores. Change scores were tested using an omnibus F test in order to determine if significant differences existed among conditions. The results of analysis of variance suggested that condition change scores were significantly different from each other ($F(4, 197) = 3.83, p = .005$), as indicated in Table 23.

Table 23

ANOVA for sponsoring candidate evaluations

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	820.07	205.02	3.83	.005
within groups	197	10540.52	53.50		
total	201	11360.59			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used to determine the location of significant change score differences. As before, the Scheffe's test is appropriate because it provides a high level of protection against Type I error for post hoc analysis (Keppel, 1973; Snedecor and Cochran, 1967; Winer, 1971). The results of the Scheffe's test revealed the existence of significant differences, as indicated in Table 24.

Table 24

Change scores for sponsoring candidate evaluations

<u>Condition</u>	<u>change score</u>
limited comparative	-3.95
complete comparative	-2.15
control	-1.49
noncomparative	1.21*
moderate comparative	1.29*

*
Significantly different from limited comparative advertising at the .05 level.

The results of the Scheffe's test indicate that

sponsoring candidate evaluations are significantly more positive in the noncomparative and moderate comparative advertising conditions than in the limited comparative advertising condition. No other change score differences are significant at the .05 level.

When examining change score differences, it is interesting to note the relatively large, negative change in control group evaluations of the sponsoring candidate. This negative change is identified by Campbell and Stanley (1963) as testing; the effect of taking a test on subsequent test scores. Despite the random assignment of subjects to conditions which helps to correct for testing imbalances (Campbell and Stanley, 1963), this appears to be a concern in the instance of sponsoring candidate evaluations.

In order to determine if the negative change in sponsoring candidate evaluations was significant, the pretest sponsoring candidate mean for the control group was compared to the posttest sponsoring candidate mean for the control group using a one-sample t-test. The results of the test indicated that the difference between the pretest measure and posttest measure for the control group was not statistically significant at the .05 level ($t = -1.23$, $p = .23$).

Despite this finding, additional tests were undertaken as a precaution, given the relatively large testing effect. In this instance, treatment condition change scores were tested using one-sample t-tests. By testing against the change score of the control group, the effects of testing

are statistically reduced to zero and testing effects are controlled. The results of this analysis indicated that both the moderate comparative advertising score ($t = 2.08$, $p = .044$) and the noncomparative advertising score ($t = 3.17$, $p = .003$) were significant when the effects of testing were controlled. These findings provide an additional level of protection from making a Type I error concerning the significance of differences in change scores between treatment conditions.

In answer to research question 2 then, it appears as if both moderate comparative advertising and noncomparative advertising significantly increase sponsoring candidate evaluations, when compared to the decrease in sponsoring candidate evaluations produced by limited comparative advertising. Additional change score differences were not significant at the .05 level.

Research Question Three

Research question 3 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in sponsoring candidate liking. In order to answer this question, change scores were created by subtracting pretest ratings of sponsoring candidate liking from posttest ratings of sponsoring candidate liking. An examination of means indicated that only noncomparative advertising contributed to positive sponsoring candidate evaluations. An omnibus F test was used to determine if the positive noncomparative score was significantly different from the remaining negative scores.

The results of analysis of variance indicated that no significant differences existed between treatment condition scores ($F(4, 201) = 1.49, p = .20$).

An examination of change scores, however, revealed that the control score fell .50 as a result of testing. As a precaution, a one-sample t-test was conducted between the control group's pretest rating of sponsor liking and posttest rating of sponsor liking. Despite its relatively small size, the results of the t-test indicated that the change was statistically significant ($t = -1.69, p = .005$).

The results of a one-sample t-test using the control group change score to remove the effects of testing, indicated that the positive change in the noncomparative advertising condition was significant ($t = 5.00, p = <.001$). This finding indicates that when the effects of testing are controlled, noncomparative advertising significantly increases perceptions of sponsoring candidate liking. As a final note, the remaining treatment means did not require additional testing since none of the scores produced positive changes in evaluations of sponsoring candidate liking.

Research Question Four

Research question 4 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in evaluations of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. In this instance, greater amounts of mean spiritedness are represented by higher subject ratings and would be indicative of a backlash

effect. With this in mind, pretest ratings of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness were subtracted from posttest ratings of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness in order to create change scores. All change scores showed increases in ratings of mean spiritedness with the exceptions of noncomparative advertising which decreased slightly (-.40) and moderate comparative advertising which did not change. An omnibus F test was used in order to determine if significant differences existed between scores. The results of analysis of variance indicated that scores were significantly different from each other ($F(4, 201) = 5.42$, $p < .001$), as indicated in Table 25.

Table 25

ANOVA for sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	42.86	10.71	5.42	<.001
within groups	201	397.16	1.97		
total	205	440.02			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used in order to determine the location of significant change score differences. The results of the Scheffe's test indicated the existence of significant differences, as exhibited in Table 26.

Table 26

Change scores for sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness

<u>Condition</u>	<u>change score</u>
noncomparative	-.40
limited comparative	.00
control	.21
moderate comparative	.27
complete comparative	1.00*

*

Significantly different from noncomparative advertising and limited comparative advertising at the .05 level.

The Scheffe's test indicates that complete comparative advertising significantly increases perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness when compared with perceptions of candidate mean spiritedness in the noncomparative and limited comparative advertising conditions.

As with other analyses, a testing effect is evident in the change score of the control group. As a precaution, the pretest mean of the control group was compared with the posttest mean of the control group using a one-sample t-test. The results of the test indicated that the difference was not statistically significant ($t = .86$, $p = .39$). No additional analyses were conducted given the lack of statistical significance and relatively small size of the testing effect.

Research Question Five

Research question 5 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative changes in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. In order to examine changes in sponsoring candidate voting preferences, change scores were created by subtracting pretest sponsoring candidate voting means from posttest sponsoring candidate voting means.

An examination of change scores indicates that advertising stimuli produced both increases and decreases in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. An omnibus F test was used in order to determine if the differences among group means were statistically significant. The results of analysis of variance indicated that no change scores were significantly different at the .05 level ($F(4, 200) = 1.99, p = .09$).

Once again, the control group change score evidenced a small testing effect (-.16). As a precaution, the pretest mean of the control group was compared with the posttest mean of the control group using a one-sample t-test. The results of the test indicated that the difference was not statistically significant ($t = -.69, p = .49$). No additional analyses were conducted given the lack of statistical significance and relatively small size of the testing effect.

Research Question Six

Research question six asks if moderate and limited comparative advertising differ in their abilities to: Produce positive change in sponsoring candidate evaluations or negative change in targeted candidate evaluations; produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking or negative change in targeted candidate liking; produce increases in perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness; produce positive change in sponsoring candidate voting preferences or negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences; and, produce positive change in election involvement.

Moderate and limited comparative advertising were tested for different effects on dependent variables using independent samples t-tests. In order to determine if moderate and limited comparative advertising differed in their abilities to produce positive change in sponsoring candidate evaluations, or negative change in targeted candidate evaluations, change scores were created by summing candidate evaluation scales and subtracting pretest means from posttest means. The results of independent samples t-tests indicated that moderate comparative advertising produced a significant positive change in aggregate evaluations of the sponsoring candidate when compared with the negative change produced by limited comparative advertising ($t = 2.80, p = .007$). In the instance of targeted candidate evaluations, no statistically significant

difference existed between moderate and limited comparative advertising ($t = -.98$, $p = .32$).

