NEGATIVE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE 1984 HELMS/HUNT SENATE RACE: DID THEY WORK?

A Thesis

by

James Judd Bason

August 1985

APPROVED BY:

Daniel B. Gorman
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

Member, Thesis Committee

David Sutton
Member, Thesis Committee

David Sutton
Chairperson, Department of
Political Science

Joyce V Lawrence
Dean of the Graduate School

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James Judd Bason

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ABSTRACT

NEGATIVE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE 1984 HELMS/HUNT SENATE RACE: DID THEY WORK? (August 1985)

James Judd Bason, B. A., Appalachian State University

M. A., Appalachian State University

Thesis Chairperson: Dan B. German

The present study attempts to study the relationship between paid political advertisements and voting behavior in the 1984 U. S. Senate race in North Carolina between Jesse Helms and James B. Hunt.

Chapter 1 examines the rise of the mass media in the political process, and discusses the advent of negative campaign tactics in elections in America. It also discusses different forms of the mass media, including radio, television, and newspapers, as they affect elections in America. Chapter 1 establishes the primacy of television as the major source of political information for the American people, and discusses the implications television holds for the political process.

Chapter 2 reviews the available literature concerning the use of paid political advertisements in

campaigns, and the obvious lack of research in the area of negative political advertisements in the election process.

Chapter 3 presents a study designed to examine the effects of negative political advertisements in the 1984 Helms/Hunt Senate race in North Carolina. A state-wide representative phone survey of registered North Carolina voters was conducted to see if negative political advertisements had an effect on voting behavior in that election, and the results of that survey are presented, along with the procedures used to conduct the survey.

Chapter 4 contains the implications of the findings, namely that a significant portion of North Carolina voters were influenced by negative political advertisements, and that both candidates were hurt by the use of negative political advertisements, turning voters off from voting for either candidate. Chapter 4 also discusses the problems posed by negative political advertisements, and suggests possible solutions to these problems.

The conclusions speak to the important consequences of the mass media, negative political advertising in the American electoral process, urging further research.

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The list of persons who provided assistance to me during the course of this project is much too numerous to list individually, but several people deserve special mention. First, I must acknowledge the encouragement, support, and input of Mr. Daniel Dunlop, Dr. Dan German, and Dr. David Sutton, who all provided assistance in the completion of this project. Mr. Dunlop warrants special mention, due to his helpful insight in the early stages of the project, as well as many hours manning the phones during the survey period. Likewise, Dr. German pointed me in the right direction, and his suggestions were instrumental in the planning stages of the project. Thanks must also be extended to the Department of Political Science at Appalachian State University, who provided facilities for our polling center, the Cratis D. Williams Graduate School, who provided financial assistance and encouragement, and Dr. Joel Thompson, who provided aid in statistical analysis.

In addition, Dr. Roger Lowery of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington must be thanked for supplying the computer generated phone listing used to

conduct the survey. Finally, thanks goes to the student interviewers who devoted their time and interest to the project, without pay, and without whom this undertaking would not have been possible. Many others helped throughout the course of this project, but space does not permit enumeration of all who aided us in one way or another.

Finally, the content and conclusions of this thesis, while influenced by many, are the author's alone. Any errors, and all contained within, must be attributed to him solely, as he is responsible for the work therein, and must take the blame for any and all criticism of it, if there is any.

DEDICATION PAGE

The completion of this project is dedicated to my mother, Violet J. Chance, and my father, Earl G. Bason, who made possible my collegiate education, and ultimately this project. They were responsible for the author and all he is, and the upbringing and moral character they provided is responsible for all of the accomplishments, past, present, and future, that I, James J. Bason, am or will be, a part of.

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INTRODUCTION

Negative campaign tactics in American elections are hardly new, and although in recent years they seem to have become more pronounced, they have existed since the beginnings of the American political system. Smear tactics, name calling, and the dishonoring of opponents' personal character have long been present within the American electoral system, at the national, state, and local levels. Candidates for political office have used negative campaign tactics in varying degrees, and with varied success, and will likely continue to do so in the future. When a candidate for political office feels that he (or she) can gain an advantage over an opponent through the use of negative campaign tactics, the temptation to use these kinds of tactics is almost invariably too great to ignore.

Throughout the political history of the United States, candidates for political office have seen fit to make their opponent look bad to the voters, through rumors, deception, falsehoods, or any other means available, and in this same period of time, the American

public has decried these tactics as unfair or underhanded; yet they continue.

In the early political history of America, negative campaign tactics were transmitted to voters mainly by word of mouth, or in some cases, through newspapers, pamphlets, or other publications. Later, with the advent of radio, candidates found another method capable of reaching American voters. Finally, in the 1950's, the era of television began, and although it took several years for political candidates to realize its potential as a campaign tool, such is no longer the case.

The first use of negative campaign tactics through television probably occurred in the 1964 Presidential election between Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson, with the broadcast of the now infamous "daisy girl" commercial. In the commercial, broadcast by Johnson, a young girl was shown contentedly picking the petals off of a daisy. As the screen changed, the now familiar orange and red mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion appeared. The narrative in the commercial then implied that if Barry Goldwater were elected, the commercial could become reality, and urged voters to vote for Lyndon Johnson in the 1964 Presidential election. The commercial was only aired once, after which a deluge of

outrage poured in to the television networks, newspapers, and to Lyndon Johnson. But the effect on the Goldwater campaign seemed enormous, and Johnson eventually won the election and the office of the Presidency. It would be pretentious indeed to suggest that this one commercial won the election for Johnson, but it did do one thing. It signaled the beginning of the age of television and negative political commercials in American elections, and since that time, the effect of television on the American electoral system has been enormous.

The 1980's have been particularly relevant with regard to television. Candidates have found television, as well as other forms of the mass media, to be an effective, albeit expensive, way to reach the American electorate, transmit issue positions, convey images of personality and character, and increase name recognition among voters. Indeed, television, and the mass media in general, have become a major determinant of the political fortunes of hopeful candidates, and for Senatorial and Presidential candidates, media exposure has become a staple no serious candidate can be without. (In House races, and local elections, it is possible to survive a campaign without the use of television and the

mass media, but in higher level races, candidates must have the mass media to wage a successful election bid.)

The use of television as a campaign tool is not an inherent evil, and can be a benefit to the electoral process. Television can be used as a vehicle for increasing name recognition, conveying positions on issues, and supplying information to voters, and these are legitimate and worthy uses, providing voters a means of gathering information needed to make an intelligent voting decision.

Television today though, is all too often used by political candidates for other purposes, purposes which do not benefit the American electoral system, purposes which are in fact, detrimental to the functioning of our political system, namely, negative political advertisements. During the 1984 election season, voters were bombarded by messages from candidates, and frequently these messages were designed to tear down the opponent, assault his or her character, and persuade through deception.

The race for United States Senator from North Carolina between incumbent Jesse Helms (R), and Governor James B. Hunt (D), was particularly relevant in this respect. The campaign, which saw the broadcasting of paid political advertisements over a

year and a half before the general election, saw a multitude of negative political advertisements, by both candidates, and by the time the election was over, the voters of North Carolina were virtually punch drunk from negative political advertisements. The two candidates spent a combined total of over 20 million dollars on their election efforts, with the majority of campaign expenditures being spent on some form of mass media, with television drawing the lion's share. The largest portion of these commercials were grounded in negativism, and did little to inform the voters on the qualifications of the candidates. Rather, they caused both candidates to look bad in the eyes of the North Carolina electorate, and the nation as a whole.

The North Carolina Senate race gained national prominence and was touted by many as a crucial national race, which would have far reaching implications for the nation as a whole. The national news media followed the race closely, and it was not uncommon to see reports on the race on all of the major networks, national news magazines, and major newspapers. In addition, the North Carolina media followed the race closely, as did the voters of North Carolina. The North Carolina Senate race proved to be one of the most memorable and hotly contested races in recent North Carolina political

history, and by the time the campaign ended, the voters of North Carolina were thoroughly disgusted with the tactics and behavior used by both candidates.

Beneath the most obvious outcome of the election, the election of North Carolina's United States Senator, were several important implications for future elections, raising questions about the utility of our present electoral system. Among these, the emergence of negative political advertising as a campaign technique, the enormous cost of the election, the costs associated with running for political office, and the influence of PACs on the election process itself.

A plethora of research, in the disciplines of both political science and communications, has been conducted in the past 30 years concerning the mass media as they affect the political system. Hundreds of studies have examined the relationship between newspapers, radio, television, magazines, and even caricatures, as they affect politics. The studies have covered virtually every aspect of the mass media as they affect politics, yet one area has been totally neglected, namely, that of negative political advertisements.

One objective of this work is to begin to remedy the shortfall in research in the area of negative

political advertisements. A second objective is to explore the relationship between the mass media (particularly television), and politics, and to shed new light on a neglected area of political science and communications research. Finally, the study examines the relationship between paid political advertisements and the American electoral system, their effects on the voter, and their consequences for the political system as a whole. The major part of this project will be concerned with television, but parts will be concerned with newspapers, radio, and other mass media.

Specifically, I will examine negative political advertisements in the 1984 United States Senate race in North Carolina between Jesse Helms and Jim Hunt, and determine whether these ads were effective ways of changing or reinforcing voter intentions, and actual voting behavior in that campaign. Previous research suggests that political ads are largely a reinforcer, and have little effect in changing voters' minds about who they will vote for, but rather serve to reinforce previous decisions that the voter has already made before the political ads are seen. From earlier research findings, we hypothesize that negative ads had little effect in changing voters' minds about their choice for a North Carolina United State Senate

candidate, and possibly alienated some voters from voting for either candidate. We hope to show that political candidates would best be advised to spend campaign funds on more beneficial purposes than negative political ads. In our conclusions, we will pose possible changes which could prove beneficial to the present electoral system.

Although the research is limited to a single Senate race in one state, additional research of a similar nature in other states, local elections, and at the national level, could provide substantial weight to the conclusions, spurring changes in present campaign finance and election laws, benefiting the political system in general, and allowing television to be used as a legitimate campaign tool.

CHAPTER 1

THE MASS MEDIA AND AMERICAN POLITICS

The mass media, in all its forms, pervades the very fabric of our American political system. The mass media have transformed the political landscape of America, with television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and other mediums all providing fuel for the fire. The ways in which the mass media affects politics in this country are many, and are often hard to observe to the unassuming eye. Each form of the mass media adds its own ingredient to the fabric of the political system, and for better or worse, the mass media are here to stay.

Before the use of television became widespread, Americans relied on other means to keep abreast of the political world around them. Radio was the dominant form of information for many, and before radio, newspapers were the staple of American political information. Even before newspapers, as we know them, the penny press transmitted information to Americans concerning politics, and before that, word of mouth

communication transmitted political information among the American public.

As each new technology was developed, Americans found newer, and presumably better, sources of political information. With each new technology, Americans found increased availability of political information, and were presented with a number of alternatives as to where they received their political information. As we progressed throughout the political history of this country, Americans were continuously given a greater variety of choice in selecting political information. Not only did the mass media become the dominant source of political information, the mass media also became the tool of those who would use it to persuade; the government, politicians, and the mass media itself each began to realize the potential of the mass media as a tool for conveying images, opinions, and messages to the rest of the American public. The government sought to use the mass media to bolster its own image, marshall support for its policies, and convince the public of the rightness of its cause. Politicians saw the potential for using the mass media as a campaign tool, as a tool of public relations, and as an image builder. And the mass media itself, found the power to become important politically, to set the

important political issues of the day, and to become the legitimate source of political information to the American people.

From the very beginnings of the mass media, researchers, scholars, and writers have sought to understand just what impact the mass media plays in the political atmosphere of America. Studies and research have been conducted on virtually every aspect of the mass media, and literally hundreds of books, studies, and other scholarly endeavors have examined the relationship of the mass media, both as they affect politics, and as they affect the American people in general.

Most certainly, television has eclipsed all other forms of the mass media as the people's choice for political information in America. In a relatively short thirty years, television has changed the way Americans view politics, and the world in general, and some of the available statistics concerning the use of television are indeed startling.

> Television consumes the second largest amount of time in life next to sleeping, and by age six, many children have been exposed to 3000 to 4000 hours of television, and by high school graduation, from 15,000 to 20,000 hours of television programming.[1]

> The average American, we are told, watches 1200 hours of television per year and spends but 5 hours per year reading books. This

> means we watch about 4 hours a day and spend almost as much time viewing in a day as we spend reading in a year.[2]
>
> According to Roper Organization polls from 1961 to 1980, the mass media audience found television news to be the most credible among the four major media. In 1980, television was picked as the most believable by 51 percent, newspapers by 22 percent, magazines by 9 percent, and radio by 8 percent of those surveyed.[3]

Despite the overwhelming choice of television as the most credible source of information, newspapers and radio have been demonstrated to be a far superior source of information politically. According to Clarke and Fredin, "findings underscore the superiority of newspapers as agents of information to help people identify assets and liabilities of political contenders."[4]

The success of television as a purveyor of political information is readily understandable. Television is a passive medium, one which requires little effort on the part of the viewer. Unlike newspapers, television requires no sustained activity, save watching, and for an America that is increasingly less active, television is the legitimate choice. No reading, no action, no work is required.

