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TELEVISION COVERS THE AMERICAN PARTIES:
EFFECTS ON POLITICAL OPINION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of
The Ohio State University

By
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From the 1960s to the present, political science survey analysis has demonstrated that increasing numbers of respondents regard the American political parties as negative or irrelevant forces on the political landscape. During this same period, television became the most pervasive of the mass media. Yet little is known about how television covers the parties or how that coverage affects political opinion. This dissertation utilizes a multimethod approach to explore that coverage and its effects.

First, a content analysis of evening television network news shows broadcast during the Democratic and Republican national convention periods from 1968-1992 was performed. The analysis showed that the national conventions were most often covered as the start of the fall campaign, with the parties portrayed in their role as supporters of front-running candidates. Even within the context of the convention, however, coverage of candidate image still predominated over that of the parties themselves. When the parties were the focus of coverage, they were most often depicted as divided over their candidates, rather than united behind them. In addition, the parties were much more
likely to be shown in an unfavorable light. Candidate-image and party division themes, then, were found to predominate in news coverage of parties, with both conceptualized as unfavorable from the parties' point of view.

Next, these themes were utilized as bases for developing specially produced television news stories to be used as experimental stimuli in a laboratory setting. Specifically, the experimental analysis explored how exposure to these unfavorable stories affects subjects' attitudes toward the parties, support for the party system, and the importance accorded to a candidate's party ties.

After viewing news story content about party division, some subgroups of subjects were found to accord relatively less importance to the candidate-party connection when evaluating candidates, as expected. However, less knowledgeable independent subjects reported the candidate-party tie to be a more, rather than less, important trait after the division story.

News story content focusing on candidate image was found to persuade some subjects to express less party system support, as hypothesized. But subjects in the mid-range of partisan strength and political knowledge reported higher, rather than lower, levels of party system support after this
story. Moreover, contrary to expectations, exposure to the candidate-image story produced more, rather than less, favorable attitudes toward the parties.

Findings suggest, then, that the predominant ways in which television has covered the parties over the last few decades can be viewed as a double-edged sword. On one hand, coverage of parties as divided can influence viewers to either de-emphasize the role of the candidate-party connection or, for independents, to perceive it as a more important, but probably unfavorable, trait. Further, candidate-image news content can result in decreased support for the party system. In both these instances, the role of the parties in the electoral process is either diminished or viewed negatively. On the other hand, stories centering solely on candidate image produced favorable views of the parties as well as increased party system support for mid-range subjects.

The study concludes that the ways in which television regards and portrays the political parties and their candidates hold important implications for the role that the public allows the parties to play in electoral politics.
Dedicated to my mother and my daughter
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my appreciation to many good people who helped make this project possible. My committee members, Professors Paul Beck, Tom Nelson, Herb Asher, and Lee Becker, gave me sound advice and graciously shared their knowledge with me over the course of a sometimes arduous research process. They are first-rate teachers and researchers and I owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:
THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

From the 1960s to the present, political science survey analysis has demonstrated that increasing numbers of respondents regard the American political parties as negative or irrelevant forces on the political landscape. Moreover, the proportion of respondents who call themselves political independents rather than Democratic or Republican party identifiers has increased over the same time period.

Why has this erosion in the parties' significance occurred? Certainly historical and institutional factors have played a role in their demise. For example, historical factors have contributed to a decrease in the traditional role of the parties as purveyors of patronage. Many party jobs and other benefits that accrued to new immigrants in urban areas during the first half of this century are now supplied by jobs programs, social welfare agencies, and civil service placement policies. In addition, the campaign reforms instituted in the 1970s by the Democratic party have resulted in the institutionalization of the presidential
primary system, accompanied by a diminution of the parties' role as nominators of presidential candidates. The ensuing emphasis on candidate-centered rather than party-centered campaigns has affected the ability of both parties to nominate sub-presidential candidates as well.