Moderate and limited comparative advertising were tested to determine if they differed in their abilities to produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking, or negative change in targeted candidate liking. Pretest measures of candidate liking were subtracted from posttest measures of candidate liking to create change scores. In the instance sponsoring candidate liking, the results of an independent samples t-test indicated that the change score differences of moderate and limited comparative advertising were not significantly different from each other ($t = 1.12$, $p = .27$). In the same way, a t-test indicated that moderate and limited comparative advertising did not significantly differ in their impact on targeted candidate liking ($t = -1.56$, $p = .12$).

Moderate and limited comparative advertising were tested to determine if they differed in their abilities to produce increases in perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness, following tests of candidate liking. Pretest measures of sponsor mean spiritedness were subtracted from posttest measures of sponsor mean spiritedness to create change scores. An independent samples t-test was used to determine if the change score differences for moderate and limited comparative advertising were significantly different from each other. The results of the test indicated that the change score differences between moderate and limited comparative advertising were

not significantly different ($t = .92$, $p = .36$).

Moderate and limited comparative advertising were tested to determine if they differed in their abilities to produce positive change in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate, or negative change in voting preferences for the targeted candidate. Pretest measures of candidate voting preferences were subtracted from posttest measures of candidate voting preferences to create change scores. The results of an independent samples t-test indicated that moderate and limited comparative advertising were not significantly different in their abilities to produce positive change in sponsor voting preferences ($t = 1.48$, $p = .14$). In the same way, a t-test indicated that moderate and limited comparative advertising did not significantly differ in their abilities to produce negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences ($t = -1.04$, $p = .30$).

Finally, moderate and limited comparative advertising were tested to determine if they differed in their abilities to produce positive change in election involvement. Pretest measures of election involvement were subtracted from posttest measures of election involvement to create change scores. An independent samples t-test was used to determine if the change score differences for moderate and limited comparative advertising were significantly different from each other. The results of the test indicated that moderate and limited comparative advertising did not significantly

differ in their abilities to produce positive change in election involvement ($t = .79$, $p = .43$).

In brief review of research question 6, the results of independent samples t-tests indicate that moderate comparative advertising produces a significant positive change in aggregate evaluations of the sponsoring candidate when compared with the negative change produced by limited comparative advertising. In all other instances, however, there are no significant differences between moderate and limited comparative advertising.

Research Question Seven

Research question 7 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in election involvement. In order to address this question, election involvement scales were summed and pretest means were subtracted from posttest means to create change scores. Change scores were tested using an omnibus F test in order to determine if significant differences existed. The results of analysis of variance suggested that change scores were significantly different from each other ($F(4, 202) = 6.98$, $p < .001$), as indicated in Table 27.

Table 27

ANOVA for election involvement

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
between groups	4	512.30	128.07	6.98	<.001
within groups	202	3703.44	18.33		
total	206	4215.74			

A Scheffe's multiple comparison test revealed the location of significant differences, as indicated in Table 28.

Table 28

Change scores for election involvement

<u>Condition</u>	<u>change score</u>
noncomparative	-1.38
control	-1.37
limited comparative	.07
moderate comparative	.90
complete comparative	2.85*

* .

Significantly different from noncomparative advertising and the control group at the .05 level.

The results of the Scheffe's test indicate that election involvement is significantly increased by complete comparative advertising when compared with the decreases in involvement existing in the noncomparative advertising condition and the control group. No other change score differences are significant at the .05 level.

When examining change score differences, the relatively large, negative change in control evaluations of election involvement should be noted. As before, this negative change is due to the effects of testing. In order to determine if the negative change in sponsoring candidate evaluations was significant, the pretest election involvement score for the control group was compared to the posttest election involvement score for the control group using a one-sample t-test. The results of the test indicated that the difference between the pretest measure and posttest measure for the control group was not statistically significant at the .05 level ($t = -1.69$, $p = .09$).

Despite this finding, additional tests were undertaken as a precaution, given the relatively large testing effect. As before, treatment condition change scores were tested for significance using the control group change score to control for the effects of testing. The results of one-sample t-tests indicated that changes in both the complete comparative advertising score ($t = 5.81$, $p < .001$) and the moderate comparative advertising score ($t = 3.59$, $p = .001$) were significant. Additional change score differences were not significant at the .05 level.

Summary of Findings

Research findings are summarized here for ease of reference. Findings are grouped by dependent variable and include the results of hypothesis testing, post hoc analysis and the analysis of research questions.

Information Credibility

Hypothesis 1 proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than noncomparative and complete comparative advertising. Hypothesis 1a proposes that noncomparative advertising will be perceived as more fair and unbiased than complete comparative advertising. Fair and unbiased were combined with believable to form an information credibility subscale.

The results of contrast analysis indicate that noncomparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and moderate comparative advertising possess significantly more information credibility than complete comparative advertising. Moderate and limited comparative advertising do not possess significantly more information credibility than noncomparative advertising, however. These findings indicate moderate support for hypothesis 1 and full support for hypothesis 1a.

Mean differences concerning information credibility were submitted to post hoc analysis in order to examine the possibility of significant mean differences in directions opposite of those predicted. The results of this analysis reveal that noncomparative advertising possesses significantly more information credibility than both complete comparative advertising and limited comparative advertising. The combined results of both analyses, along with the pattern of mean ratings, indicate that

noncomparative advertising, moderate comparative advertising, and limited comparative advertising possess significantly more information credibility than complete comparative advertising. In addition, noncomparative advertising possesses significantly more information credibility than limited comparative advertising.

Information Utility

Hypothesis 2 proposes that complete comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 2a proposes that moderate and limited comparative advertising will be perceived as more informative and useful than noncomparative advertising. Informative and useful were combined with interesting and believable to form an information utility subscale.

The results of contrast analysis indicate that complete comparative advertising possesses significantly more information utility than limited comparative advertising. The remaining contrasts are not statistically significant. Statistical support for hypothesis 2 is weak and there is no statistical support for hypothesis 2a.

Mean differences concerning information utility were submitted to post hoc analysis in order to examine the possibility of significant mean differences in directions opposite of those predicted. The results of this analysis indicate that no mean differences are statistically significant at the .05 level of probability. These findings

contribute no additional information concerning hypotheses 2 and 2a.

Aggregate Candidate Evaluations

Hypothesis 3 predicts that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 3a predicts that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than noncomparative advertising. Candidate evaluations were summed and the pretest mean was subtracted from the posttest mean to create change scores.

The results of contrast analysis indicate that complete comparative advertising has a significantly more negative impact on targeted candidate evaluations than moderate comparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and noncomparative advertising. While all other change scores are in the directions predicted, no other change score differences are significant. Post hoc analysis is unnecessary. These findings indicate full support for hypothesis 3 and no support for hypothesis 3a.