The visual element of television also enhances its favored use. As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, and this could certainly be said to be

true for television. Americans like to watch, as well as listen to incoming information, and pictures accompanying the audio provide viewers with a visual account of the information they receive, and a frame of reference to put the information into perspective.

The sheer availability of television also serves to make it the first choice of Americans for political information.

> Statistics compiled through 1974 show that 97 percent of the homes in the United States have at least one television receiver (almost half having two or more), with the average American household spending six hours every day in front of the television screen.[5]

Television's mass character allows it to reach virtually every American, at almost a moment's glance. Although radio, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of the mass media are readily available, they all require action on the part of the receiver, limiting the number of Americans who rely on them as a source of information.

Finally, television has the ability to bring political situations and realities to our living rooms, providing a concrete observable phenomena, even though the action or reality may in fact be thousands of miles away. Television has the capability of bringing world events into our backyards, transforming the vastness of

the world into local phenomena, what McCluhan termed the global village.

Television, and its eminence as the major mass media instrument, has some very real consequences for the political system in general. First, the majority of American people get the largest part of their political information from television news, which tends to oversimplify events, stress the exciting and sensational, and provide news in short, concise snippets of information, in which viewers obtain little real substantive information.

Television news, and newspapers also, tend to be grounded in negativism, and driven by the profit motive, are more concerned with advertising dollars than sound, substantive political information. Television tends to shy away from detailed explanations of complex political situations, partly out of fear of losing viewers who won't stay interested with such complexity, and partly due to its own inability to correctly analyze such situations.

Second, television, and other mass media in general, have an enormous inherent power in setting the tone of national politics in this country, and to a large extent, determining for us what the important issues of the day will be.

> The media are the major primary source of national political information; for most, mass media provide the best--and only--easily available approximation of ever-changing political realities.[6]

As the mass media are for many the major source of political information, they have enormous power to set the national agenda, and to dictate to us the major issues. The idea of agenda-setting by the mass media is supported through a number of studies conducted on the subject. McComb and Shaw found that Chapel Hill, North Carolina voters in the 1968 Presidential election were most likely to identify as issues of the campaign, issues which had been stressed by agents of the mass media.[7] Findings of other studies point in this same direction, namely, that the mass media exert a tremendous influence on what Americans will think about politically on a given day.

> The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about.[8]

The American public is literally at the mercy of the mass media for the information about the political world they receive, and as such, must accept the information they receive with no reservations. Interpersonal contacts are virtually the only alternate source of information available to American citizens,

and often this information is influenced by the mass media initially.

The mass media also have consequences for the electoral system in America. The mass media have a direct impact on how political campaigns are run, and how American voters view elections.

First, political parties have suffered and grown weaker due to the increased importance of the mass media. The mass media seems to have gained prominence in proportion to the lessening of power of political parties. Traditionally, candidates running for political office had relied on the political party for organizational strength and support, and without the support of the party, election was extremely difficult. With the rise of the mass media though, they have replaced the political party as the candidate's main source of campaign strength.

> Whereas once candidates for political office had to rely on mustering organizational strength to communicate with voters, it is now increasingly possible for them to establish direct contact through the media.9

Candidates are able to bypass the use of the political party through vigorous media campaigns, including political advertising, direct mail, and news coverage. By utilizing these means, candidates are able to reach voters with various messages, and are not beholden to

various elements within the party. Candidates can run their campaigns independently of the party, stressing the issues and concerns they feel are important, and do not have to take into consideration the concerns of the party.

Indeed, it is now often the case that candidates do not want to be associated with their own political party, and prefer to keep a substantial distance from the policies and platforms of the party.

> Once a major theme of most campaigns was the candidate's party affiliation, while now candidates often run campaigns which de-emphasize party ties wherever possible.[10]

In the elections of 1984, several election bids followed this pattern. In North Carolina, the Hunt campaign sought to distance itself from the national Democratic party, and the Mondale/Ferraro campaign, which was tagged as being extremely liberal. North Carolina is largely a conservative state, even as Democrats go, and Hunt strategists did not want to be labeled ultra-liberal. As a result, Hunt distanced himself from Mondale, unlike Helms, who used his association with Reagan in his campaign to his benefit. So for untold reasons, candidates everywhere are deemphasizing party ties, and using the mass media as a replacement for functions previously fulfilled by the political party.

Another way candidates are increasingly trying to reach voters is through direct mail. By building computer lists of potential supporters, and flooding them with direct mail appeals, candidates can facilitate fund-raising, transmit issue positions, and elicit persuasive material.

Republican candidates seem to have taken the lead in direct mail activities, raising millions of dollars in campaign contributions over the past ten years. Democratic candidates are seeing the light though, and are trying to develop their own direct mail operations, but as yet, they are still far behind the Republicans. Certainly one of the most capable at direct mail is Richard Vigurie, a direct mail consultant serving political campaigns, mostly Republican ones.

> The Vigurie operation is typical of the growing use of the computer as an instrument of political campaigning. The computer has enormous potential for 'targeting' potential supporters and then reaching them with carefully tailored appeals.[11]

Direct mail is certain to be one of the most effective ways to reach potential voters in future elections.

One of the most important consequences of the increased power and use of the mass media in elections is the phenomenal increase in the cost of running a political campaign. The rise in campaign costs parallels the increased use of political advertising

> Between January, 1981, and August 2 of this year, congressional office-seekers raised more than $200 million for this year's primary and general elections, according to the Federal Elections Commission (FEC). By election day, the total will probably far exceed the $240 million congressional candidates spent during the 1980 elections.[13]

Although we do not have available statistics, it is safe to assume that the 1984 figures far surpass those of the 1980 elections. It is also safe to assume that the total dollar amount for each successive election will also increase, unless controls are placed on campaign spending by the Congress, or FEC.

To support the financial health of a political campaign, candidates are increasingly soliciting the help of Political Action Committees, organizations which raise large sums of money to aid political candidates. In return for PAC contributions, candidates stress issues important to the PAC, vote favorably on legislation which involves the PAC, and give the PAC a voice in the United States Congress or nation. PAC contributions are today a major force in the financing of political campaigns, at all levels. Writing in a 1982 Mother Jones article, Jonathan King commented:

> Once again, political action committees - particularly business PACs - dominate the funding. Common Cause, the citizen's lobby, estimates that more than 3,000 PACs now greasing the campaign trail will pour about $80 million into this year's congressional contests.[14]

The 1984 election figures are undoubtedly much higher, and will continue to be so in future elections.

To many, the rapidly growing increase in PACs signals a danger for the American electoral system as a whole.

> PACs threaten to further displace the party organizations as a useful tool for political candidates. Also PAC money is interested money and therefore bound to have a major influence on how campaigns are conducted.[15]

The idea is that if political candidates accept large sums of money from PACs, they will somehow owe them a return on an investment, namely influence once that candidate is elected. In addition, PACs are able to lend support to candidates in ways unregulated by present campaign finance laws, such as independent expenditures which are supposedly unrelated to any specific campaign. Through these means, PACs have an increasing power, and largely one held unaccountable by the voters, which enables them to influence candidates and policies.

Another criticism frequently leveled by critics of PACs is that they benefit incumbent candidates over challengers, and that they threaten to nationalize our system of campaign finance in this country.

> While these contentions may indeed hold some truth, evidence is present which suggests that the actual effect of PACs in the

> legislative and electoral process is much less than has been previously thought.[16]

Nevertheless, PACs should not be taken lightly, and further research on PACs needs to be conducted before we unequivocably say they have no influence in elections or campaigns.

PACs have been established by a number of different entities, with varying purposes, goals, and strategies, each with its own distinct make-up and financial support. PACs have been formed by single-issue interest groups, both political parties, numerous state party organizations, by interest groups based on ideological grounds, by organizations devoted to a particular candidate, and of course, by corporate entities. In the 1982 and 1984 congressional elections, PACs contributed heavily to numerous candidates, targeted defeat of candidates unsympathetic to their cause, and ran media campaigns independent of individual candidates and parties. Business PACs have surpassed other PACs as the major contributor to political campaigns, and although the benefits of such PACs are far from conclusive, they are certainly important to future political campaigns. Corporations have many ways of influencing politicians and legislators, and PACs merely represent another avenue available for securing favorable legislative outcomes.

> Prior to the 1970s, business executives contributed to politicians in an unsystematic, ad hoc manner. Traditionally, corporate executives got together and bank rolled candidates of their choice with little pressure or need to disclose the recipients of their largess. Gone are those days when the so called 'corporate bag-men' would pass out envelopes filled with cash on the 17th green of some exclusive country club. Today, computerized records of congressmen's roll-call votes and lists of potential PAC contributors have replaced the nine iron as an effective corporate political tool.[17]

The recent explosion of PACs in the last fifteen years by organizations and particularly business have been a result of attempts at campaign finance reform which began in 1971 and continued throughout the decade of the 1970s. A brief review of past and present campaign finance laws is warranted here.

The two major congressional acts concerning campaign reform in the United States were the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act, and the amendments to it added in 1974.

> Until 1971, most federal law relating to campaign finance was codified in the Corrupt Practices Act of 1925, which required disclosure of receipts and expenditures by candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives.[18]

Partly because of campaign abuses during Nixon's 1972 Presidential re-election bid, and their aftermath, now known as Watergate, and partly because of a growing concern among many that guidelines were needed in

political campaigning, the Federal Elections Campaign Act was passed.

> The new act had three major provisions: (1) It significantly tightened disclosure and reporting requirements for all candidates for Federal office as of April 7, 1972; (2) It limited the amounts of money candidates could spend on media advertising; and (3) It limited the amount a candidate and his immediate family could contribute to his own campaign.[19]

Three years later in 1974, a number of amendments were added to the 1971 law.

> The FECA amendments of 1974 probably represented the most sweeping set of campaign finance law changes ever adopted in the United States, if not in the world. The 1974 law:
> -limited the amount individuals could contribute to federal candidates to $1,000 per election (primary, general election, or runoff) and cumulative total of $25,000 per year
> -retained the 1971 limit on contributions by candidates to their own campaigns
> -limited to $1,000 the amount an individual could spend independently to influence an election (such spending is termed an 'independent expenditure')
> -limited what candidates could spend to get elected
> -amended a 1940 Hatch Act provision prohibiting contributions from federal contractors to make it clear that contractors could form PACs
> -limited PAC contributions to $5,000 per candidate per election, with no cumulative limit
> -limited expenditures by political parties on behalf of a candidate (over and above contributions) to $10,000 per candidate for the House general elections, $20,000 or two cents per eligible voter, whichever was greater in the general elections for the Senate, and two cents per voter in the

> presidential election
> -established formulas for disbursing public funds to match contributions of up to $250 for presidential candidates in prenomination contests
> -used flat grants to cover the full expenses of the conventions of the two major parties and the major presidential general election campaigns, with proportional formulas for postelection grants to qualified candidates of minor parties
> -required candidates of major parties who choose to accept flat grants for general elections to forego private financing and limit their expenditures to the amount of the grant (regulations later permitted candidates to raise money privately to pay for the cost of complying with the law)
> -created an independent, six-member, Federal Elections Commission (FEC)
> -strengthened disclosure and closed previous legal loopholes by requiring all federal candidates to establish a single central campaign committee through which all contributions and expenditures would have to be reported.[20]

Shortly after passage, many parts of the 1974 law were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in Buckley vs. Valeo, as it violated 1st amendment freedoms of expression.

> The Supreme Court decision in that case, handed down a little more than a year later on January 30, 1976, held unconstitutional the limits on campaign spending, independent expenditures, and contributions by a candidate to his or her own campaign, along with the method by which the FEC was appointed. The Court upheld disclosure, public financing, and the limits on individual, PAC, and party contributions. The Court also upheld the spending limits imposed on a candidate as a condition for accepting public financing.[21]

The Buckley decision, while striking down many of the 1974 provisions, allowed business and labor organizations to continue forming political action committees, which corporations did at an alarming rate during this period. PACs were also allowed to spend as much money as they wanted, as long as the money was spent independently of a candidate's campaign. PACs could, within the legal confines of the law, spend as much money as they wished to influence voters during an election, provided they were not directly linked to the campaign. So PACs could run political commercials favoring one candidate, or opposing another, as long as the commercial was not produced in collaboration with the candidate's campaign.