But this dissertation proposes that the content of mediated messages about the parties also plays a role in how the Democratic and Republican parties are regarded by the public. Further, it posits that such message content also affects the degree of public support for the American party system, as well as the importance accorded to party ties in candidate evaluations.

This chapter now turns to a discussion of theoretical considerations and a review of relevant literature. It closes by previewing subsequent material.

PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE PARTIES

Most of the existing research on American public assessments of political parties utilizes survey methodology, in particular responses to questions asked in the National Election Studies (NES). Campbell et al. (1960) were the first such researchers, suggesting that responses about the parties during the 1950s could be

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1The National Election Studies have been conducted every two years since 1952. Originally the surveys were conducted by the Survey Research Center and later by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan.
grouped into several general areas. Later, Nie et al. (1979) found that most people during the 1950s held favorable attitudes about their own party and either negative or neutral perceptions of the opposition. More importantly, they found as well that, by the early 1970s, those who held either negative or neutral attitudes toward the parties in general outnumbered those who supported the parties (Nie et al., p.57). More recently, Kessel (1992) found that over the 1952-88 period, parties were less important and less salient to voters than were candidates or issues.

In addition to these studies, there has been a lively exchange in the literature between Martin Wattenberg and Stephen Craig. The controversy began with Wattenberg's (1984) "neutrality hypothesis" in which he held that the public has actually demonstrated increasingly neutral rather than negative assessments of the parties. He argued that just because citizens split their tickets or refrain from calling themselves Democrats or Republicans does not mean that they are rejecting the parties. They just may not see the campaign in partisan terms.

Craig (1985) challenged Wattenberg, contending that an absence of increased negativity does not constitute support for the neutrality hypothesis. He agreed with Wattenberg

---

The areas were economic prosperity and depression, social welfare policies, war and peace, other foreign issues, corruption and governmental change, and groups and candidates in terms of their party affiliation.
that there was no sharp increase in negative positions toward the parties, but argued that there was no trend toward neutrality or toward lower positivity either.

Much of the Wattenberg-Craig dispute is methodological in nature. Both authors utilize, as do most studies of party assessments, the NES open-ended "likes/dislikes" questions and feeling thermometer ratings for the Democratic and Republican parties, and the 1980 NES party support index in their analyses.\(^3\) The latter measure concerns itself with support for the American party system in general, rather than opinions about the two major parties specifically.

In summary, public opinion about the Democratic and Republican parties has consistently shown that much of the public views them with either low salience and low importance, low efficacy, or as irrelevant or even negative public institutions. Thus, public opinion about the American political parties can probably best be exemplified by the report that almost half of the 1980 NES sample (48%) agreed with the statement that "we probably don't need political parties in America anyway (Beck and Sorauf, 1992, p.30)."

This dissertation focuses on the role that media coverage of the Democratic and Republican parties plays in public opinion about them, about the party system, and about

---

\(^3\) Additional studies have been done using NES questions on, among other things, the effectiveness of the parties versus elections (Asher 1992) and versus the three branches of government (Dennis 1976). In both studies, the parties were seen by the public to be less effective than either elections or the governmental branches.
the candidate-party connection. But before undertaking that analysis, a review of past research on the effects of media coverage of campaigns and issues is in order, areas in which political scientists have traditionally dealt.

MEDIA COVERAGE:
Campaigns

Much of the media coverage of presidential campaigns has been found to be presented in terms of a "horse race:" who is ahead, who is trailing, who is gaining, who is doing better than expected.* An association has been found between horse race coverage and an audience's inability to recall substantive campaign information (Patterson, 1980; Patterson and McClure, 1976) as well as an increased ability to recall campaign "hoopla" stories (Patterson and McClure, 1976).