Research question 1 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in targeted candidate evaluations. An examination of scores indicates that all evaluations of the targeted candidate change in a negative direction. Therefore, the answer to research question 1 is negative.

Research question 2 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative changes in sponsoring candidate evaluations. An analysis of change scores indicates that significant differences exist between treatment conditions and the control group. The results of a Scheffe's multiple comparison test indicate that sponsoring candidate evaluations are significantly more positive in the noncomparative advertising condition and moderate comparative advertising condition than in the limited comparative advertising condition.

Treatment condition change scores were tested using the control group change score as a means of controlling for the effects of testing. The results of one-sample t-tests indicate that both moderate comparative advertising and noncomparative advertising significantly increase sponsoring candidate evaluations.

Candidate Liking

Hypothesis 4 suggests that complete comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 4a suggests that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than noncomparative advertising. Pretest means of targeted candidate liking were subtracted from posttest means of targeted candidate liking to create change scores. The results of contrast analysis indicate a lack of statistical

support for hypotheses 4 and 4a at the .05 level.

Post hoc analyses were conducted to examine potentially significant contrasts in directions opposite of those predicted. The results of analysis of variance indicate that significant change score differences exist. The results of a Scheffe's test indicate that both the moderate and complete comparative advertising change scores are significantly different from the change score of the control group at the .05 level. These findings provide no additional information concerning hypotheses 4 and 4a.

Research question 3 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in sponsoring candidate liking. Only noncomparative advertising produces a positive change in sponsoring candidate liking. While an analysis of variance indicates that no significant differences exist between treatment condition change scores, additional analyses reveal a significant testing effect. The noncomparative advertising change score was examined while controlling for the effects of testing. The result of this analysis indicates that noncomparative advertising significantly increases sponsoring candidate liking.

Candidate Mean Spiritedness

Research question 4 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce a positive change in perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. In this instance, a positive change indicates that perceptions of candidate mean

spiritedness increase among subjects. Pretest measures of candidate mean spiritedness were subtracted from posttest measures of candidate mean spiritedness to create change scores.

Analysis of variance indicates that change scores are significantly different from each other. The results of a Scheffe's multiple comparison test reveals that complete comparative advertising significantly increases perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness when compared with perceptions in the noncomparative and limited comparative advertising conditions. No additional analyses were conducted.

Candidate Voting Preference

Hypothesis 5 predicts that complete comparative advertising will produce a greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 5a predicts that moderate and limited comparative advertising will produce a greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than noncomparative advertising. Pretest voting preference means were subtracted from posttest voting preference means to create change scores. The results of contrast analysis indicate that there is no statistical support of hypotheses 5 or 5a at the .05 level.

Post hoc analyses were conducted to examine the possibility of significant contrasts in directions opposite of those predicted. The results of analysis of variance

indicate that significant change score differences exist. The results of a Scheffe's test reveals a significant difference between the complete comparative advertising condition score and the control group score. This finding provides no additional information concerning hypotheses 5 or 5a.

Research question 5 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative changes in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. An examination of change scores indicates that advertising stimuli produce both increases and decreases in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. The results of analysis of variance, however, indicate that no change scores are significantly different at the .05 level.

Moderate and Limited Comparative Advertising Differences

Research question 6 asks if moderate and limited comparative advertising differ in their abilities to: Produce positive change in sponsoring candidate evaluations or negative change in targeted candidate evaluations; produce positive change in sponsoring candidate liking or negative change in targeted candidate liking; produce increases in sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness; produce positive change in sponsoring candidate voting preferences or negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences; and, produce positive change in election involvement.

In order to address these questions, moderate and limited comparative advertising were tested for significant

differences using independent samples t-tests. The results of these tests indicate that moderate comparative advertising produces a significant positive change in evaluations of the sponsoring candidate when compared with the negative change produced by limited comparative advertising. In all other instances, however, there are no significant differences between moderate and limited comparative advertising.

Election Involvement

Research question 7 asks if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in election involvement. Measures of election involvement were summed and the pretest mean was subtracted from the posttest mean to create change scores. Analysis of variance indicates the existence of statistically significant change score differences. A Scheffe's multiple comparison test was used to determine the location of significant change score differences. The results of the Scheffe's test indicate that complete comparative advertising significantly increases election involvement when compared with the decreases in involvement in the noncomparative advertising condition and the control group. No other change score differences are significant at the .05 level.

In order to control for the possible effects of testing, treatment condition change scores were tested against the control group change score using one-sample t-tests. The results of this analysis indicate that both

complete comparative advertising and moderate comparative advertising are significantly different from the control group. Additional change score differences are not significant at the .05 level.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research findings discussed here include the results of hypothesis testing and post hoc analysis, followed by the analysis of research questions. The limitations of the study are addressed next, followed by recommendations for a course of future research and a summary of conclusions.

Discussion and Implications of Research Findings

The results of the experiment and their implications are discussed here. All results are presented briefly in summary form, followed by a brief a discussion of the findings and their implications.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 proposed that moderate and limited comparative advertising are perceived as more fair and unbiased than noncomparative and complete comparative advertising. Hypothesis 1a proposed that noncomparative advertising is perceived as more fair and unbiased than complete comparative advertising. Fair and unbiased were combined with believable to form an information credibility subscale.

The results of contrast analysis indicated that noncomparative advertising, limited comparative advertising,

and moderate comparative advertising possessed significantly more information credibility than complete comparative advertising. No other mean differences were significant. These results indicate partial support for hypothesis 1 and full support for hypothesis 1a.

Post hoc analyses were conducted. The results of a Scheffe's test revealed that noncomparative advertising possessed significantly more information credibility than both complete comparative advertising and limited comparative advertising. Taken together, these findings indicate that moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising possess significantly more information credibility than complete comparative advertising. In addition, noncomparative advertising possesses significantly more information credibility than complete comparative advertising.

These results are generally consistent with the results of a variety of survey research indicating that voters dislike negative political advertising, finding it uninformative, unethical, uninteresting, and deceptive (Garramone, 1984; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1989; Nix, Nein, 1984; Pinkleton and Garramone, 1992; Surlin and Gordon, 1977). These findings are of particular interest in view of the increased use of comparative political advertising by candidates attempting to avoid the negative stigma attached to attack advertising, as previously discussed.

In this instance, the negativity of complete

comparative advertising significantly lowered its information credibility, despite its comparative format. Moderate comparative advertising did not suffer the same losses of information credibility, however, despite the fact that it is only slightly less negative. These findings suggest that voters are likely to recognize and distrust the most negative kinds of political advertising, regardless of their form. At the same time, political advertising can be negative and still enjoy an acceptable degree of information credibility. With this in mind, candidates for public office may find it beneficial to employ comparative appeals containing moderate amounts of negative information. This strategy will allow them to communicate disparaging information regarding an opponent to voters while maintaining an acceptable level of information credibility.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that complete comparative advertising is perceived as more informative and useful than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 2a proposed that moderate and limited comparative advertising are perceived as more informative and useful than noncomparative advertising. Informative and useful were combined with interesting and believable to form an information utility subscale.