> Since Buckley vs Valeo effectively put the FEC out of business in the middle of a presidential election campaign, Congress was forced in 1976 to pass yet another set of amendments to the FECA. The 1976 law:
> -limited individual contributions to political parties to $20,000 per year and to other political committees to $5,000 per year
> -limited contributions to political parties by PACs to $15,000 per year
> -increased the amount that the Democratic and Republican Senate Campaign Committees could contribute to Senate candidates from $5,000 per election to $17,500 per year
> -limited to $50,000 the amount their own money that presidential candidates who were publicly financed could spend to support their own campaign
> -reversed an FEC ruling on PACs that appeared to allow labor and business PACs to proliferate in a way that effectively might have destroyed the PAC contribution limits.[22]

The Buckley decision effectively took the teeth out of the 1971 law and the 1974 amendments, opened the door to the rapid expansion of PACs, and made it impossible to limit spending for congressional campaigns. In 1979, a final set of amendments was added to the FECA, which were largely non-controversial and were aimed at simplifying parts of the 1974 and 1976 amendments' reporting procedures. The 1979 law,

> -reduced the maximum number of reports to be filed by House and Senate candidates
> -exempted candidates from filing disclosure statements if they do not receive or spend more than $5,000
> -permitted unlimited expenditures by state and local parties for registration and get out the vote drives for the presidential ticket (the provision was silent about volunteers, but FEC regulations say that although professionals may be used to train people to use phone banks, volunteers must do the actual telephoning)
> -raised the disclosure threshold from $100 to $200 for contributions and expenditures and from $100 to $200 for independent expenditures
> -increased from $2 million to $3 million the 1974 base, before inflation adjustments, for public funds given to major political parties for national nominating conventions
> -doubled the threshold for reporting expenditures made by volunteers on travel and home entertainment in support of a candidate (from $500 to $1,000) or political party (from $1,000 to $5,000).[23]

Clearly the most controversial facet of the campaign reforms of ten years ago, and the one which subsequently affected the elections of 1980 and 1984 was the provision allowing independent expenditures by

PACs, and by candidates themselves. Without limits on such expenditures, the costs of running for political office have sky rocketed, making running for elective office a rich man's game.

> Among the most difficult issues posing a conflict between the law and the 1st amendment during the 1980 election cycle was that of 'independent expenditures' - spending by individuals or groups for or against candidates but independently of candidate or party organization.[24]

Despite the fact that groups which spend money during an election are clearly disposed to one party or candidate, by simply declaring that they are not connected with the party or organization, they can spend unlimited funds to aid a candidate's election, or attempt to frustrate the candidacy of another.

> Independent expenditures present one of the most difficult challenges to the law. The Supreme Court, in Buckley, ruled that limits on individual expenditures were unconstitutional. The Court equated such spending with political expression guaranteed by the First amendment.[25]

As well as affecting the 1980 elections, the ruling profoundly affected the 1984 elections, and the Helms/Hunt Senate race in particular. It allowed NCPAC, the National Conservative Political Action Committee, founded by Helms, to devote huge sums of money to the candidacy of Helms, despite the fact that, to many, NCPAC was not independent of Senator Helms.

> At present, there is no ceiling on how much any individual or group can spend to support or attack a candidate as long as the campaign activity is not co-ordinated in any way with an official campaign. This means, in effect, that any person or group that wants to spend any amount of money to influence voters can find a legal way to do so.[26]

This is precisely what happened in the case of the Helms candidacy, as well as the candidacy of President Reagan.

Although attempts have been made at future campaign reform during the 1970s, they faced strong opposition in Congress, and as a result, failed to pass. Campaign law in the United States, as it now stands, allows groups or individuals to influence the outcome of congressional elections.

One final consequence of the mass media in American elections should be noted, that of the effect of newspapers and broadcast news in elections. Along with campaigning with the mass media through political commercials, candidates rely on newspapers and broadcast news to stay in the public eye, maintain public relations, and transmit issue positions. Although the fairness doctrine allows equal time for opposing political viewpoints, equal news coverage by the media is not guaranteed. Candidates use newspapers and broadcast news to supplement paid political advertisements, without the excessive cost. Candidates build their

campaigns so as to maximize favorable news coverage, and often stage non-events or staged events to help them accomplish this task. Many argue that the incumbent candidate has an unfair advantage over challengers, as incumbents' actions are almost always considered newsworthy, thereby giving them news coverage and exposure the challenger does not receive. An incumbent candidate can often call a news conference, receiving free air time in which to reach the voters with a position, while the challenger must buy air time to get his or her own views out to the public.

In addition, debates and other non-party affiliated broadcasts give candidates free exposure to the public. The excessive cost of political advertisements, and the advantage in coverage incumbents enjoy, have serious implications for our electoral system. The cost of running a successful political campaign makes public office-seeking an enterprise that only the richest can afford to endeavor, and may cause public office-seekers to possibly be not the most experienced or dedicated persons, but the ones with the largest bankroll. The attempted campaign reforms of the 1970s limited the cost-prohibitive nature of running for political office, but provisions for all save Presidential candidates accepting public funds were struck down as

unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, in effect opening the door to million dollar election campaigns.

As the situation stands, candidates seeking public office at the federal level need not even attempt an election bid, unless they are extremely wealthy, or have the support of wealthy individuals, groups, or PACs. Some of the best qualified individuals in the country are discouraged from running for political office because of the cost factor and the strength of incumbency, limiting the effectiveness of our governmental system. Despite the good intentions of the 1970 campaign reforms, their effect has been not to alleviate the problems associated with running for political office, but rather to complicate and raise the cost of running for political office.

Despite the ever-increasing cost of campaigns, specifically as it relates to the mass media and paid political advertisements, the return on media investments has yet to be proven to be greatly beneficial to candidates seeking political office. On the one hand, are efforts such as those of John Lindsay in Florida, who spent millions of dollars, only to lose disastrously in his election bid.

> Real doubts about the magic of television campaigns were raised by John Lindsay's Florida effort in the same primary. After outspending all candidates combined

> on TV spots, he was soundly beaten and became a TV 'personality' instead.[27]

Lindsay's efforts are not the only media campaign which failed to get a candidate elected, and some studies have shown that the mass media are less effective in getting out the vote than other resources available to the candidate. "During the middle of television's major growth years, Glaser reported that TV ran far behind direct mail and newspapers as the most effective medium to get out the vote."[28] On the other hand, there are also cases in which the mass media seems to have made a difference in an election.

> Howard Metzenbaum, at the outset a relatively unknown Cleveland millionaire, defeated former astronaut John Glenn in the 1970 Ohio Democratic Senatorial primary after spending about 15 times as much money for electronic media spots as Glen; multimillionaire Norton Simon, who entered the California Republican primary in 1970 against incumbent U.S. Senator George Murphy with a recognition factor close to zero, spent almost $2 million, most of it for advertising, and received 33% of the Republican vote; and that same year in Texas, a conservative Democrat insurance man, millionaire Lloyd M. Bentson Jr., defeated incumbent Senator Ralph Yarborough in the primary after an intensive Bentson campaign of political spot advertisements.[29]

In the next chapter, we will look at some of the research that has been conducted in the area of the mass media, and more specifically, in the area of paid political advertisements, and then see if the media

investment was worth the cost for Helms and Hunt in the 1984 U.S. Senate race in North Carolina.

CHAPTER 1 - FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER 2

THE EXISTING LITERATURE: PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

The available literature involving the mass media as it relates to politics in the United States is wide and varied, and by no means do we presume to review the full range of research which has been conducted on the subject. Rather, we wish to review relevant research which deals with the mass media, and has an influence on the role of paid political advertising in the American electoral system. Research concerning the mass media in the American electoral system dates back over forty years, and in the recent future has flourished, both in the area of political advertising, and concerning the political system in general.

Among the early studies which sought to examine the relationship between the media and elections were those of Lazarfield, Berelson, and Gaudet[30]; Berelson, Lazarfield, and McPhee[31]; and Lang and Lang[32]. These studies generally sought to explain the full range of mass media effects on elections in America, and were not limited to one specific area of mass media research.

Lazarfield, Berelson, and Gaudet undertook a systematic study of the effects of the mass media in the 1940 Presidential election, and Berelson, Lazarfield, and McPhee, in 1954, also examined mass media effects in Presidential elections. The results of these early studies of voting behavior and mass media effects all produced similar conclusions; that the effect of the mass media in the electoral process was minimal. These studies, along with others which replicated initial findings, provided evidence that supported the body of literature which came to be associated with the limited effects model. The limited effects model said that the actual effect of the mass media in the electoral process was minimal, and that while the mass media did have consequences for the electoral system, these effects were far less important than traditional indicators of voting behavior such as party identification, level of education, and socio-economic status.

> For example, Lazarfield found that the effects of the media were very limited. The media only reach interested people and these people were already committed. The study further concluded that little attitude change occurred during the campaign; the media in general activated latent predispositions.[33]

The conclusions reached by Lazarfield, although not dealing specifically with television, were widely

accepted by the research community, and other researchers replicated Lazarfield's conclusions in numerous other studies. In the 1950s and 1960s, the limited effects model was recognized by most as the dominant paradigm concerning the effects of the mass media in elections.

Closely related to the limited effects model was the idea of selective perception, the idea that users of the mass media were able to expose themselves to media messages selectively, fitting them to already held beliefs or predispositions. Rather than change attitudes and voting behavior, the mass media was thought to be mainly a reinforcer, and the electorate used the mass media to support their own beliefs about politics. Klapper, in his exhaustive examination of the effects of mass communication wrote:

> The existing opinions and interests of people, or more generally, their predispositions, have been shown profoundly to influence their behavior vis-a-vis mass communications and the effects which such communications are likely to have upon them. By and large, people tend to expose themselves to those mass communications which are in accord with their existing attitudes and interests. Consciously or unconsciously, they avoid communications of opposite hue. In the event of their being nevertheless exposed to unsympathathetic material, they often seem not to perceive it, or to recast it, or interpret it to fit their existing views, or to forget more readily than they forget sympathetic material.[34]

People, according to the idea of selective perception, can receive a media message, and read into that message a meaning which is consistent with their previously held beliefs, and read out of that message any meaning which contradicts their own notions or predispositions. Patterson and McClure reported similar findings in 1972 in their examination of the Presidential election that year.

> Not being political eunuchs, they (the voters) see candidates through their political desires. The candidate who shares their biases gains stature. His image improves. The candidate who opposes the biases loses stature, and his image deteriorates.[35]

The early studies of voting behavior and media effects generally concluded that the mass media's effects were minimal, but could increase awareness and political knowledge during an election, still exerting a limited effect on the electoral process.

As the mass media began to grow in importance, theories about its increased importance also became more prevalent, but little evidence was presented to support the notion of a great mass media impact in elections.

One of the few studies which cited the mass media as being important in the electoral process was that of Palda[36], who examined the effects of mass media in 108 electoral districts in Quebec and Manitoba in 1966 and

1970, and found the mass media to be an important determinant of voting behavior.

> Palda reports that in 1966 'advertising' was the second most important variable behind 'other expenses' in affecting voting behavior; in 1970 it was third most important behind 'other expenses' and 'party incumbency'. In both cases advertising had a significant positive affect on behavior such that each incremental dollar spent on advertising returned one-third of a vote for that candidate.[37]

Palda's study was a departure from the conclusions of the limited effects model, and one of the only studies which was in conflict with earlier research.

The 1970s saw further interest in the effects of the mass media and political advertising on voting behavior. Much of the concern stemmed from the increasing use of televised political advertisements, and the rise in costs associated with this type of political campaigning. Many political observers felt that campaigns were becoming much too costly, largely because of use of the mass media, and that candidates were selling out to special interests in order to pay for advertising costs. Also of concern was the notion of the mass media manipulating voters through political advertising, polls, and projections on the outcome of elections by the mass media.

> Underpinning the undue direct influence doctrine is the assumption that simple exposure to the results of political

> broadcasts via television results in direct and immediate effects among the political choices of those who are victims to such fare. In the vernacular that has grown up around the allegations the doctrine of undue direct influence is referred to as the 'bandwagon effect'. With this phrase it is argued that the electorate, always hungry to be identified with a winning candidate, will eagerly endorse the candidate or candidates who appear to be winners, regardless of all other factors that may operate in the ordinary vote decision-making process.[38]

Despite the fears of such political pundits, study after study showed that these "bandwagon effects" were largely overstated. Crespi and Mendelson[39] concluded that the "bandwagon effect" was indeed a myth, unsubstantiated by the studies that examined these effects.

Probably one of the best known and most widely read studies of the impact of the mass media in elections produced during the 1970s was that of Patterson and McClure in their book, The Unseeing Eye.[40] The Unseeing Eye examined the use of the mass media in the 1972 Presidential election, including television and the print media, to determine the impact of the mass media overall. Patterson and McClure wanted to see if the impact of the mass media was significant, or if its impact was largely overstated. In addition to traditional survey methods, they undertook content analysis to determine the content of political

advertisements and newspapers, and compared both types of media in relation to the 1972 Presidential election. Patterson and McClure concluded that while the mass media indeed was a potent force in elections, its actual impact was overstated.