Some scholars have argued that horse race coverage is due to the television medium's structural need for drama (for example, see Patterson and McClure, 1976). Patterson (1994) suggests that it is due to the "game schema" of journalists. His thesis is that journalists view campaigns

---

*A side effect of television's horse race coverage is an emphasis on the momentum of candidates, which disproportionately stresses the importance of winners in the earliest primary and caucus contests in New Hampshire and Iowa. These "winners" are not only those who actually receive a plurality of the vote, but more importantly are also those whom the media designate as winners because they finish better than the media's expectations would indicate. Coverage of the primary campaign season is devoted almost exclusively to these early winners, an important advantage for them, and a bandwagon effect is begun. This suggests that, in effect, the public is left to choose a candidate based on the media's identification of early front-runners.
as competitive games among candidates who play strategically in order to achieve goals. Thus, press coverage of campaigns reflects such views of electoral politics. Patterson argues that campaigns have come to be centered around the media, which now play a pivotal role in the presidential selection process, a role they can not and should not play.

**MEDIA COVERAGE: Issues**

Some of the ways in which the media cover political issues have been found to affect presidential evaluations and attributions of responsibility. Additionally, the ways in which issue messages are framed have been found to affect attitudes about the issues themselves.

First, media coverage of issues has been found to influence presidential evaluations. A substantial amount of research has been done on how the news can set the public agenda; that is, how it can draw public attention to certain national problems. Further, those problems have been found to affect evaluations of the president. For example, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found that when defense, inflation, and unemployment issues were emphasized in news stories, subjects' use of them in evaluating overall presidential performance was twice that of when such issues were not emphasized.

Likewise, scholars have found evidence for the impact of foreign policy attitudes in evaluations of presidential
performance. For instance, media dissemination of information regarding Ronald Reagan's role in the Iran-Contra scandal fortuitously occurred while University of Michigan personnel were in the field interviewing respondents for the NES survey.

This data showed that as media coverage of the scandal increased, there was a significant increase in its importance in evaluations of Reagan's performance (Krosnick and Kinder, 1990).

Similarly, an examination of national survey data showed that the media's emphasis on the Gulf crisis altered the ingredients of assessments of George Bush's performance. After the war, those assessments were based more on confidence in Bush's management of the conflict and less on his handling of other foreign or domestic economy matters (Krosnick and Brannon, 1993).

A second way in which coverage of issues affects public opinion concerns attributions of responsibility. Iyengar (1987 and 1991) has shown that average citizens are capable of and quite willing to attribute responsibility for national problems based on the media's framing of a news story as either episodic or thematic.

For most of the study's issue areas, subjects exposed to episodic news frames (in which personal stories are portrayed) attributed responsibility for the issue problem to the victim. On the other hand, subjects exposed to
thematic frames (in which "backgrounder" coverage is featured) attributed responsibility to society or the government.  

Finally, the ways in which issues are framed in messages have been found to influence attitudes toward the issues themselves. Nelson and Kinder's (1996) survey-based experiments, carried out as part of the 1989 NES pilot instrument, involved question wording variations (societal group- or other-centered frames) on three issues. A welfare question was presented as either a "welfare freeloader" or "budget deficit" frame, an AIDS question within either a "blame the victim" or "spend the money on cancer research" frame, and an affirmative action question within either an "unfair advantage" or "reverse discrimination" frame. They found that, for all three issues, attitudes about the involved group (the poor, gays, and minorities, respectively) played a greater role in attitudes toward the issues when the issue was cast in the group-centered frame.

In sum, political science literature has involved a substantial amount of research about media coverage of campaigns and issues. Additionally, effects of mediated messages such as these on recall of campaign events,

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Iyengar (1991) found differential framing effects for poverty, terrorism, some types of crime, and black poverty, but not for unemployment or affirmative action. When stories of the Iran-Contra scandal focused on criticism of the president's role, causal responsibility was attributed to him. When the arms sales were presented as an instrument of United States foreign policy, however, contextual, nonpresidential attributions resulted.
Certainly campaigns and issues are important aspects of American politics; political scientists have properly focused on the impact that messages about them can have on political opinion. However, in a democracy, campaigns are conducted and issues are debated against a backdrop of party politics. Yet little is known about how the media cover the parties and how such coverage influences public opinion. Does party coverage influence an audience’s feelings for and beliefs about the parties? Does it affect the level of support for the contemporary two-party system? Does it have an impact on how a candidate’s relationship with the party is regarded? These questions have been virtually ignored in the political science literature.