The results of contrast analysis indicated that complete comparative advertising possessed significantly more information utility than limited comparative advertising. The remaining contrasts were not statistically

significant. Post hoc analyses were conducted. The results of a Scheffe's test indicated that no mean differences were statistically significant at the .05 level of probability. Statistical support for hypothesis 2 is weak and there is no statistical support for hypothesis 2a.

Despite the general lack of support for hypotheses 2 and 2a, the significant difference found between complete and limited comparative advertising is broadly consistent with other research findings. The results of the Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991a) study, as well as the results of a limited amount of comparative product advertising research utilizing print media, indicate that comparative advertising is generally more informative than other types of advertising. In the present study, complete comparative advertising contained the greatest amount of comparative information, while the limited stimulus contained very little comparative information. Here, the stimulus with the most comparative information enjoyed significantly more information utility than a stimulus possessing much less comparative information.

It should be noted, however, that the information utility of complete comparative advertising appears to be weak. It is likely that the limited comparative stimulus communicated very little new information concerning candidate differences to subjects. This is due to the presence of only two comparative statements differentiating the sponsoring candidate from the targeted candidate in the limited advertisement. Given this fact, the information

utility of complete comparative advertising is possibly a function of the lack of information utility possessed by limited comparative advertising rather than the true information utility possessed by complete comparative advertising. Additional support for this position is found in the fact that no additional significant differences emerged between the complete comparative stimulus and other stimuli.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that complete comparative advertising produces a greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 3a predicted that moderate and limited comparative advertising produce a greater negative change in evaluations of the targeted candidate than noncomparative advertising.

The results of contrast analysis indicated that complete comparative advertising had a significantly more negative impact on targeted candidate evaluations than moderate comparative advertising, limited comparative advertising, and noncomparative advertising. No other contrasts were significant at the .05 level. These findings indicate complete support for hypothesis 3 and no support for hypothesis 3a. Additional post hoc analyses were unnecessary.

Findings in support of hypothesis 3 are completely in keeping with the results of research concerning negative information effects and negative political advertising

effects. As previously discussed, research concerning the impact of negative information on person perception indicates that negative information is weighted more heavily than positive information when forming evaluations of social stimuli (Anderson, 1965; Hodges, 1974; Kellerman, 1984, 1989; Levin and Schmidt, 1969; Warr and Jackson, 1976; Wyer, 1970). The results of research concerning the impact of political advertising also indicate that subject evaluations of targeted candidates often fall as a result of exposure to negative political advertising (Kaid and Boydston, 1987; Shapiro and Rieger, 1989; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a).

The fact that complete comparative advertising significantly lowers targeted candidate evaluations indicates that the impact of negative comparative advertising is similar to the impact of other types of negative political advertising. This finding is particularly interesting given the concerns raised regarding the information credibility of complete comparative advertising. Based on these results, it appears as if complete comparative advertising effectively reduces support of the targeted candidate, despite the fact that it is significantly lower in information credibility than other types of comparative and noncomparative advertising.

Although not directly supported by this research evidence, it is reasonable to expect that there is an optimal tradeoff between the credibility and negativity of political advertising. In this instance, negative

advertising will enjoy an acceptable degree of credibility and still effectively reduce support of a targeted candidate. Finally, it is significant to note that all stimuli produced negative changes in targeted candidate evaluations. These findings provide no indication of a backlash effect and will be discussed in greater detail shortly.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that complete comparative advertising produces a greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than moderate, limited, and noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 4a suggested that moderate and limited comparative advertising produce a greater negative change in targeted candidate liking than noncomparative advertising. The results of contrast analysis indicated a lack of statistical support for hypotheses 4 and 4a at the .05 level. Post hoc analyses were conducted. The results of a Scheffe's test indicated that moderate and complete comparative advertising change scores were significantly different from the control group at the .05 level. These findings provide no additional support for hypotheses 4 or 4a.

Based on these results, the impact of negative information on aggregate candidate evaluations and the impact of negative information on evaluations of candidate liking do not appear to be equivalent. Negative comparative information has a pronounced impact on overall targeted candidate evaluations. At the same time, this information

has very little impact on targeted candidate liking.

Although improbable, it is possible that negative political advertising impacts voters' perceptions of a candidate's character traits and job performance abilities, apart from impacting voters' evaluations of candidate liking. In this instance, the influence of complete comparative advertising would be very narrow, significantly reducing targeted candidate evaluations while leaving evaluations of targeted candidate liking intact.

It appears more likely that the measure of candidate liking is not accurately reflective of subjects' candidate perceptions. The artificiality of the research environment, the relatively low election involvement of subjects, and the lower reliability of a single-item measure contribute to a situation in which negative information erroneously appears to have no significant impact on targeted candidate liking. Support for this position is found in the general lack of significance existing in contrasts concerning targeted candidate liking. A future study conducted during an election, using a random sample of voters, and utilizing more thorough measures of targeted candidate liking is more likely to accurately measure the impact of negative information on targeted candidate liking.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that complete comparative advertising produces a greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than moderate, limited, or noncomparative advertising. Hypothesis 5a predicted that moderate and limited comparative advertising produce a

greater negative change in targeted candidate voting preferences than noncomparative advertising. The results of contrast analysis indicated that there was no statistical support of hypotheses 5 or 5a at the .05 level of significance. Post hoc analyses were conducted. The results of a Scheffe's test revealed a significant difference between the complete comparative advertising condition and the control group. This finding provides no additional information concerning hypotheses 5 or 5a, which remain unsupported.

As with candidate liking, it appears as if measures of candidate voting preferences are not accurately reflective of subjects' voting behavior. In this instance, the artificiality of the research environment and the relatively low election involvement of subjects contributes to a situation in which negative information erroneously appears to have no significant impact on subject voting preferences. Support for this position is found in the general lack of significance existing in contrasts concerning targeted candidate voting preferences. As before, a future study conducted during an election and using a random sample of voters is more likely to accurately measure the impact of negative information on targeted candidate voting preferences.

Research Questions

Research question 1 asked if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in targeted candidate

evaluations. An examination of scores indicates that all evaluations of the targeted candidate changed in a negative direction. Therefore, the answer to research question one is negative. This question was included in this study as part of an attempt to gauge the existence of a backlash effect. The answer to research question 1 indicates that no backlash effect exists as measured by targeted candidate evaluations. It should be noted, however, that targeted candidate evaluations are only a single measure of voter backlash. Candidate liking, candidate voting preferences, and perceived candidate mean spiritedness are also used to provide evidence of a backlash effect. Each of these will be discussed shortly.

Research question 2 asked if any of the four types of advertising produce positive or negative changes in sponsoring candidate evaluations. An analysis of change scores indicated that sponsoring candidate evaluations were significantly more positive in the noncomparative and moderate comparative advertising conditions than in the limited comparative advertising condition. When controlling for the effects of testing, both moderate comparative advertising and noncomparative advertising significantly increased sponsoring candidate evaluations.

These results are somewhat difficult to interpret in that both a negative advertisement and a positive advertisement significantly increase sponsoring candidate evaluations. Findings concerning moderate comparative

advertising indicate the possibility of a range of acceptability for the contents of comparative political advertising. When comparative advertisements are too negative--as in the instance of complete comparative advertising--voters may perceive the advertising as unfair and sponsoring candidate evaluations will decline (see Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1989; Garramone, 1984, 1985; Merritt, 1984). In the same way, comparative advertising containing a small amount of information differentiating between candidates--as in the instance of limited comparative advertising--may frustrate voters by providing little information of use in determining the relative advantages of the sponsoring candidate over the targeted candidate. This also results in declining sponsoring candidate evaluations.