> Symbolic manipulation through televised political advertising simply does not work. Perhaps the overuse of symbols and stereotypes in product advertising has built up an immunity in the television audience. Perhaps the symbols and postures used in political advertising are such patently obvious attempts at manipulation that they appear more ridiculous than reliable. Whatever the precise reason, television viewers effectively protect themselves from manipulation by staged imagery.[41]

Patterson and McClure's study revealed other important insights into the mass media in general in elections. They were not at all kind to network television and its coverage of electoral politics, and criticized the networks for their tendency to center coverage on the flashy, exciting, and sensational aspects of campaigns, at the expense of substantive information on candidate qualifications and issue positions.

> Television news emphasized superficial pictures of the candidates in action. About 60% of the time that a presidential candidate was shown on camera during the 1972 general election, he was pictured in a crowd scene. Less than 10% of the time was the candidate alone, except for a reporter. In the visual world of network news, the candidate naked before the camera is no match for the candidates surrounded by a chanting jostling mob.[42]

Patterson and McClure found that televised political commercials actually contained more information content about the candidates than an entire network newscast, and that political commercials were superior to network news in providing voters with information needed to assess candidates' qualifications and stands on issues.

> A comparison with network news' coverage of the same issues helps put the advertising minutes into perspective. Of the twelve policies, each received more general coverage through advertising time than through evening news time.[43]

Patterson and McClure's findings generally agreed with the limited effects model, that the impact of the mass media in elections was generally overemphasized, but that political advertising could prove beneficial in transmitting information about candidates' positions and qualifications, something that network news was largely deficient in. One of the reasons the impact of the mass media and political commercials were limited in affecting voting behavior, according to Patterson and McClure, was that the majority of people reached by political commercials were already knowledgeable about politics through other forms of the mass media. In The Unseeing Eye, they wrote:

> People who follow presidential politics closely through the news media are virtually untouchable. Not only do the news media seldom tell them anything new, but if they do absorb anything, it is overwhelmed by the

> other things they already know. The new tidbit of information simply becomes one of many factors that may affect their final vote choice. For those people, advertising may whet their appetite for election exposure; it may be a source of enjoyment or an object of derision, but it is not their basic source of vote guidance.[44]

Patterson and McClure did acknowledge that the mass media have important consequences for the electorate, as an information source and as an agenda-setter, but not as a determinant of voting behavior. The impact of the mass media was present, but in setting the issues of the campaign, purveying information to voters, and increasing awareness of the election, but not in affecting voters' final vote choices. The mass media were able to stress certain issues, and to set the general tone of the election.

> By covering certain news events, by simply giving them space, the media signals the importance of these events to the citizenry. By not reporting other activities, the media hides portions of reality from everyone but the few people directly affected.[45]

The media, according to Patterson and McClure, could affect what people felt was important about the election, but in the final analysis, had little success in determining who a person would vote for.

> All the careful image planning - the coaching, the camera work, the calculated plea - counts for nothing. Just as with network news appearances, people's feeling about the candidate's politics - his party, past actions, and future policies - far outweigh the influence of televised commercials.[46]

Several other studies examined the effects of political advertising during the 1970s, with varied results and conclusions. Of these studies, several dealt with elections in lower level races. Kaid, in a 1972 study of an Illinois State Senate campaign, found that although issue information was communicated through political advertising, political ads were generally not that effective, and had little impact on voter decisions.[47] Atkin, Bowen, Nayman, and Sheinkoff examined televised political advertisements in a 1970 campaign for Governor in Wisconsin, and Colorado[48], and found that although there was impact on voting behavior, it was minimal, and mainly reinforced previous notions of voters. They found though, that political advertisements, if shown with a high degree of frequency, could work to thwart selective perception.

> The spot ad tends to overcome the barrier of predispositional selectivity. Sheer availability overwhelmed any partisan defenses at the exposure level of message repitition, and only a small minority of voters gave close attention to the favored candidate's ads or selectively avoided the opposition candidate's ads.[49]

They also concluded that, "saturation advertising strategies oriented toward high frequency of exposure may not be the most effective means of securing an attentive and responsive audience."[50]

Donahue conducted a study concerning political commercials in the 1972 Presidential election, and found that people appear to read information into political ads that is not actually there[51], contradicting the findings of Atkin, et.al. Donahue looked at ten issues of importance in the election, and interviewed respondents as to the predispositions toward political commercials on television. Donahue wrote:

> A major implication of these findings seems to be that favorably disposed voters project more of their own beliefs into political commercials for preferred candidates on issues which they consider important.[52]

Donahue's conclusions seem to be the exact opposite of those reached by Atkin, et.al., that televised political commercials overcome selective perception.

Hofstetter and Russ conducted personal interviews with 108 respondents during the 1972 presidential election to determine if last-minute media campaigns were effective in helping candidates win elections.[53] They concluded that,

> Last minute television makes a difference. The differences are not as large as anticipated according to prevalent views of the role and influences of mass media in society. But the differences are present, and appear to be persistent. The findings clearly support an accelerated finish strategy of campaigning in comparison to a flat-buy strategy, in the absence of overwhelmingly contrary consideration.[54]

Joslyn, using data collected from 1970, 1972, and 1974 Congressional and Senatorial races, provided evidence that, through the use of political advertising, candidates could encourage party defections. Joslyn wrote:

> Current patterns of use of the broadcast media by candidates and citizens has altered the flow of information between campaigner and citizen in such a way that voters are much more likely to be exposed to campaign communication that contradicts their partison predispositions than they were two decades ago. For the political candidate, this suggests that a means is now available through which partison defections may be encouraged and the lot of the underdog improved.[55]

Joslyn argues that the use of the mass media in elections have profoundly changed the way candidates go about campaigning, and have increased the likelihood that money, rather than party loyalty, will be the determinant of who runs in an election. Joslyn also argues that the spot ad, or short televised political commercial, seems to be the logical choice for candidates running for political office. Joslyn analyzed over 150 spot ads from varying campaigns and candidates in an attempt to determine the content of political spot ads. Televised spot ads allow the candidate to control the information voters receive, unlike newspapers and network news, in which the candidate has no control over the information transmitted.

> Spot ads may be used to communicate with a large proportion of most large constituencies, they may be targeted to particular demographic or attitudinal groups and they are one of the few forms of communication over which the candidate has almost complete control.[56]

Joslyn concurred with Patterson and McClure that political commercials can be a better source of information than many thought. In comparing political commercials with other forms of campaign communication, Joslyn concluded:

> In terms of information about candidates characteristics or qualities, almost half of the spot ads analyzed here contained that type of information compared with 6% of network news coverage, 13% of Time and Newsweek coverage, and 7% of the LA Times and Erie Times coverage of the 1976 Presidential election campaign.[57]

In a study conducted by Becker and Doolittle using college students in two mass communications classes[58], it was found that repetitive political ads, after a certain point, tended to decrease positive evaluations of candidates. As voters are exposed to ads repeatedly, positive evaluation increases, but at some point, repetition begins to negatively affect evaluation about candidates. The affective evaluation approximates a U-shaped curve, with moderate exposure to ads increasing positive evaluation, until at some point of repetition, evaluation begins to turn downward, where negative evaluation occurs.

Atkin and Heald, in a study of a 1979 Michigan Congressional campaign[59], examined the effects of political advertising on the electorate through a random telephone sample of 323 voters. They concluded:

> The evidence suggests that a well-designed and well financed political advertising campaign in the broadcast media can serve to (1) increase the electorate's level of knowledge about the candidate and his favored issue position, (2) elevate emphasized issues and attributes high on the voter's agenda of decisional criteria, (3) stimulate the electorate's interest in the campaign, (4) produce more positive affect toward the candidate as a person, and (5) intensify polarization of evaluation of the candidate.[60]

More recently, German and Thompson, in a study of college students from three colleges in different parts of the country in 1982, found that, "the mass media have little impact changing the political attitudes of individual voters."[61] German and Thompson did find that the mass media affected the political knowledge of college students and that the students surveyed felt television to be the most credible source of information of all media mediums.[62]

One final study, by Rothschild[63], warrants attention here. Rothschild studied political advertising to determine if it impacted voting behavior. Rothschild used an involvement model to ascertain impact of the mass media, in which four possible states could occur.

> There are at least 4 states of the world with which one should be concerned with in evaluating the effects of advertising on voting behavior: high or low level elections, and high or low levels of expenditures.[64]

Rothschild felt that a different approach to examining advertising effects should be taken, one which used the involvement model to determine voting behavior.

> The involvement model postulates that neither all voters, nor all voting situations are alike. Highly involved voters will not be greatly affected by a stream of messages, because they will put up perceptual defenses either to evaluate or screen out these messages. Less involved voters will be more easily influenced by a stream of messages, because they may be more concerned with the behavior itself than developing a stand. The involvement model seems intuitively plausible and relates directly to the issue of political advertising effects. If the model were valid, it would support the findings of the limited effects model previously discussed, for both models predict that the media will have little impact in a high level (involving) race such as the Presidential race. The involvement model additionally predicts positive effects for low level (involving) races such as a state assembly race, whereas the limited effects model makes the same limited prediction for all races, even though little data have been collected in the lower level races.[65]

Although Rothschild may be correct that the impact of political advertising in the electoral system should be approached through the involvement model, it seems that the occurrence of large media expenditures in low level races is highly unlikely. Most often, high media

expenditures are associated with higher level, more involving election campaigns, such as Congressional, Senatorial, or Presidential elections. Less involving, lower level races are not likely to incur high media expenditures, so few campaigns would be considered likely candidates for high impact media effects, as Rothschild suggests. Therefore, Rothschild's paradigm hardly seems fruitful to mass media and political advertising research.

Conspicuously absent from all of the research done on political advertising effects or impact are studies on the effects of negative political advertising. Although negative political advertising has been present almost from the beginnings of televised political advertisements, no systematic study of their impact on voting behavior, that we are aware of, has been conducted.[66]

In a study of basically limited scope, German examined the impact of negative political advertisements in the 1984 Helms/Hunt U.S. Senate race in North Carolina in an unpublished study. German administered a phone survey to a randomly selected sample of college students at Appalachian State University before the election was held. German found that negative political ads has a limited effect in

changing voter's minds about who they voted for in the election, and tended to turn the voters off from voting for either candidate. The German study, limited to college students at one university, was not generalizable to the state or nation, but nevertheless was the only study we came in contact with dealing specifically with negative political advertisements in elections. This study is an attempt to replicate the German study on a state-wide basis.

In the next chapter we will examine the 1984 Helms/ Hunt U.S. Senate race in North Carolina. We hope to remedy the relative shortfall of available research on the subject, and determine whether negative political advertisements in that race affected voting behavior. It might be argued that all political commercials dealing with one's opponent, and not the candidate himself, could be called negative ads, but the Helms/ Hunt Senate campaign was particularly relevant, as both of the candidates tried to disgrace the other candidate in the eyes of the voters. Accusations flew daily, both in the print and broadcast media, and in political advertisements aired by the candidates, as well as by the national news media, and the campaign was a frequent news story. It is in this vein that we studied negative ads in the campaign.

CHAPTER 2 - FOOTNOTES

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[40]Patterson and McClure, p. 65.

[41]Ibid., pp. 115-116.

[42]Ibid., p. 31.

[43]Ibid., p. 104.

[44]Ibid., p. 130.

[45]Ibid., p. 75.

[46]Ibid., p. 111.

[47]Lynda Lee Kaid, "Measures of Political Advertising", Journal of Advertising Research, v. 16 n. 5, 1976, pp. 49-53.

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[51]Thomas Donahue, "Impact of Viewer Predispositions of Political TV Commercials", Journal of Broadcasting, v. 18 n. 1 (Winter 1973-74), pp. 3-15.

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[55]Richard A. Joslyn, "The Impact of Campaign Spot Advertising on Voting Defections", Human Communications Research, v. 7 n. 4 (Summer 1981), p. 349.

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[58]Lee B. Becker and John C. Doolittle, "How Repetion Affects Evaluations of and Information Seeking About Candidates", Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1975, pp. 611-617, v. 52.

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[61]"Media Don't Shape Voters, Study Says", Winston-Salem Journal, Winston-Salem, N.C., February 4, 1984, p. 6.

[62]"Media Use in American Politics: Questioning a Modern Myth", Research News, Appalachian State University, v. 3 n. 1, (Fall 1984), pp. 5-7.

[63]Michael L. Rothschild, "Political Advertising: A Neglected Policy Issue in Marketing", Journal of Marketing Research, v. 15, February 1978, pp. 58-71.

[64]Ibid., p. 59.

[65]Ibid., p. 61.

[66]Several books which we became aware of, but were not able to include contain information on negative political advertisements, but are not systematic studies. For example, see Jack Wigermond and Jules Witcover, Wake Us Up When Its Over, MacMillan, 1985; Wayne Greenhall, W.W. Moreaux, Elephants in the Cotton Field, 1984; William D. Synder, The Helms-Hunt Senate Race, 1984, UNC Press, 1984.