Several scholars have speculated about how the media cover the political parties. Ranney (1983), for one, argues that such coverage is either negative or nonexistent, as a result of a structural bias in news organizations. Because the progressive movement of the early 1900s was initiated in part by muckraking journalists whose program included exposing the corruption of political machines, political parties were portrayed as enemies of the people. Direct
primaries, on the other hand, were seen as a way for the public to rule directly. Ranney contends that these anti-party attitudes are implicit in the journalism profession today and that they bias news stories in terms of a de-emphasis on or negative coverage of the parties. Similarly, Patterson (1994) holds that journalistic values and political values are at odds with each other, contributing to the media’s antipolitical bias.

Gans (1979) extends these arguments by asserting that progressive values are used by journalists as a baseline from which to judge deviance. The goal of his participant observation study of 1965-1975 national television network and newsmagazine journalists was to discover how and why they selected the news, what they left out, how they reported stories, and what kinds of people they were. He suggests that the "enduring values" of the journalism profession resemble those of the progressive movement. He argues that "progressive ideology sidesteps or cuts across the partisanship of the political parties; it was, and continues to be, attractive to people who, like journalists, regard themselves as political independents (Gans, 1979, p.205)."

Ranney (1983) suggests another theoretical basis for television’s stress on candidate coverage over other

6These enduring values are ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and nationalism.
elements of the campaign, most notably, over coverage of the political parties. He argues that the structural requirements of the medium and its economic need to hold an audience result in coverage of campaigns as games with the main players being individuals. A group or organization, on the other hand, is considered to be an abstraction, so it must be presented in verbal messages alone or in visuals of a crowd. The usual way for television to cover such a group is to personify it by interviewing its leaders. So, for instance, television coverage of national party conventions is presented as that year's contest among candidates with little reference to the continuity the parties provide. Thus, the presidential campaign is depicted as a contest between two candidates, not between two parties.

The arguments of these scholars suggest that coverage of parties as institutions of the American political system has either been neglected altogether or negatively biased. Indeed, the few studies which have been done on the subject seem to confirm these suspicions. For example, Robinson (1980) found in a content analysis of the 1976 primary season that the media (newspapers and national television networks) placed much more emphasis on the importance of the role of the New Hampshire primary than of the parties in choosing presidential nominees.

Additionally, Miller et al. (1979) conducted a content analysis of newspapers which showed that by far the largest
proportion of critical coverage in 1974 was devoted to parties. Similarly, in another study conducted during the 1992 general election season, more than 80% of network news stories on the Democratic party and 87% on the Republican party were found to be negative (Clinton's The One, 1992).

Because of the dearth of research on media coverage of parties, there is also a lack of studies on how such coverage might affect public opinion. Several scholars have noted this gap in the literature. Graber (1991), for one, suggests that relatively few studies have been done on the subject because of the difficulty in estimating the extent of media influence. She sees the shift from party-dominated presidential campaigns to direct primaries as signifying a major change in our political system, entailing complex interactions among many different political forces, many of which can interact with media effects. Thus, media effects might prove difficult to disentangle from other variables affecting public opinion.

So, two chief questions remain: what is the nature of media coverage of the parties and how might such coverage affect public opinion?

\[\text{Coverage which criticized the parties was operationalized in this work by coding for words such as "wrong, incorrect, harmful, misguided," while coverage which praised them was indicated by words such as "helpful, intelligent, effective." The proportion of critical coverage of seven political entities was measured: the U.S. (10%), Supreme Court (25%), State and Local Government (34%), President Ford (38%), the Administration (40%), Congress (42%), and Parties (70%) (Miller et al., 1979, p.69).}\]
The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of theoretical bases underlying an examination of those questions, namely media frames and themes and persuasion.