An acceptable range of negative and comparative information appears to have been contained in the moderate comparative stimulus. In this instance, enough negative information is presented to effectively erode targeted candidate support. At the same time, the moderate stimulus is not negative enough to create a backlash against the sponsoring candidate. The result is a significant increase in sponsoring candidate evaluations.

Findings concerning noncomparative advertising are easier to interpret. In this instance, it appears as if noncomparative advertising is simply having its desired impact. That is, noncomparative advertising is designed to increase positive perceptions of the sponsor, rather than

increase negative perceptions of the target. Noncomparative advertising generates no perceptions of unfairness because it communicates only positive information concerning its sponsor. Here, there are no backlash concerns.

As an additional note, a backlash effect is weakly evident in sponsoring candidate evaluations. In this instance, noncomparative advertising significantly increases sponsoring candidate evaluations when compared with the decrease in evaluations resulting from limited comparative advertising. Unfortunately, this finding is difficult to interpret because of two related factors. First, it is the least negative of the comparative advertising stimuli which generates the greatest decrease in sponsoring candidate evaluations. Second, another negative stimulus actually has an effect opposite of the backlash created by the limited comparative stimulus.

These confounding variables contribute a high degree of doubt as to the validity of the backlash effect created by limited comparative advertising. As previously noted, the primary explanation for this finding exists in the fact that the limited stimulus communicates a small degree of information useful to subjects in determining the advantages of the sponsoring candidate over the targeted candidate. As before, it is likely that subject frustration contributed to a significant decline in sponsoring candidate evaluations.

Research question 3 asked if any of the four types of advertising produce a positive change in sponsoring

candidate liking. When pretest candidate liking scores were subtracted from posttest candidate liking scores, only one positive score emerged. In addition, the results of analysis of variance indicated that no significant differences existed between treatment condition scores. When controlling for the effects of testing, however, a one-sample t-test indicated that noncomparative advertising did, in fact, significantly increase sponsoring candidate liking.

As with sponsoring candidate evaluations, this finding is probably best interpreted as an example of noncomparative advertising having its desired impact. Since the noncomparative stimulus communicates only positive information about the sponsor of the advertisement, it is reasonable to expect that sponsor liking will increase, particularly in the absence of any other candidate information.

This finding, when combined with findings concerning the positive impact of noncomparative advertising on sponsoring candidate evaluations, indicates that the impact of positive political advertising can be fairly substantial. While negative political advertising appears to generate the majority of attention from journalists and researchers, positive political advertising appears to possess a relatively high degree of effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

Research question 4 asked if any of the four types of advertising produce a positive change in perceptions of

sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. The results of analysis indicated that complete comparative advertising significantly increased perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness when compared with noncomparative and limited comparative advertising.

These findings provide some evidence of a backlash effect. In this instance, the most negative comparative stimulus contributes to a significant increase in perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. Several points should be made regarding this finding. First, candidate mean spiritedness is only one aspect of the concept of voter backlash. There are a variety of additional measures of voter backlash, as previously discussed. These include sponsoring and targeted candidate evaluations, sponsoring and targeted candidate liking, and sponsoring and targeted candidate voting preferences.

Next, it is conceivable for a candidate to engender increasing perceptions of mean spiritedness without having large numbers of the electorate actually vote against him or her. At lower levels, some degree of mean spiritedness is likely to be acceptable for a political candidate. In fact, a certain amount of mean spiritedness may even be beneficial for a candidate attempting to demonstrate a strong image, for example. As voter perceptions of mean spiritedness continue to escalate, however, its consequences are likely to become more significant. Based on the results of this research, complete comparative advertising may harm a

candidate by contributing to voter backlash as perceptions of mean spiritedness reach higher levels.

Finally, only the most negative comparative stimulus increased perceptions of candidate mean spiritedness. Here, it appears as if a less negative form of comparative advertising can be used without creating this perception. As a final note, other indications of voter backlash examined in this study provide minimal evidence of backlash effects. Based on these findings, it appears as if comparative political advertising can be effectively used to communicate negative information to voters concerning an opponent without engendering the strong backlash effects associated with direct attack advertising.

Research question 5 asked if any of the four types of advertising produce a positive or negative change in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. An analysis of change scores indicated that advertising stimuli produced both increases and decreases in voting preferences for the sponsoring candidate. No change scores were significantly different at the .05 level, however.

This result is difficult to interpret, particularly given the lack of consistent research findings concerning the impact of political advertising on voting behavior. As previously discussed, the positions of political consultants concerning political advertising suggest that negative advertising exerts a powerful influence over the attitudes and behavior of voters, generally resulting in its desired effect (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a, 1991b; Perloff

and Kinsey, 1990). Conversely, the research efforts of academicians examining negative political advertising indicate that a backlash effect is a common outcome of negative political advertising (Garrazone, 1984, 1985; Merritt, 1984; Shapiro and Rieger, 1989).

Two points should be made with respect to this finding. First, political scientists have suggested that comparative advertising is a desirable vehicle of political communication for the very reason that it avoids the stigma attached to negative, attack advertising (Salmore and Salmore, 1989). In providing limited evidence of a backlash effect, the findings of this study are generally consistent with this view.

Second, measures of candidate voting preferences tend to lack a high degree of external validity. Having subjects project their voting behavior in a fictional political contest is quite different from voting for a political candidate in an election. Simply having subjects rate their voting preferences for two candidates on seven-point scales limits the applicability of voting preference measures to actual voting behavior in which one candidate is selected over another. While findings concerning the impact of comparative political advertising on sponsoring candidate voting behavior are not significant in the present study, this should not necessarily be taken as evidence of null effects.

Research question 6 addresses the differences between

moderate and limited comparative advertising in terms of their impact on dependent variables. The results of analysis indicated that moderate comparative advertising produced a significant, positive change in aggregate evaluations of the sponsoring candidate when compared with the negative change produce by limited comparative advertising. In all other instances, no significant differences existed between moderate and limited comparative advertising.

This finding is interesting in that two stimuli, having no significant difference in terms of perceived negativity, have significant opposite effects on candidate evaluations. Once again, it should be noted that the limited stimulus contained little comparative information communicating a clear sponsoring candidate advantage. In this instance, the sponsoring candidate may appear to have possessed no real advantage over the targeted candidate resulting in decreased candidate evaluations. In the instance of the moderate stimulus, however, sufficient information exists to allow subjects to identify genuine differences between the sponsoring and targeted candidates. In addition, the moderate stimulus is not so negative as to create a backlash effect. Here, the moderate stimulus successfully increases evaluations of the sponsoring candidate. Further, the sponsoring candidate is exemplified without being excessively negative toward the targeted candidate.