CHAPTER 3

THE STUDY:

NEGATIVE POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE 1984 HELMS/HUNT SENATE RACE

As mentioned earlier, the 1984 U.S. Senate race in North Carolina between Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. and incumbent Jesse Helms was indeed one of the most memorable in recent North Carolina political history. The race attracted nationwide attention in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Time, Newsweek, the Chicago Tribune, all of the major television networks, and several smaller newspapers around the country. The race was seen as a key national race to many political observers, in an election year in which Republicans were wondering aloud whether they would maintain a majority in the Senate after the 1984 Senatorial elections.

Media advertising through television began over a year and a half before the general election, and by the time the campaign was over, the candidates had spent a combined total of over $20 million, making it the most

expensive Senatorial election in history. Helms spent $12 million alone, giving him the dubious distinction of the only Senate candidate ever to spend such an amount on an election campaign. Helms also outspent Hunt by a margin of almost $4 million, with Hunt spending roughly $8 million on his unsuccessful election bid. The majority of these campaign funds were used to finance the paid political advertisements used by both candidates, which flooded the television screen during the course of the campaign. Seldom a day passed when North Carolina voters did not see a political commercial espousing the relative merits of one of the candidates, or attacking the shortcomings of the other.

Both candidates were largely unopposed in their respective party primaries, needing little effort to beat the opposition, and from the beginning, the campaign was totally a two man race. Both candidates were popular, well known political figures in North Carolina, and name recognition was not a factor in the decision to use paid political advertisements in the campaign. Virtually all of the state's registered voters were familiar with the candidates, and both candidates were extremely visible in the eyes of North Carolina voters.

Hunt, the Democrat and challenger, was North Carolina's first two-term Governor, and represented the "new south" breed of Southern Democrats who were progressive in nature, yet conservative enough to please a largely conservative state electorate.

Helms, on the other hand, was seeking his third term in the U.S. Senate, having won election to that office in the landslide 1972 election year of Richard Nixon. Helms represented the "old south", and was a staunch conservative who favored lower taxes, was a vehement critic of the Soviet Union, and was hawkish in relation to foreign affairs and military spending. Helms had gained a reputation in the Senate for his outspokenness and conservatism, and had a penchant for mixing flaming oratory with religious overtones and wry humor. Although hated by many, he enjoyed strong support from conservatives nationwide, the moral majority, and other fundamentalist religious groups, as well as North Carolina sportsmen.

The stage was set for what Time magazine referred to as, "North Carolina's Costly Catfight".[67] Throughout the early parts of the campaign, Hunt led Helms in virtually all of the polls and projections cast by the national and local news media. Despite the early emphasis by Helms on televised political advertisements,

Hunt retained his lead over Helms through late 1983 and the early months of 1984. Slowly but surely, the tone of the campaign changed, and Hunt's lead began to shrink little by little. By early spring, Helms had virtually pulled even with Hunt in the polls, although a sizable portion of the electorate remained undecided. In an April 1984 article, Time magazine ran a story about the Helms surge, hinting that Helms' negative media barrage may have been responsible for the upswing.

> So far, the Senator's negative campaigning seems to be working. While statewide polls showed Hunt leading Helms by 20 percentage points last October, the most recent polls place them in a virtual tie, although a crucial 10% are undecided. The polls also show that 36% of the state's democrats, who outnumber republicans 3 to 1, say that they may vote for Helms.[68]

For Helms to win the election, he had to marshall strong Democratic support, as any Republican candidate in North Carolina must do, and several prominent North Carolina Democrats publicly endorsed Helms over Hunt. Several other factors were at work which affected the final outcome of the Helms/Hunt senate race.

First, in an election year destined for Republican candidates, the candidacy of Ronald Reagan on the national ticket helped Helms enormously. Not only did Helms receive Reagan's full support, Helms used the popularity of Reagan to bolster his own image. Helms

featured several political commercials in which he was pictured with the President, and portrayed himself as being a Reagan conservative, and proud of it. Reagan's landslide victory in November certainly helped Helms in his successful re-election bid, and likewise, the candidacy of Walter Mondale hurt the Hunt campaign. Hunt tried to distance himself from Mondale, even though he made it clear that he supported Mondale. The reluctance on the part of Hunt to associate himself with Mondale stemmed from two factors. First, Mondale was perceived as being too liberal for conservative North Carolina, and even Democrats in North Carolina generally favored Reagan over Mondale. Second, Helms plastered the TV screen with ads portraying Hunt as a big spender, a "Mondale liberal", and a man who could not take a stand, waffling from one side of an issue to the other. North Carolinians became well familiar with the Helms ad, "Where do you stand, Jim?"

Another factor affecting the North Carolina Senate election was the tension and disharmony in the North Carolina Democratic Party. Although Hunt himself was largely unopposed in his primary, the Democratic gubernatorial primary was a harsh fight among different factions within the Democratic party, and when the dust settled, the Democratic party was deeply divided.

Hunt was not able to endorse any of the Democratic primary contenders, and Rufus Edminsten, North Carolina Attorney General, won the nomination in a runoff primary against former Charlotte Mayor and businessman, Eddie Knox. After the election, the Democratic party and Knox split after the former refused to help Knox pay off his campaign debt. Knox retaliated by endorsing Helms, because he felt Hunt should have supported him, and many Knox supporters defected to the Helms camp as a result of Democratic party in-fighting.

The Republican gubernatorial nominee, James Martin, enjoyed an easy primary victory, and a unified, supportive Republican party. The situation resembled the 1972 election, when Nixon won by a landslide in the Presidential election, pulling Helms in on his coattails, as well as North Carolina's first Republican Governor in 100 years, James Holshouser. The relative coherence of the Republicans and constant in-fighting among Democrats hurt Hunt's election efforts, and contributed to the Republican sweep in November.

Additionally, Hunt's image among North Carolina's state workers was poor, and they tended not to trust Hunt's rhetoric. For Hunt's entire tenure as Governor, state employees only seemed to get pay raises when Hunt was up for re-election, and labored without cost-of-living increases in some years. After conversations

with several state employees, it was made clear that they would not vote for Hunt in November. During the actual survey, one respondent worked in the Hunt administration in Raleigh, and actually voted for Helms in the election.

One final factor affecting the campaign was of course the media campaigns of both camps. If one were to point the proverbial finger, Helms was probably the candidate who first ran negative political advertisements. He argued that the liberal media was against his candidacy, requiring a counter-attack to offset unbiased coverage. Hunt claimed to run his negative ads in response to those of Helms, arguing that his only alternative was to respond in kind to Helms' charges with a counter attack of his own. Briefly, we need to look at some of the negative ads run by each camp, and determine how much truth the ads contained, if any.

The Helms ads generally sought to portray Hunt as an ultra-liberal, a taxer, and a big spender. Helms also portrayed Hunt in his ads as a wishy washy politician on the issues, citing numerous instances during his eight years as Governor in which he switched sides of an issue. Among the more memorable Helms ads were a barrage of ads linking Hunt to Mondale,

Richardson Preyer, and Bella Abzug. The Helms ads ingrained the phrase, "Where do you stand, Jim?", into the minds of North Carolina voters. Another Helms ad cited Hunt's out-of-state fund raising activities, and the large amount of funds he received from liberal groups out of the state of North Carolina. One Helms ad, narrated by Verne Strickland, went as follows:

> Actions speak louder than words, especially when you're talking about politicians. Last year, Jim Hunt said out-of-state campaign contributions create obligations you ought not to have. This year Jim Hunt is raising out-of-state campaign money for his drive to defeat Jesse Helms.
>
> Hunt's out-of-state fundraisers in New York and Atlanta raised 65 thousand dollars from liberal special interests. Folks like Sol Linowitz, the man who negotiated the treaties that paid Panama to take our canal; AFL-CIO union boss Herb Mabry; McGovern for president delegate Ted Sorenson; and Jimmy Carter's ultra-liberal U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young, who said the Ayatollah Khomeni was 'a saint'. And millions have been pledged to Jim Hunt's election effort by groups identified with Big Labor, with Ted Kennedy, and with Julian Bond.
>
> Ask yourself, what obligations does politician Jim Hunt have to these liberal, out-of-state special interests? Paid for by Helms for senate.[69]

It is interesting that Helms received much more out-of-state contributions than Hunt, yet he still ran such an ad.

Another ad pictured Hunt at a Governor's conference in Washington, D.C. with his hand raised. The narrative read that Jim Hunt was voting to raise

each North Carolina voter's taxes by $1,000 per family. In reality, the vote had no tax raising authority, and therefore was a shrewd untruth. Hunt's raised hand had nothing to do with taxes paid to the federal government by North Carolina citizens, as Governors have no authority to raise federal taxes. The narrative in the commercial read, "This is actual TV footage in slow motion of Jim Hunt voting to raise your taxes." Hunt's vote had no binding authority, and was simply a resolution passed by the Governors which had no enforcement authority whatsoever.

Hunt, although beginning his media blitz later than Helms, had his share of negative ads as well. Hunt's ads charged Helms with the raising of out-of-state contributions, criticized Helms' vote in the Senate on Social Security and agriculture, and charged Helms with favoring the rich over the poor. Although Hunt's ads were generally not as negative as Helms', he did have his moments. In response to Helms' ad accusing Hunt of voting to raise taxes, Hunt ran an ad charging Helms with voting to cut social security. The narrative read, "This is an actual artist's drawing of Jesse Helms voting to cut social security". (Cameras are not allowed in the Senate, so Hunt could not provide "actual film footage".) Helms responded with another

negative ad, featuring his wife, Dorothy, who scolded Hunt for trying to scare North Carolina's elderly people.

Another Hunt ad charged Helms with taking the wrong stand on the abortion issue, stating that women have a right to choose for themselves what they do with their own bodies.

Probably the Hunt ad that caused the most controversy was the one linking Helms to El Salvadorean right wing leader, Roberto D'Aubission, thought by many to be the man responsible for right wing death squads operating in El Salvador. The ad charged that D'Aubission, leader of the ARENA party, was a close friend of Helms, and shared his philosophy of exterminating Communists and other persons left of the political spectrum. The ad pictured bloody Salvadorean bodies, followed by a picture of Helms beside D'Aubission. The narrative read, "This is what they do - death squads in El Salvador. Men, women, and children - murdered in cold blood." The ad implied that Helms was linked to D'Aubission, and condoned such behavior. Helms immediately replied to the Hunt ad, and even some Hunt supporters felt that Hunt had went too far with the ad. The backlash from the ad may have even prompted some voters to change their allegiance from Hunt to Helms.

Although these ads mentioned above do not include the full range of ads broadcast, they give the reader a fairly good idea of what the negative campaigning was like, on both sides of the fence. Not all of the ads were negative; some did transmit information on issue positions and candidate qualifications, but these ads were the exception and not the rule. Both candidates were guilty of negative political advertising, and who started the negativism is not the issue. Rather, the important question is, Did the negative ads work, and what did North Carolina voters feel about the ads, and are negative political advertisements a form of campaign communication that should be allowed to continue? Does the bitter taste left in the mouths of voters, the negative image the nation was given concerning North Carolina, and the costs of these negative media campaigns justify their use? It is these questions the present study attempted to answer.

Methods and Procedures

To examine the impact of negative political advertisements in the Helms/Hunt campaign, a representative, state-wide phone survey was undertaken during the month of April, 1985, and completed in the month of June, 1985. The sample population consisted of all registered North Carolina voters, and respondents were surveyed concerning the use of the mass media by the candidates during the election, negative political advertisements, as well as a number of demographic variables. The sample was drawn with the help of Dr. Roger Lowery, a polling expert and professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and consisted of a computer generated random listing of phone exchanges covering the six media markets present in North Carolina.

This being our first experience with public opinion polling on a large scale, we had much to learn, and did so in the course of the survey procedure. Initially, the plan was to divide the state into ten geographic areas, take a random sample of each area, and administer the survey instrument to selected respondents in each of the ten markets. Using just geographic areas, with no guarantee that each was homogeneous in terms of demographics, that course of action was abandoned, and

a technique called random digit dialing was used instead. With random digit dialing, a computer generates a list of randomly chosen phone exchanges throughout the state, with each exchange representing a portion of the state's citizens. Areas which were more populated than others had more exchanges present, thereby homogenizing the state in terms of population and geographic area. Each phone exchange generated by the computer consisted of the first five digits of a phone number. The last two numbers were chosen randomly with a random number table, thereby giving every available telephone number within each exchange an equal chance of selection. The procedure was repeated for each different media market, until all six media markets had been covered.

The main purpose in this study was to determine the effect of televised negative political advertisements on the voting behavior of North Carolina voters in the 1984 U.S. Senate race between Hunt and Helms. The effects of negative political commercials are a slippery subject, and to ascertain effects is no easy task. Most would argue that the ideal way to study mass media effects would be through some sort of experimental design, consisting of an experimental group of those exposed to negative ads, and a control

group of those not exposed to the ads. An added aid would be the administration of pre- and post- tests to see if there were changes over time.