MEDIA COVERAGE: Frames and Themes

Messages disseminated by the mass media are thought to be framed, or packaged, in certain ways. In their comprehensive analysis of framing, Pan and Kosicki (1993) make two important points. One is that framing is a strategy employed by journalists to construct news discourse, guided by their organizational constraints, rules and conventions, and anticipated audience responses. At the same time, elite opinion leaders attempt to frame political discourse to their advantage. Thus, the media are thought to play an intermediary role between such elites and the media-consuming public.

Another important point is that one of the devices which journalists can use to compose or construct news discourse is thematic structure. "A theme is an idea that connects different semantic elements of a story (e.g., descriptions of an action or an actor, quotes of sources, and background information) into a coherent whole. (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p.63)." This suggests that a thematic framing approach to media coverage can be used to analyze not only the ways in which journalists construct news
discourse but also how such discourse may provide a conduit between political elites and the public.

Thus, the thematic frames used in party coverage are thought to be a result of the tension between the parties' efforts to cast themselves in a favorable light for public consumption and the media's structural requirements for conflict and drama. And exposure to those themes may affect the opinions held by audience members. In order to lay the theoretical groundwork for investigating how such effects might occur, the next section discusses persuasion theories and the conceptualization of attitudes.

**EFFECTS OF COVERAGE: Persuasion**

Many theories of persuasion can be found in the social and cognitive psychology literatures. One rather straightforward theory, the message-learning approach, involves exposure to negative or positive information about an object in a persuasive message. The content of the message then either convinces audience members to change their attitudes about the object in the direction of the message, or it does not.

Attitude change is thought to occur in other ways as well, including through priming and framing processes, both of which involve activation of information already stored in memory. For example, recall that previous research on coverage of issues found that the mention of certain
national problems occasioned their greater prominence in presidential evaluations (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

This research involves priming, a process in which the issues stressed in media messages were made more salient to viewers, who were subsequently better able to readily access them from memory when asked to evaluate the president. Thus, this stored information provides a prior context within which people interpret new information.

On the other hand, framing processes are involved in the studies previously discussed in which episodic and thematic media coverage resulted in differential attributions of responsibility (Iyengar, 1991) and in which group-centered frames affected opinion about the groups and, in turn, the issues themselves (Nelson and Kinder, 1996). Framing processes involve "information weighting," in which the feature of an issue emphasized in the message frame is accorded greater weight in a person's attitude (Nelson et al. 1997).

While persuasion accomplished through priming and framing is important in the study of the effects of mediated messages, the learning approach is more central to the research undertaken in this dissertation. Learning-based persuasion does not involve activation of prior stored information as do priming and framing.
However, the strength of a person’s prior attitudes and level of knowledge about an object are thought to be important moderators of learning-based persuasion.

**Attitude Strength:** Attitudes have been defined in many disparate ways by researchers (for example, see discussions in Fiske and Taylor, 1991, ch.11; and McGuire, 1985). The definition used in this dissertation is one which reflects an emerging consensus among social and cognitive psychologists and seems well-suited for the study’s purposes. Simply put, an attitude is conceptualized as an evaluation, specifically a directed judgment (which is generally valenced) toward an object. Attitudes are thought to have both an affective and a cognitive component, both of which may be valenced. The affective component involves an emotional stance toward the object, while the cognitive has to do with beliefs about it. The more consistent these two components, the stronger the attitude is thought to be. Affect is considered to be the more stable, enduring attitudinal component, while cognitions are more changeable and short-term. Therefore, beliefs about an object are believed to be more susceptible to persuasion than are feelings about it.

Attitudes vary in their susceptibility to change, according to their level of strength, with strong attitudes being the ones more resistant to change. Strong attitudes have been defined by Krosnick and colleagues (1993) as
possessing several features besides resistance to change: they are persistent over time and they exert a strong impact on information processing and behavior. These authors suggest several dimensions around which attitude strength revolves, including its extremity, intensity, certainty, importance, relevance, and accessibility. Direct experience of, affective-cognitive consistency about, and a high level of knowledge of an attitude object are also important factors in strong attitudes.