Research question 7 asked if any of the four types of advertising produce positive changes in election

involvement. An analysis of change score differences indicated that complete comparative advertising significantly increased election involvement when compared with the decreases in involvement in the noncomparative advertising condition and the control group. No other change score differences were significant at the .05 level. When controlling for the effects of testing, both the complete and moderate comparative advertising change scores significantly increased election involvement.

These findings are particularly interesting in that no previous research exists indicating that political advertising has the ability to increase election involvement. The common perception among journalists and political observers is that negative political advertising discourages voters from political participation (Colford, 1988; Hinds, 1990; Martz, 1988; Much Ado, 1985; Denton and Woodward, 1990). In addition, previous research examining the impact of political advertising on election involvement indicates that political advertising has no effect (Garrazone, et al., 1990).

The findings in the present study, however, indicate that the most negative stimuli actually increase election involvement. While this finding is interesting, it should not be over emphasized. This is only a single indication that negative advertising can increase political involvement. These findings have not been replicated and stand alone against the results of other research, as well

as conventional wisdom. In addition, the involvement measures contained in the test instrument are likely to be lacking some degree of external validity. Asking subjects how stimulating or exciting they find an election does not necessarily translate into greater political interest or participation. Finally, the experimental setting of the research also hinders the external generalizability of the involvement finding. In this instance, subjects are likely to be extremely low in involvement due to a lack of knowledge, participation, and general interest in the election. On this basis, any additional information concerning the election has the potential to increase involvement.

Limitations

The limitations of this study derive from a variety of sources including the research method utilized, the independent and dependent variables employed, and the selection of college students as subjects. In a general sense, a laboratory setting is a poor setting in which to conduct political advertising research. While this environment contributes greatly to internal validity, it is a significant hindrance to external validity. In a political campaign, the impact of political advertising takes place among a myriad of communication sources. Competing messages are transmitted via different channels amid a variety of social and cultural influences. In an experimental setting, each of these influences are

necessarily limited in order to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. This lack of context hinders the external validity of experimental research. By controlling for extraneous variables, important sources of influence and their interaction with other campaign elements are eliminated. The result is an increase in internal validity at the expense of external validity.

A related hindrance to external validity involves the unnatural exposure patterns used in experimental research. Requiring subjects to read biographic profiles and political advertising under tightly controlled time constraints is greatly unlike exposure patterns existing outside of a research laboratory. While attempts were made to approximate a multiple exposure pattern, these attempts fall far short of the exposure patterns existing within a nonresearch environment.

The use of a convenience sample of college students also hinders the external generalizability of this study's findings. While the sample is made up of subjects of voting age, participants are skewed in terms of both age and education. Many of these subjects arguably lack political sophistication or experience. Roddy and Garramone (1988) suggest that the youth and education of college students ultimately counterbalance, making them adequate subjects for political advertising research. Nevertheless, a convenience sample of college students hinders the external generalizability of research findings to some degree.

In addition, subject responses to test items cannot be accepted as the equivalent of their political behavior or attitudes. While scaled items may be taken as indications of behavior and attitudes, there is a substantial difference between projecting responses onto seven-point scales and the actual behavioral and attitudinal outcomes that are likely to result from exposure to political advertising. In addition, these measures are collected at a single point in time, immediately after exposure to experimental stimuli. Such measurement, while a necessary part of the design of the experiment, may not be accurate in its attitudinal and behavioral representation.

As an additional note, while the direction of several scale items was reversed to control for response bias, it is possible that such bias still made its way into subject ratings. In fact, there are a number of potential sources of bias that must be considered in any experimental setting, including the demand characteristics of the research situation and the behavior of researchers. While reasonable controls were employed to contain the introduction of bias, it was simply not feasible to provide all of the controls required to eliminate all potential sources of bias.

Future Research

Future research examining comparative political advertising should attempt to provide a greater depth of understanding concerning the findings disclosed in this study. Further information needs to be gathered in order to

confirm or disconfirm these results and provide additional information concerning this important field of research. At the most basic level, additional research should be conducted in an attempt to replicate these findings, correcting for the weaknesses existing in this study. Perhaps the most important aspect of such replication should involve the use of a randomly selected sample of the voting public, rather than a convenience sample of college students. Additional improvements in external validity should be obtained by utilizing natural environments and normal media exposure patterns.

Another important aspect of replication involves the use of broadcast media, particularly televised commercials, to study comparative advertising effects. While print media are often used as a vehicle for comparative political advertising, the preponderance of political advertising is presented to the electorate via television. In this instance, an examination of different types of comparative broadcast commercials would provide additional information concerning the role of communication modality in comparative political advertising effects.

Finally, research efforts should be made that attempt to separate the influences of comparative information from the influences of negative information in political advertising. While some social scientists have suggested that comparative advertising is necessarily negative advertising (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991a, 1991b), it

is reasonable to expect that positive comparative political advertising exists, based on the pretest results of experimental stimuli. Such advertising would work to the benefit the sponsor without engendering the perceptions of negativity created by negative political advertising. In this instance, a 2 x 2 factorial design employing comparative and noncomparative advertising, and positive and negative advertising, would be useful in separating the influences of comparative information from the influences of negative information in political advertising. This design would also provide for an examination of interaction effects.

Summary of Conclusions

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this study. From a broad conceptual perspective, it is interesting to note that the comparative and noncomparative advertising utilized in this study appear to be perceived in a manner that is fundamentally different. This difference, derived from the negativity of complete comparative advertising, is especially notable in subject ratings of information credibility. As might be expected, positive noncomparative advertising is rated significantly higher than negative complete comparative advertising in terms of information credibility. When comparative advertising contains some positive information concerning its target, however, the information credibility differences between noncomparative and comparative advertising are nullified.

Despite the increased information credibility enjoyed by noncomparative advertising, complete comparative advertising still results in its desired impact. Here, the greater relative influence of negative information over positive information is substantiated. This result is most evident in candidate evaluations. The results of this study indicate a significant negative change in subject evaluations of the targeted candidate after exposure to negative comparative advertising. These findings provide additional evidence concerning the greater weighting given to negative information over positive information in political perception and information processing.

The results of this study provide additional evidence concerning the backlash effect, as well. While evidence of a backlash effect emerges in both sponsoring candidate evaluations and ratings of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness, this effect appears to be relatively weak. When comparative advertising contains a high degree of negative information, the results of this study indicate that sponsoring candidate evaluations decline. Sponsoring candidate evaluations also decline if a comparative advertisement does not contain enough information to present a clear rationale for supporting the sponsoring candidate over the targeted candidate. These backlash effects are nullified by moderate comparative advertising, however. In this instance, moderate comparative advertising appears to contain an acceptable range of negative information, nullifying the occurrence of backlash effects and

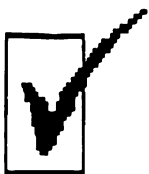
significantly increasing sponsoring candidate evaluations.

Additional evidence of a backlash effect is contained in evaluations of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. Here, the most negative advertisement, complete comparative advertising, significantly increases perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness. It should be noted, however, that perceptions of mean spiritedness are likely to be important primarily in instances in which they escalate to such an extent that they negatively impact voter behavior. If perceptions of sponsoring candidate mean spiritedness remain within acceptable limits, they are unlikely to harm a candidate. In addition, it is significant to note that this effect is nullified by comparative advertising employing a moderate amount of negative information.