> If one were studying the effects of communication on cognitive, affective, or conative development, it would be preferable to separate the effects of the key independent variable(s) and to eliminate contamination from other elements of the environment.[70]

Although this would be the ideal situation, such an undertaking would have been completely beyond the scope of this study, and there were virtually no voters who did not see any of the ads, thereby making a control group almost impossible to obtain. Also, the use of pre- and post- tests would have been much too expensive and time consuming for the budget of this study. Rather, a research design of traditional survey research of a random nature was used, without the controls of a group of non-exposed voters. In short, the research design had to be such that a single researcher could complete the project himself, with limited resources and staff to help conduct the survey.

The survey instrument was a questionnaire, developed by Dr. Dan B. German, professor of political science at Appalachian State University, and used in a previously mentioned study. The questionnaire was modified for this specific study, with the addition of

questions including demographic variables, and the deletion or revision of questions thought to be too complex for the average N.C. voter. Included in the questionnaire were two filter questions used to ascertain the political knowledge respondents had about the Helms/Hunt Senate race, with the rationale that respondents who had no knowledge of the election should not be included. The two filter questions, (which will be discussed later), were probably a mistake and provided little aid in drawing conclusions. In addition, they made analysis difficult, and hindsight now seems to suggest that these filter questions should have been left out of the survey. The use of filter questions does not necessarily aid researchers in screening respondents, and research on filter questions suggests their utility is questionable in many cases.

> In most instances, filtering will have little impact in the distribution of substantive responses to an item once the DKs are excluded from the analysis. The use of filter questions, moreover, did not appear to have any significant influence on the magnitude of association between substantive responses to issues and such demographic variables as age, sex, and education. A researcher would, in other words, draw essentially the same conclusions about the nature and determinants of public opinion on an issue on the basis of either an unfiltered or filtered form.[71]

Looking back on the decision to use filter questions, it was probably a mistake, but not one that affected the

results or conclusions, but rather made analysis more difficult.

Another important consideration encountered was that of the method of respondent selection. A number of alternatives were available to us for respondent selection which allowed for an equal representation of male to female respondents. Ideally, the ratio of male to female should be roughly equal to the actual percentage of male and female respondents in the sampling population, but this is easier said than done. Public opinion surveys will generally yield a higher number of female than male respondents for a number of reasons. First, there are simply more females than males, especially in North Carolina, and second, the time of day the survey is conducted will affect the male to female ratio. If conducted during the day, chances are male respondents will be hard to obtain, as many people who are reached are housewives who stay home the largest part of the day, while their male counterparts are more often at work. Even if conducted in the evening hours, it is more likely that a female will answer the phone. A number of approaches can be taken to approximate an acceptable male to female ratio. The surveyor can simply ask for a male respondent when the phone is answered, but this sometimes results in

suspicion on the part of the respondent, especially if a female is the only person home, resulting in a higher refusal rate than simply interviewing whoever answers the phone.

A number of techniques were available to us to use in respondent selection. One technique is to simply divide the sample into one half male, and one half female respondents, and ask for the required gender when the phone is answered. Unfortunately, it may be that no female lives at the household, and asking questions such as, Do any men live in this household to a female tends to frighten some female respondents. (For that matter, respondents are often suspicious of any survey over the phone, male or female.) Another method available was the Troldahl-Carter method of respondent selection.

> In the Trohldahl-Carter method, one of four selection matrixes which list various combinations of age and sex of household members is assigned randomly to telephone numbers in the sample. Thus, by asking only two questions, (How many people 18 years or older live in the household, and how many of them are men?), the interviewer has enough information to select the respondent who is designated at the intersection point on the matrix.[72]

The Trohldahl-Carter method is one of the most popular in random-digit dialed surveys, but can still be invasive to some respondents.

One final method of respondent selection available is the "next birthday method", which is less intrusive than the male/female alternative, or the Trohldahl-Carter method. In the "next birthday method", "the interviewer asks to speak to the adult member of the household who has the next birthday."[73] The next birthday method takes some of the suspicion out of the initial part of the call and serves as an ice breaker, and is apparently an effective method of respondent selection in terms of achieving a representative sample. The next birthday method, though, seems to catch people off guard, and they respond as if the survey were a joke, and may not take it seriously, resulting in answers that may not be truthful.

One final method is to simply proceed with the phone call, and interview anyone that answers the phone. Although this method always results in an over-sampling of female respondents, it is undoubtedly the simplest, and least intrusive method. This method was finally chosen, because the interviewers were not trained in the more complex methods of respondent selection, and by making phone calls at strategic times during the day, a representative approximation of reality could be obtained. The phone calls were made between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., during the days Monday

through Thursday, when most people are home from work, and when male respondents are more likely to answer the phone. (Phone calls were not made on Wednesday night, as large portions of Southern Baptists are at church on this night.) Although one of the other methods of respondent selection may have yielded a closer approximation of male to female respondents, they were not well suited to the purposes of this study, and thus were not used.

The survey team was made up primarily of student interviewers from two introductory political science classes, and most had no prior experience in public opinion polling. They were each given a short training session before beginning, and were instructed as to the purpose of the survey. Also, interviewers were familiar with the questionnaire before beginning, and all interviewers had sufficient knowledge about the election between Helms and Hunt that was needed to administer the questionnaire. The decision to interview any registered voter who answered the phone worked satisfactorily, and although it did result in a slight oversampling of females, other demographic characteristics were representative of North Carolina voters.

Results

The survey yielded a sample consisting of 58% female and 42% male respondents. Although these figures are six percentage points above the female to male ratio of 52% in North Carolina, they are a reasonable approximation of reality. (Table 1)

Table 1

MALE TO FEMALE RATIO OF SAMPLE

	SAMPLE RATIO n of respondents	%	ACTUAL RATIO (1983) %
Male	155	41.40	47.60
Female	219	58.60	52.40
	n=374		

Source: 1985 Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 105 ed., p. 252.

During the polling period, we contacted 777 respondents. Of those 777 respondents who answered the phone, 289 refused to participate in the survey. (A refusal was coded as refusing to participate for any reason, excluding recordings or non-residents of North Carolina). Of the remaining 488 respondents, 110 were eliminated as not being registered voters. The final sample consisted of 378 respondents, yielding a margin of error of + or -5 percentage points. (Table 2)

Table 2

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

N OF RESPONDENTS	
Contacted	777
Refusals	289
Not Registered	110
Eligible	378

MARGIN OF ERROR ±4OR - 5 percentage points

Respondents completed a phone questionnaire consisting of 21 questions about the 1984 U.S. Senate race between Jesse Helms and Jim Hunt, specifically relating to the mass media, paid political advertisements, and voting behavior in the election. (Most respondents answered only 16 of the 21 questions, as those respondents who were not influenced by the TV ads were excluded from the ad-related questions.)

It would have been optimum to conduct the survey during and after the election, but resources only permitted one survey, after the election was held. The survey was conducted as long after the election as it was because of a lack of initial funding, which we had had to build up over a period of time after the election.

Respondents were first asked if they were registered voters. If they were not, the interview was terminated. If they were, they were next asked if they

voted in the 1984 Helms/Hunt Senate race. If they reported yes, they were asked which candidate they voted for. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents were registered to vote. These figures correspond to actual registration statistics which were available in The Helms/Hunt Senate Race 1984.[74] (Table 3)

Table 3

NORTH CAROLINA VOTER REGISTRATION

N OF RESPONDENTS		% SAMPLE	% ACTUAL
Registered	378	79.20	77.00
Not Registered	99	20.80	23.00
	n=477	100.00	100.00

As is often the case with public opinion polling, reported figures for voter turnout were larger than they should have been. Respondents often will report that they voted, even if they didn't, to appear as if they are politically active, and not apathetic. Of the respondents, 93% reported having voted in the Senate race, with actual figures at 70% voter turnout. (See Table 4, next page) Although the results are somewhat high, probably from untruthful reporting, the accuracy of the sample is substantiated by similarity of other demographic characteristics.

Table 4

VOTER TURNOUT IN 1984
N.C. SENATE RACE

N OF RESPONDENTS		% SAMPLE	% ACTUAL
Yes	353	93.40	70.00
No	25	6.60	30.00
	n=378	100.00	100.00

Source: N.C. State Board of Elections

Respondents were next asked which candidate they voted for for U.S. Senator from North Carolina between Hunt and Helms. Forty-seven percent reported having voted for Helms, 41% for Hunt, with 11% reporting other (didn't vote or voted for someone else). According to the Charlotte Observer, 52% voted for Helms, and 48% voted for Hunt. (The Charlotte Observer did not include voters who voted for the two other candidates, probably amounting to 1%). Although the results are slightly different from actual election returns, the margin of victory and direction of the results were in line with actual election figures. (See Table 5, next page)

Questions 4 and 5 were the two filter questions, designed to weed out respondents who didn't follow the election closely, had little political knowledge concerning the election, or simply were lying to the

interviewer. Although the use of filter questions can greatly aid a survey if used properly, they probably hindered more than helped this study. The first

Table 5

VOTE CHOICE IN 1984 HELMS/HUNT SENATE RACE

CANDIDATE	N OF RESPOND	% SAMPLE	% ACTUAL
Hunt	154	41.00	48.00
Helms	178	47.60	52.00
Other	20	5.30	--
Didn't Vote	23	6.10	--
	n=375	100.00	100.00

Source: Charlotte Observer, Nov. 8, 1984, p. 18A

question asked respondents which candidate spent the most money on media advertising between Helms and Hunt, and the second question asked which candidate would have been most likely to support increased federal aid for education. Respondents who were aware of the candidates, their issue positions, and followed the election closely would be the respondents to correctly answer the filter questions. Only if a respondent missed both of the filter questions were they eliminated and excluded from all other questions except demographic questions. Sixty-five of the registered respondents correctly answered the first filter question, and 61%

correctly answered the second filter question. In all, 65 respondents were eliminated due to failure to correctly answer either question, making the sample size of those respondents asked media related questions 311.

Respondents were next asked which form of media advertising made them most aware of the U.S. Senate race in North Carolina, and were read a list of (1) radio; (2) TV ads; (3) billboards and bumper stickers; (4) newspapers; (5) news programs on TV; or (6) other. As might be expected, televised political ads were reported as the overwhelming medium respondents used for awareness about the election, with 67% choosing TV ads, followed by newspapers and news programs with 10% each, radio with 7.7%, other with 2.9%, and billboards and bumper stickers with 2.6%. (See Table 6, next page) The sheer availability of televised political commercials insured that this would be the form of mass media making voters most aware of the election, and sandwiched in between viewers' favorite programs, seeing the ads was unavoidable.

Respondents were next asked which political party they were a registered member of, with 68.5% reporting Democratic party affiliation and 27.3% reporting Republican party affiliation. Figures obtained from

Table 6

FORMS OF MEDIA USED BY VOTERS FOR SENATE ELECTION AWARENESS

FORM OF MEDIA	N OF RESPONDENTS	%
Radio	24	7.70
TV ads	208	66.80
Billboards/bumper stickers	8	2.60
Newspapers	31	10.00
News Programs on TV	31	10.00
Other	9	2.90
	n=311	100.00

the N.C. State Board of Elections list 72% of the state's registered voters as being Democrats, and 27% of the registered voters as being Republicans. These figures are roughly equal to the results obtained in the survey, although the figures are slightly lower. Only 1% of the state's voters are registered with another party, or are Independents. The results show 4% of the respondents being either Independent, or not being able to remember which party they were registered with. (See Table 7)

Respondents next were asked if they had seen any of the Jim Hunt or Jesse Helms TV ads for U.S. Senate during the election. As expected, almost all respondents reported having seen televised political ads

Table 7

NORTH CAROLINA POLITICAL
PARTY AFFILIATION

PARTY	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE	% ACTUAL
Democrat	213	68.50	72.00
Republican	85	27.40	27.00
Independent	11	3.50	1.00
Don't Know	2	.60	--
	n=311	100.00	100.00

Source: N.C. State Board of Elections

of one or the other candidates during the election, with 94% having seen the ads.

Next, to gauge the influence or impact of the televised political ads during the election, respondents were asked if any of the televised ads they saw influenced their choice for a U.S. Senate candidate. The results of this question were indeed surprising. Twenty-one percent of the respondents reported being influenced by the televised political ads in the campaign. Seventy-seven percent said the ads definitely did not influence their choice, and 2% of the respondents were not sure if the ads influenced them or not. (See Table 8, next page) The results of the question far exceeded expectations for influence by televised political ads. Previous research pointed to a

Table 8

SELF-REPORTED INFLUENCE OF
HELMS/HUNT TV ADS

RESPONSE	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
No Influence	226	77.20
Influence	61	20.80
Not Sure	6	2.00
	n=293	100.00

limited influence on the part of paid political advertisements on voting behavior, but the results of this study show that a sizable portion of the electorate were indeed influenced by the ads. (Eight respondents refused to answer this question at all.)

Respondents who reported no influence from the TV ads (or weren't sure) were terminated from further ad-specific questions, and skipped directly to the demographic questions at the end of the survey, while those respondents reporting influence continued with survey questions dealing specifically with the ads.