Finally, it is of great interest to note the ability of complete and moderate comparative advertising to increase election involvement. While the importance of this finding should not be overstated for reasons already discussed, these results provide preliminary evidence indicating that political advertising can positively impact election involvement. This finding is contrary to the generally accepted notion that negative political advertising creates election apathy and discourages political participation.

APPENDIX A

EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI



Check Out DAVE WILSON

for 3rd District Senator

DAVE WILSON



Is a staunch advocate of
increased funding for higher education



Understands the needs and
concerns of local residents



Strongly opposes the pro-
posed 4 cent sales tax increase



Has consistently voted to prevent
the clear-cutting of national
forests



Has voluntarily released his
income tax records



Has an unquestioned record
of honesty in public office

Brian Rogers

Is an opponent of increased
funding for higher education

Is out of touch with the needs
and concerns of local residents

Supports the proposed 4 cent
sales tax increase

Has been inconsistent in the
protection of national forests

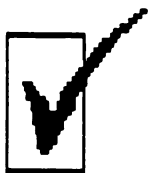
Has refused to release his
income tax records

Has had honesty questioned
in ethics probe

Vote DAVE WILSON
for Senator of the 3rd District

Paid for by Citizens for Dave Wilson

NONCOMPARATIVE STIMULUS



Check Out
DAVE WILSON
for 3rd District Senator
DAVE WILSON



**Is a staunch advocate of increased
funding for higher education**



**Understands the needs and concerns
of local residents**



**Strongly opposes the proposed 4 cent
sales tax increase**



**Has consistently voted to prevent
the clear-cutting of national forests**



**Has voluntarily released his
income tax records**



**Has an unquestioned record of
honesty in public office**

Vote DAVE WILSON
for Senator of the 3rd District

Paid for by Citizens for Dave Wilson

APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENT

INSTRUMENT

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STUDY

STUDY CONSENT FORM 1

A study is being conducted to learn about perceptions of political candidates and reactions to political campaigns. You will be asked to complete various exercises as part of this study, including:

1. Reading brief biographic profiles of candidates competing for a state Senate seat in Idaho;
2. completing questionnaires concerning your impressions of the political candidates; and,
3. reading political advertisements and/or essays.

At the conclusion of the study you will be debriefed regarding the study's theory, methodology, and expected findings. The entire study will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

You may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. All subject responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name and student number are needed only to ensure that you receive proper credit for participating in the study. Your name and/or student number will not be used to identify your individual responses. If you have any questions regarding the study, or would like to obtain a copy of the study's findings, contact the director of graduate studies in the School of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University.

Please indicate your willingness to participate in the study by both signing and printing your name, and writing your student number, in the spaces provided below.

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE

STUDENT NUMBER

**PLEASE WAIT QUIETLY
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO**

IDAHO LEAGUE OF WOMEN'S VOTERS CANDIDATE PROFILES

DAVID R. WILSON

David R. Wilson, 46, was born and raised in Pocatello, Idaho. Wilson graduated from Boise State University in 1967 with a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice. After graduation, Wilson returned to Pocatello and started a local retail firm with a family friend. Wilson sold his interest in the business after four years in order to pursue a career in law.

Wilson attended law school at Vanderbilt University. He graduated in 1974 with an emphasis in criminal law. He subsequently joined the law offices of Mead, McCaleb, and Grant. Wilson is married with two children.

In 1980 Wilson was elected to the Bingham County Board of Directors. He served two terms. Wilson played key roles in initiating new road and bridge construction in Bingham County. As a private citizen, Wilson has held leadership roles with Pocatello chapter of the American Cancer Society and the Physically Impaired Association of Idaho.

BRIAN A. ROGERS

Brian A. Rogers was born September 17, 1940, in Nampa, Idaho. Rogers enrolled at Idaho State University in 1958. Rogers was a member of the Student Senate for three years. He graduated in 1963 with a bachelor of science degree in political science, prelaw.

Rogers attended Wake Forest University Law School. Following graduation, Rogers returned to Nampa where he served as a county attorney for nine years. Rogers is married with three children.

Rogers was elected to the Nampa City Council in 1980 and served two terms. Rogers is credited with helping to revitalize downtown Nampa while on the City Council. Rogers is a Red Cross volunteer and has also served on the Board of Directors of the Idaho Council for the Humanities.

PLEASE WAIT QUIETLY
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete the following scales. You may refer back to the material on the previous page to help you complete the scales.

Please rate **Dave Wilson** on the following characteristics by circling the appropriate number.

Believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not believable
Unconcerned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concerned
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honest
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Persuasive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpersuasive
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sincere
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Qualified
Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Unethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ethical

Based on the candidate profile, how much do you like **Dave Wilson**?

Like very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dislike very much
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------------

How mean spirited is **Dave Wilson**?

Very mean spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not at all mean spirited
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------------------

If you were to vote in this election, how likely would you be to vote for **Dave Wilson**?

Very likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very unlikely
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

Please rate **Brian Rogers** on the following characteristics by circling the appropriate number.

Believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not believable
Unconcerned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concerned
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honest
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Persuasive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpersuasive
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sincere
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Qualified
Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Unethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ethical

Based on the candidate profile, how much do you like **Brian Rogers**?

Like very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dislike very much
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

How mean spirited is **Brian Rogers**?

Very mean spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not at all mean spirited
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------------

If you were to vote in this election, how likely would you be to vote for **Brian Rogers**?

Very likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very unlikely
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---------------

How interesting do you find the Senate race between Wilson and Rogers?

Not at all interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very interesting
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

How much do you care about this election?

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A lot
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------

How stimulating do you find the contest between Wilson and Rogers?

Not at all								Very
stimulating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	stimulating

How exciting is this race?

Not at all								Very
exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	exciting

PLEASE WAIT QUIETLY
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE AND CAREFULLY
READ THE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

DO NOT TURN PAST THE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT
UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO



Check Out DAVE WILSON for 3rd District Senator

DAVE WILSON

☒ Is a staunch advocate of
increased funding for higher education

☒ Understands the needs and
concerns of local residents

☒ Strongly opposes the pro-
posed 4 cent sales tax increase

☒ Has consistently voted to prevent
the clear-cutting of national
forests

☒ Has voluntarily released his
income tax records

☒ Has an unquestioned record
of honesty in public office

Brian Rogers

Is an opponent of increased
funding for higher education

Is out of touch with the needs
and concerns of local residents

Supports the proposed 4 cent
sales tax increase

Has been inconsistent in the
protection of national forests

Has refused to release his
income tax records

Has had honesty questioned
in ethics probe

Vote DAVE WILSON for Senator of the 3rd District

Paid for by Citizens for Dave Wilson

INSTRUCTIONS: Suppose that you are discussing the candidates with a friend. Please list the thoughts you have about each of the candidates. Write **ONE** thought in each box. Use as many boxes as you need. Continue on the back of this page, if necessary. **DO NOT** continue on to the next page, or turn back to previous pages, until instructed to do so.