The first ad-specific question dealt with the extent of influence of the TV ads. Respondents were asked if they were influenced (1) a great deal, (2) some, (3) a little, or (4) none. The majority of the respondents, 47%, reported some influence by the TV ads,

with 28% reporting a great deal of influence, and 23% reporting a little influence. (Table 9)

Table 9

SELF-REPORTED EXTENT OF AD INFLUENCE*

RESPONSE	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
Great Deal	18	28.20
Some	31	48.40
A Little	15	23.40
None	0	--
	n = 64	100.00

The next ad-specific question dealt with how respondents were influenced by the ads, an important consideration for political advertising influence. Respondents were asked, Did the TV ads help you: (1) Switch from Helms to Hunt, (2) Switch from Hunt to Helms, (3) Choose Helms, (4) Choose Hunt, or (5) Turn you off from voting for either candidate. As hypothesized, televised political ads were mainly a reinforcer, but a

*Tables 9-14 are percentages of those influenced by the ads only, and represent 20.80% of the original sample. For this reason, the number of respondents is much lower than 311. In addition, some respondents refused to answer certain of the ad-specific questions, so the number of respondents for tables 9-14 vary slightly.

small percentage of those respondents reporting influence were also encouraged to change their vote intention because of televised political advertisements. Forty-two percent of the respondents felt the ads helped them choose Hunt, while 29% felt the ads helped them to choose Helms. Of those respondents who were influenced to switch from one candidate to another because of the TV ads, 4.8% felt that the ads helped them switch from Helms to Hunt, while 6.6% felt the ads helped them switch from Hunt to Helms. Of more importance though, is the fact that 17.7% of the respondents felt that the TV ads turned them off to voting for either candidate. (Most of the respondents who were turned off to voting for either candidate obviously voted anyway.) (Table 10)

Table 10

SELF-REPORTED AD EFFECT*

RESPONSE	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
Switch, Helms to Hunt	3	4.80
Switch, Hunt to Helms	4	6.60
Choose Helms	18	29.00
Choose Hunt	26	41.90
Turn off to Voting	11	17.70
	n=62	100.00

*In Tables 9-14, the number of cases is very small, and

Although the actual numbers of respondents for this part of the survey were small, the results are still noteworthy. The main purpose of televised political ads, and especially negative political ads, is to change voter preferences on election day, and even though switchers made up a small percentage of those influenced, elections are often won by a relatively small percentage. Possibly of more importance is the fact that a large percentage of those influenced were alienated by the ads, and were prompted to possibly not vote at all. Although most voted anyway, perhaps next time they see negative ads, they will not. It is also interesting that while the Hunt ads were more likely to reinforce voting intentions of the respondents, the Helms ads were more likely to cause voters to switch to his camp, although hardly to a significant degree.

The next ad-specific question dealt with the content of the ads, as perceived by the respondent. Respondents were asked, Did the ads deal with, overall (1) specific issues; (2) the personalities of the candidates; (3) were they simply mudslinging; or (4) all

---

inferences must be made with caution. For example, in Table 10, the number of switchers is almost less than the margin of error for the survey.

of the above. The respondents surveyed overwhelmingly felt that the ads were mudslinging, with 55.6% choosing that response. Twenty-three percent felt the ads dealt with all of the responses, while 11.1% felt the ads dealt with specific issues, and 9.5% chose the personalities of the candidates. (See Table 11) Clearly, the majority of the sample perceived the televised ads as negative ads, and by no means were they pleased by them.

Table 11

AD CONTENT

CONTENT	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
Specific Issues	7	11.10
Personalities	6	9.50
Mudslinging	35	55.60
All of the Above	15	23.80
	n=63	100.00

The next two questions dealt with the image the respondent got from the ads, and if this image was a negative one. Respondents were asked if the candidate's image was at odds with the public's perception. Forty-one percent of the respondents felt that neither candidate's image was at odds with the public's perception. Thirty-five percent felt that both

candidates' images were at odds with the public's perception of them. Fifteen and nine tenths percent and 7.9% felt Hunt's and Helms' images were at odds with the public's perception of them respectively. (See Table 12) It is interesting that although the majority of the respondents felt the ads were negative ads, this did not make the candidates' images inconsistent with the public's perception of them. Respondents could view the candidates' images favorably, while still classifying the ads as negative.

Table 12

CANDIDATE IMAGE THROUGH TV ADS

PUBLIC PERCEPTION	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
Hunt's, at odds	10	15.90
Helms', at odds	5	7.90
Neither, at odds	26	41.30
Both, at odds	22	34.90
	n=63	100.00

Respondents were next asked if the TV ads gave them a less than favorable image of either of the candidates, and again 40% of the sample reported no unfavorable image from the ads for either candidate, with 36% reporting that the ads did give them a less than favorable image of both the candidates. Fifteen and

six tenths percent felt the Helms ads exclusively gave them a less than favorable image of him, and 9.4% reported that the Hunt ads exclusively gave them a less than favorable image of him. (See Table 13) Again, a sizable proportion of the sample felt the ads were negative, but did not think of the candidates less favorably because of the ads.

Table 13

FAVORABLENESS OF CANDIDATE IMAGE THROUGH TV ADS

LESS FAVORABLE	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
Hunt's ads	10	15.60
Helms' ads	6	9.40
Both's ads	23	35.90
Neither's ads	25	39.10
	n=64	100.00

One final measure was also included in the ad-specific questions. The measure probed which candidate the respondents felt was most responsible for the negative political ads, or if respondents felt they were equally responsible for the negative ads. Respondents were asked, which candidate do you think was most responsible for mudslinging, or negative ads during the campaign. The majority of respondents felt that both candidates were equally responsible for the

negative ads, with 46% reporting that response. Between the two candidates, the respondents felt Helms was the most responsible for negative ads, with 39.7%, while 14.3% felt that Hunt was the most responsible for negative ads. (See Table 14) Again, the majority of the respondents felt both of the candidates were equally responsible for the negative ads, although Helms was perceived the instigator with almost the same frequency as that reporting both candidates.

Table 14

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MUDSLINGING

CANDIDATE	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE
Hunt	9	14.30
Helms	25	39.70
Both	29	46.00
	n=63	100.00

The remaining six questions of the survey dealt with voting behavior in the Presidential election, and other demographic measures of the sample. Reported voting behavior by the respondents again approximated the actual election results of the 1984 Presidential election, indicating that our sample was indeed a representative one. Sixty-three percent of the sample reported having voted for Reagan, 34.6% for Mondale,

and 2.7% indicated other as their response. The comparison of actual voting behavior in that election is very similar to our results. (Table 15)

Table 15

VOTE CHOICE IN 1984 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

CANDIDATE	N OF RESPONDENTS	% SAMPLE	% ACTUAL
Reagan	222	62.50	62.00
Mondale	123	34.60	38.00
Other	10	2.70	--
	n=355	100.00	100.00

Source: Charlotte Observer, Nov. 8, 1984, p. 18A

Demographic measures which were taken included a measure of race, income, and age, and all seem to be fairly representative except the measure of race. Eighty-three percent reported being white, 14.7% reported being black, and 2.7% reported other. In actuality, black representation should have been higher than the results reveal. One explanation for this fact is that black respondents may have been more likely to refuse to answer the survey, although this is mere speculation, and no statistics are presented to back up this contention.

The measure of income seems to be representative, although actual figures are not presented for income of

registered voters. Thirty-three percent of the respondents fell into the $10,000 - 20,000 range, 25% in the $20,000 - 30,000 range, 24% in the $10,000 and under range, and 17% in the $30,000 and over range.

One measure which was not included was a measure of respondents education, and these statistics might have been helpful. But measures of income, age, and education are often intrusive to the respondent, and many refused to answer these questions that were asked on the survey. So while unfortunate that an education measure was not taken, the results of the survey were not compromised. (A sample questionnaire is included in the Appendix.)

CHAPTER 3 - FOOTNOTES

[67]Ed Magnuson, "North Carolina's Costly Catfight", Time, April 30, 1984, p. 17.

[68]Ibid.

[69]Helms for Senate Ad Transcript, (Out of State Contributions #1), March 29-30, 1984, N.C. News Network.

[70]Michael L. Rothschild, "Political Advertising: A Neglected Policy Issue in Marketing", Journal of Marketing Research, v. 15 February, 1978, p. 59.

[71]George F. Bishop, Robert W. Oldendick, Alfred J. Tuckfarber, "Effects of Filter Questions in Public Opinion Surveys", Public Opinion Quarterly, v. 47, 1983, p. 529.

[72]Charles T. Salmon, John Spicer Nichols, "The Next-Birthday Method of Respondent Selection", Public Opinion Quarterly, v. 47, 1983, p. 270.

[73]Ibid., p. 271.

[74]William D. Synder, Helms & Hunt: The North Carolina Senate Race, 1984, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1985, p. 202.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Results from the state-wide phone survey conducted on the 1984 U.S. Senate race between Hunt and Helms provide strong evidence that negative political advertisements in political campaigns can indeed influence voting behavior. In the present study, a significant portion of the sample reported that they were influenced by the negative political ads, and while the majority of those influenced by the ads were reinforced in their initial voting decisions, a minority of voters were persuaded to switch their vote choice. In a close election, this minority of voters could have an effect on the final outcome of an election.

In addition, while respondents clearly saw the ads as negative, or mudslinging, they did not perceive the candidates any less favorably than they did before the ads were seen. Respondents' images of the candidates were not lessened, and even though the ads were not liked, they were watched, and did influence voting behavior.

Helms definitely spent more money on media advertising than Hunt, and his ads were seen with a

higher degree of frequency than the Hunt ads, and although Helms was the eventual victor in the election, it could be possible that Helms' reliance on negative advertisements hurt him more than Hunt, as evidenced by the greater number of respondents choosing Hunt because of the ads. Both candidates were hurt by using negative political advertisements, as the results show, and many were turned off to voting for either candidate.

The findings further suggest that negative political advertisements may be more effective in affecting voting behavior than ordinary political advertisements. The great majority of research supports the limited effects model of advertising in elections, and the findings depart somewhat with those findings. But the study was concerned with negative political advertisements, rather than political advertisements in general, and differences may exist between negative and positive political advertisements. Although the results showed that negative political advertisements were a reinforcer of political attitudes and voting behavior for many, an important minority were influenced to change their original voting choice, suggesting that the impact of negative political advertisements may be greater than those documented concerning political advertising.

It was unfortunate that the entire sample was not questioned as to their perception of the content of negative political ads, and the images produced by them about the candidates, regardless of whether they felt they were influenced. The use of inexperienced pollsters did have its benefits in that respect, as pollsters often continued with ad-specific questions after respondents reported no influence by the advertisements. (Respondents were to skip to the demographic section if not influenced by the ads.) Although this made phone costs slightly higher, in those cases in which respondents not influenced by the ads continued through the ad-specific questions, respondents still felt the ads were mainly mudslinging, and their images of the candidates were not lessened by the negativism of the ads. Exact figures for non-influenced respondents are not available, but through interviewer error, it can be inferred that respondents felt the same way about the ads regardless of whether they were influenced or not.

A major implication of the findings concerns the high and rising costs of political campaigns. In the present study, the candidate who spent the largest amount of money on media, and aired the largest number of negative ads, won the election. For our political

system, this raises serious doubts about the efficacy of negative political advertisements as tools of political campaigns, although political candidates may disagree. Negative political advertising, and the huge sums of money needed to sustain this type of activity, pose the danger that public officials may not be those that are the most dedicated, most qualified, and most concerned with the public good, but those that have the largest bankrolls, and the best media consultants. Many qualified, dedicated individuals in the country are discouraged from running for political office for just that reason, and the real losers in this situation are the American people. What can be done to insure that important elected offices are filled with the most qualified and capable individuals?

Several possible solutions are available. First, political spending in elections could be limited, though at present, the Supreme Court has ruled that controls on spending by political candidates violate freedom of expression. One alternative would be to publicly finance Senatorial and Congressional elections, as Presidential elections are now conducted. If a candidate accepts public funding, he must stay within spending limits prescribed by the FEC. Although such an action might help the situation, it would not

alleviate it. Presently, Presidential elections are publicly financed, yet their costs continue to rise, and Presidential candidates frequently overspend the limits, with no more than a slap on the wrist as punishment. Also, if candidates were rich enough, or had sufficient backing from other sources, they could simply not accept public funds, freeing them to spend as much as they wished. Clearly, compliance with the spending limits would have to be much stricter, with non-compliance subject to much harsher penalties, and perhaps even forfeiture of the elective office if limits are grossly ignored.

Another solution to the problem of high costs in elections would be a logical shortening of the election season, with campaigns lasting months instead of years. Presently, candidates seeking a major elective office start their campaign as many as four years in advance, with the rationale that the longer the candidate has to prepare for the election, the better chance he or she has of winning the election. By shortening the election season, candidates would not be able to sustain a campaign of high frequency media saturation beginning two years before the election is held, and a two or three month period, for the primaries and the general election each, is certainly sufficient time to reach

voters with issue positions, images of personality and character, and candidate qualifications.

Critics might argue that such a system would disadvantage challengers, and give incumbents an advantage, as incumbents are almost constantly in the public eye. While these charges may be true, measures can be taken to insure challengers have sufficient exposure to reach voters.

One such measure would be to give all candidates for public office equal broadcast time, free of charge, in which to air their positions, qualifications, and character traits. Although the networks would undoubtedly be opposed to these changes, they would allow all candidates to receive equal media exposure, giving the incumbent candidate no unfair advantage. In addition, free broadcast time would greatly cut the costs of campaigns, as would shortening the election season, and media costs represent a large portion of a candidate's budget expenditures.

Still another possible solution available would be to place controls on negative political advertisements so that candidates would be discouraged from using this technique of campaign communication. At the heart of this type solution would be the monitoring of political ads by the FEC or some other legitimate governing body

to determine whether or not the ads are factual. Blatant negative ads which distorted the truth, or falsely attacked a candidate's character could be forbidden, with a stiff monetary penalty imposed on candidates who broadcast ads which are non-factual.

In a nationwide survey conducted in February - March 1985 by Civic Service, Inc., a political based research organization, the American people clearly favored some sort of limits on campaign costs and political commercials, and felt that such limits did not interfere with freedom of expression or speech. They also felt challengers should be given some means to even the inherent advantage of incumbents.[75] Given the feeling of the American people, it seems that public pressure could bring about some very needed changes in the present electoral system. A constitutional amendment calling for limited spending in political elections is one such change. If a push for such an amendment were started, and public sentiment supportive, the required majority of states to force such a vote on a nationwide basis might be possible.

If one state felt strongly enough about the ill effects of negative political advertising in that state, it could alone impose controls on negative political

advertisements in that state, and if the results of these controls were satisfactory, other states might follow the lead.

North Carolina could be such a state, as its voters know first hand the disgust such ads produce, and the polarization that occurs among groups with different political viewpoints. Efforts should be made to spark public awareness and action in such a direction.

Finally, the broadcast media themselves could help to alleviate the situation. The mass media pride themselves on being the fourth branch of government, providing all sides to an issue or story, being a watchdog on the political process, and providing clear, accurate political information to the American people. Given this fact, they themselves could refuse to sell air time to political candidates who run negative political ads, and could even limit the amount of air time they sell to political candidates in general. By only allotting each candidate a certain amount of air time, and by refusing to run ads of negative, untruthful information, the costs of elections would shrink, and candidates would be more concerned with transmitting substantive information to the public. The mass media must choose between the almighty advertising dollar on the one hand, and the integrity and professionalism

they profess on the other. The mass media can, in the words of American Broadcasting Company president, Jim Duffy, "extend the freedom to enjoy the medium". Perhaps that phrase should be changed to, "extending the freedom to use the medium."

These measures, as well as others, could greatly benefit the functioning of our American electoral system.

CHAPTER 4 - FOOTNOTES

[75]"Attitudes Toward Campaign Financing: A Nationwide Public Opinion Survey", Civic Service, Inc., Washington, D.C. and St. Louis, Missouri, 1985, p. 6.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the evidence is strong suggesting a more than limited influence of the mass media, and negative political advertisements, on the electoral process in America. Negative political advertisements were shown to have a significant effect on political campaigns, and although the results show the mass media to be mainly a reinforcer of existing opinions and predispositions, they also showed that the mass media can exert a significant influence in changing previous opinions and predispositions. The original hypothesis was only partly proven, that negative political advertisements would reinforce voting intentions rather than change them, and would not have a significant effect on changing voting behavior. While the mass media was shown to be such a reinforcer, they were shown to also change the voting behavior of some. We are not disappointed that the results of the study varied slightly from the initial predictions, and feel the results of the study can benefit the electoral process in America. In addition, it was demonstrated that the mass media was the major source of information

about politics, and television the major media form in supplying that information.

This study was the first systematic study of the effects of negative political advertisements on the electoral process, and the results of the study were a departure from the results of most other studies examining media and advertising effects in political campaigns. Although numerous studies had been conducted on political advertising, no studies existed on negative political ads. This study fills the gap in the existing literature on political advertisements as they affect the electoral process in America, but by no means does it close that gap. Much more research in this area is needed before definite conclusions can be reached.

Several observations can be made about the impact of the mass media, particularly television, in the political process. First, political campaigns in this country have become much too costly, and with current campaign finance law as it now stands, campaign costs are not likely to decrease.

Second, it is clear that the use of television as a campaign tool is the major reason for the increasing costs of election campaigns. The use of television as a campaign tool threatens to make public office an

enterprise of the rich, and poses a particular problem for democratic government in America. Our democratic system of government relies on the theory of representation by people dedicated to the betterment of the country, and the influx of large amounts of money into the electoral process implies that elected officials may not be able to make independent decisions if they are beholden to those who support and finance the large sums of money needed to win an election. Public officials may become errand boys and spokesmen for those with money, and not spokesmen for the American people, if this situation is not altered.

Third, we have before us with the use of negative political advertisements, a form of campaign communication which has very real negative consequences for the political system overall. The results of this study show that negative political advertisements can be effective in influencing voting behavior, and in changing voter intentions. If political candidates feel they can gain an advantage over an opponent through the use of negative political advertisements, they will do so. In future elections, we may see an increase in the use of negative political ads, and an increase in the harshness of such media campaigns. If such becomes the case, voters will get less substantive information

on political candidates than they now do, and instead, will get false accusations, lies, and distortions of reality; certainly not the information voters need to make an informed voting decision. In addition, voters may become discouraged with the political system, view it in a negative way, and political support for democracy and the American electoral process may decrease.

The 1986 re-election campaign of Senator John East of North Carolina will in all likelihood be a barometer of future political campaigns in this country (should East run for re-election). Supported by the same conservative groups that Helms was, the East campaign may use many of the same tactics used by Helms. If so, and if East is successful, other candidates in North Carolina and the nation may begin to use negative campaign tactics with a high degree of frequency, setting a dangerous pathway for future politics in the United States.

The mass media, and television in particular, can be beneficial tools for the political process in America. It has been shown that these tools can provide a channel with which candidates can reach voters. If used for these purposes, the mass media can be greatly beneficial; but if misused, the consequences

can be enormous. Efforts need to be made to strengthen campaign finance laws, control spending in elections, and limit the use of negative political advertisements in political campaigns. Public awareness of the dangers of negative political advertisements need to be stressed, and the public will demand changes be made.

First though, additional research needs to be conducted on negative political advertisements and their effect on the electoral system. This study, although representative of the state of North Carolina, cannot as yet be generalized to the nation as a whole. In addition, all political campaigns are different, and circumstances in other elections may be different from those present in the 1984 Helms/Hunt Senate race. Studies need to be conducted in other states, in Presidential elections, and in local elections before the impact of negative political advertisements can be fully understood. The results are not etched in stone, and the conclusions may not be correct; but we cannot take the chance that they are wrong. We must assume they are right, for the sake of our political system, until additional research proves incontrovertibly otherwise.

In retrospect, many parts of this study could have been conducted differently, and much more could have

been included. It is unfortunate work on this project could not be continued for a longer period of time. It would have been interesting, and possibly fruitful, to examine the effect of negative political advertisements across the six different media markets surveyed, to see if differences existed from market to market. Given additional time, further analysis will be conducted with the data collected in this study to draw further conclusions about negative political advertisements in the political process. Many materials concerning the mass media and paid political advertisements could not be examined in the scope of this study, and inclusion of them in further studies might yield tangible results as well.

Finally, many parts and procedures of this study can be questioned, and many might criticize its conclusions. But it is unquestionably clear that the mass media, and paid political advertisements, are an integral part of the election process, exerting a tremendous influence. This influence needs to be understood, and made available to elected officials, researchers and scholars, and most importantly, the American people, for these are the people that can affect change in the electoral process.

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APPENDIX
SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello, my name is _____. My political science instructor here at Appalachian State University in Boone is conducting a public opinion survey about the recent election for the United States Senator in North Carolina between Jim Hunt and Jesse Helms. Would you answer a few questions for me? Your answers will be confidential, so please answer as honestly as possible.

1. Are you registered to vote?
   1. Yes _____ 2. No _____
   IF NO, TERMINATE

2. Did you vote in the recent election for U.S. Senator from N.C. between Jim Hunt and Jesse Helms?
   1. Yes _____ 2. No _____

3. Which candidate for the U.S. Senate from N.C. did you vote for?
   1. Hunt _____
   2. Helms _____
   3. Didn't vote _____
   4. Other (Specify) _____

4. Of the two candidates, Hunt and Helms, which one do you think spent the most money on media advertising?
   1. Hunt _____
   2. Helms _____
   3. Don't Know _____

5. Which of the two candidates do you think would be most likely to support increased federal aid for education?
   1. Hunt _____
   2. Helms _____
   3. Don't Know _____

IF BOTH QUESTIONS ARE MISSED, GO TO #15

6. From the following list, which form of media advertising made you most aware of the U.S. Senate race in N.C.? (IF IT IS A COMBINATION, SPECIFY)
   1. Radio _____
   2. Television advertisements _____
   3. Billboards and Bumper stickers _____
   4. Newspapers _____
   5. News programs on TV _____
   6. Other (specify) _____

7. What political party are you registered with?
   1. Democrat _____
   2. Republican _____
   3. Independent _____
   4. Other _____
   5. Don't Know _____

8. During the election, did you see any of the Jim Hunt or Jesse Helms TV ads for U.S. Senate?
   1. Yes _____
   2. No _____
   IF NO, GO TO #15

9. Did any of these TV ads influence your choice for a U.S. Senate candidate? (GIVE RESPONDENT A FEW SECONDS TO THINK ABOUT IT)
   1. Yes _____
   2. No _____
   3. Not sure _____
IF YES, TO WHAT EXTENT? A great deal _____ Some _____
A little _____ None _____
IF NO OR NOT SURE, GO TO #15

10. Did the TV ads:
   1. Help you switch from Helms to Hunt _____
   2. Help you switch from Hunt to Helms _____
   3. Help you choose Helms _____
   4. Help you choose Hunt _____
   5. Turn you off to voting for either candidate _____

11. Do you think the TV ads dealt with, overall
   1. Specific issues, like Social security or the economy _____
   2. The personalities of the candidates _____
   3. Simply mudslinging _____
   4. All of the above _____

12. Which candidate for U.S. Senate was the most responsible for mudslinging, or negative TV ads?
    1. Jim Hunt _____
    2. Jesse Helms _____
    3. Both equally _____

13. Do you feel that either candidate presented an image of himself in his TV ads that was at odds with your previous image of him? (Read list)
    1. Hunt presented an image of himself that was at odds with the public's previous perception of him _____
    2. Helms presented an image of himself that was at odds with the public's previous perception of him _____
    3. Both candidates TV images were consistent with the public's perception of them _____
    4. Neither candidate's TV images were consistent with the public's perception of them _____

14. Did any of the TV ads give you a less than favorable image of the candidate?
    1. Helms' TV ads gave me a less than favorable image of him _____
    2. Hunt's TV ads gave me a less than favorable image of him _____
    3. Both candidates TV ads gave me a less than favorable image of them _____
    4. Neither candidate's TV ads gave me a less than favorable image of them _____

15. Did you vote in the 1984 Presidential election?
    1. Yes _____
    2. No _____ (IF NO, GO TO #17, IF YES CONTINUE)

16. Who did you vote for in the 1984 Presidential election?
    1. Ronald Reagan _____
    2. Walter Mondale _____
    3. Other _____

17. What is your sex?
    1. Male _____
    2. Female _____

18. What is your race?
    1. Caucasion (white) _____
    2. Afro-American (black) _____
    3. Hispanic _____
    4. Other (specify) _____

19. What is your age?

_____

20. What is your income?
    1. Below $10,000 _____
    2. $10,000 - $20,000 _____
    3. $20,000 - $30,000 _____
    4. $30,000 or above _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION!
Good-bye and have a nice evening.

VITA

James Judd Bason was born in Durham, North Carolina on September 17, 1960. He attended elementary and high school in Hillsborough, North Carolina, graduating from Orange High School in June, 1978. The following September, he entered Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, and in May, 1983, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science.

In the fall of 1983, he began work towards a Master's of Arts degree at Appalachian State University, and in January, 1984, accepted a teaching assistantship in the Department of Political Science.

In August of 1985, the Master of Arts degree was awarded. Mr. Bason will begin employment teaching political science at Young Harris College, Young Harris, Georgia, in August, 1985.

The author is a member of Pi Sigma Alpha, Pi Gamma Mu, and the American Political Science Association.

Mr. Bason's address is P.O. Box 275, Hillsborough, North Carolina. His parents are Mr. Earl G. Bason and Ms. Violet J. Chance, both of Hillsborough, North Carolina.