THOUGHTS ABOUT DAVE WILSON

THOUGHTS ABOUT BRIAN ROGERS

PLEASE WAIT QUIETLY
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete the following scales. You may refer back to the material on the previous page to help you complete the scales. Please DO NOT refer to any other portion of the questionnaire.

Please rate the political advertisement on the following characteristics by circling the appropriate number.

Believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not believable
Biased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unbiased
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Informative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninformative
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninteresting
Not useful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Useful

How negative are the contents of the advertisement you read?

Not at all negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very negative
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

Please rate Dave Wilson on the following characteristics by circling the appropriate number.

Believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not believable
Unconcerned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concerned
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honest
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Persuasive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpersuasive
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sincere
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Qualified
Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Unethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ethical

Based on the political advertisement, how much do you like
Dave Wilson?

Like									Dislike
very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		very much

How mean spirited is **Dave Wilson**?

Very mean									Not at all
Spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		mean spirited

If you were to vote in this election, how likely would you be to
vote for **Dave Wilson**?

Very likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very unlikely
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Please rate **Brian Rogers** on the following characteristics by
circling the appropriate number.

Believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not believable
Unconcerned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concerned
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honest
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Persuasive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unpersuasive
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sincere
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Qualified
Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Unethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ethical

Based on the political advertisement, how much do you like
Brian Rogers?

Like									Dislike
very much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		very much

How mean spirited is **Brian Rogers**?

Very mean									Not at all
spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		mean spirited

If you were to vote in this election, how likely would you be to vote for Brian Rogers?

Very likely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very unlikely

How interesting do you find the Senate race between Wilson and Rogers?

Not at all Very
interesting 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 interesting

How much do you care about this election?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A lot

How stimulating do you find the contest between Wilson and Rogers?

Not at all Very
stimulating 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 stimulating

How exciting is this race?

Not at all Very
exciting 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 exciting

**PLEASE CLOSE YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND WAIT QUIETLY
UNTIL GIVEN FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS**

APPENDIX C

BIOGRAPHIC PROFILES

BIOGRAPHIC PROFILES

IDAHO LEAGUE OF WOMEN'S VOTERS CANDIDATE PROFILES

DAVID R. WILSON

David R. Wilson, 46, was born and raised in Pocatello, Idaho. Wilson graduated from Boise State University in 1967 with a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice. After graduation, Wilson returned to Pocatello and started a local retail firm with a family friend. Wilson sold his interest in the business after four years in order to pursue a career in law.

Wilson attended law school at Vanderbilt University. He graduated in 1974 with an emphasis in criminal law. He subsequently joined the law offices of Mead, McCaleb, and Grant. Wilson is married with two children.

In 1980 Wilson was elected to the Bingham County Board of Directors. He served two terms. Wilson played key roles in initiating new road and bridge construction in Bingham County. As a private citizen, Wilson has held leadership roles with Pocatello chapter of the American Cancer Society and the Physically Impaired Association of Idaho.

BRIAN A. ROGERS

Brian A. Rogers was born September 17, 1940, in Nampa, Idaho. Rogers enrolled at Idaho State University in 1958. Rogers was a member of the Student Senate for three years. He graduated in 1963 with a bachelor of science degree in political science, prelaw.

Rogers attended Wake Forest University Law School. Following graduation, Rogers returned to Nampa where he served as a county attorney for nine years. Rogers is married with three children.

Rogers was elected to the Nampa City Council in 1980 and served two terms. Rogers is credited with helping to revitalize downtown Nampa while on the City Council. Rogers is a Red Cross volunteer and has also served on the Board of Directors of the Idaho Council for the Humanities.

APPENDIX D

CONTROL ESSAY

CONTROL ESSAY

IDAHO

Idaho is one of the group of states known as Mountain States. It is situated in the northwestern part of the United States, bordering the Canadian province of British Columbia. Idaho is roughly L-shaped, with a broad base extending eastward to Wyoming. Idaho measures only about 45 miles from east to west along its northern border. Idaho is approximately 300 miles wide along its southern border. From north to south, along its border with Washington and Oregon, Idaho spans a distance of approximately 500 miles.

Idaho includes parts of four of the major geographic provinces of the western United States. The Northern Rockies cover all of central Idaho and most of Idaho's panhandle. The Middle Rockies lie in a narrow strip along the Idaho-Wyoming border. Adjoining the Middle Rockies is a small triangular section of the Great Basin, extending along most of the Idaho-Utah border. The remainder of the state belongs to the Columbia Plateau, which extends into Idaho from the west.

Agriculture, manufacturing based on farm and forest products, tourism and mining form the basis of Idaho's economy. Among Idaho's greatest assets are its rich agricultural lands, large tracts of which are still undeveloped. Idaho possess the water resources needed to make such land productive. Expansion of tourism and of industries based in Idaho's farm, forest, and mineral products are expected to bring continued prosperity to Idaho in the future.

APPENDIX E

CONTRAST WEIGHTING SPECIFICATIONS

CONTRAST WEIGHTS

Table 29

Contrast weights for information credibility

	<u>Comp.</u>	<u>Mod.</u>	<u>Lim.</u>	<u>Non.</u>	<u>(sum)</u>
mod w/ non	0	+1	0	-1	= 0
mod w/ comp	-1	+1	0	0	= 0
non w/ comp	-1	0	0	+1	= 0
lim w/ non	0	0	+1	-1	= 0
lim w/ comp	-1	0	+1	0	= 0

Table 30

Contrast weights for information utility

	<u>Comp.</u>	<u>Mod.</u>	<u>Lim.</u>	<u>Non.</u>	<u>(sum)</u>
comp w/ lim	+1	0	-1	0	= 0
comp w/ non	+1	0	0	-1	= 0
lim w/ non	0	0	+1	-1	= 0
comp w/ mod	+1	-1	0	0	= 0
mod w/ non	0	+1	0	-1	= 0

Table 31

Contrast weights for targeted candidate evaluations

	<u>Comp.</u>	<u>Mod.</u>	<u>Lim.</u>	<u>Non.</u>	<u>(sum)</u>
comp w/ lim	+1	0	-1	0	= 0
comp w/ non	+1	0	0	-1	= 0
lim w/ non	0	0	+1	-1	= 0
comp w/ mod	+1	-1	0	0	= 0
mod w/ non	0	+1	0	-1	= 0

Table 32

Contrast weights for targeted candidate liking

	<u>Comp.</u>	<u>Mod.</u>	<u>Lim.</u>	<u>Non.</u>	<u>(sum)</u>
comp w/ lim	+1	0	-1	0	= 0
comp w/ non	+1	0	0	-1	= 0
lim w/ non	0	0	+1	-1	= 0
comp w/ mod	+1	-1	0	0	= 0
mod w/ non	0	+1	0	-1	= 0

Table 33

Contrast weights for targeted candidate voting preferences

	<u>Comp.</u>	<u>Mod.</u>	<u>Lim.</u>	<u>Non.</u>	<u>(sum)</u>
comp w/ lim	+1	0	-1	0	= 0
comp w/ non	+1	0	0	-1	= 0
lim w/ non	0	0	+1	-1	= 0
comp w/ mod	+1	-1	0	0	= 0
mod w/ non	0	+1	0	-1	= 0

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