**Knowledge Level**: A person's knowledge level about an attitude object can influence susceptibility to persuasion effects. Those who are more sophisticated and who possess higher levels of knowledge about an object have been found to be more resistant to persuasion effects than are those with lower levels (for example, see McGuire, 1968; Zaller, 1992). While the more knowledgeable tend to receive and comprehend a message, they are also less likely to yield to it. The notion is that they are more apt to be familiar with arguments on both sides of an issue and have thought them through prior to exposure to the message. As a result, they have already mounted their own counterarguments in support of their own position about the object.

In sum, the content of media messages may cause audience members to change certain beliefs about an attitude object. Further, their susceptibility to such persuasion is thought to be moderated by the strength of their prior
attitudes and level of knowledge about the object. Specifically, for the purposes of this dissertation, media coverage of the parties is posited to alter attitudes about the parties, support for the party system, and the importance accorded to a candidate's party ties. Further, those who possess stronger attitudes about the parties and higher levels of political knowledge are thought to be less susceptible to such persuasion effects than are those who hold weaker attitudes and possess lower levels of knowledge.

**CONCLUSION**

Several phenomena important to American electoral politics emerged at about the same time in our nation's history: the weakening of political party organizations, the rise of candidate-centered campaigns, and the diminished role of partisanship in citizens' vote calculations. At the same time, scholars began to study the effects of mediated messages on political opinion. The purpose of this dissertation is to use a multimethod approach in order to explore how parties are covered by the media and how that coverage affects attitudes toward the Democratic and Republican parties, support for the American party system, and the importance of party ties in candidate evaluations. Hopefully this study will advance new insights, some of which can provide the foundation for future research.
Forthcoming Chapters

The plan of this dissertation is to present, in Chapter Two, the design of the research project, which involves both content analysis and experimental methodology. Appropriate research questions, hypotheses, and operational definitions are specified. The results of the content analysis, which explores the ways in which the parties have been covered over the past three decades, are presented in Chapter Three. This "real world" news content is then replicated in specially produced news stories and used as stimuli in a laboratory experiment, which focuses on the persuasive effects of those stories on viewers' attitudes. Chapter Four addresses the methodological considerations and Chapter Five presents the results of that experiment. Finally, Chapter Six reviews the findings of this study and sets them within the broader context of the role of the political parties and party politics in the United States. Avenues for future research will also be proposed.
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter introduces the multimethod research design used to examine how the media cover the parties and how such coverage might affect audience members. After a consideration of general questions intended to guide the study, the chapter proposes a model of persuasion effects, and introduces operational definitions of variables and hypotheses to be used in the analysis.

The theory and literature reviewed in the previous chapter inform several key research questions. First, what are the frames, or themes, with which parties are covered by the media? Second, what is the valence of that coverage? Third, can exposure to such valenced thematic coverage persuade audience members to alter their attitudes toward the parties, support for the party system, and degree of import allotted to candidates’ party ties?

These questions are used as a framework for the empirical analyses to follow. But first, a description of a proposed model of persuasion effects is in order.
MODEL OF PERSUASION EFFECTS

After providing an overview of the model, this section will discuss the operationalization of the independent and dependent variables of interest, as well as of possible moderating variables.

The proposed research design enables a comprehensive test of the persuasion effects of party coverage. First, a content analysis of media coverage allows a "real world" look at just how the Democratic and Republican parties are portrayed in the media. In particular, the themes and valences of that coverage need to be explicated. The findings of the content analysis can then be used in developing stimuli for use in a laboratory experiment, which provides a controlled environment in which to determine effects of party coverage on audience members.

The Independent Variables:
Media Coverage of Parties

The media coverage conceptualized in this research design, to be examined using content analysis, is that provided by television news broadcasts. Television is chosen because it has been found to be the medium which enjoys the most exposure,¹ which takes the least amount of cognitive

¹Exposure to television should not be equated with its having the most powerful effect on an audience. In other words, just because television is the most prevalent medium, it does not necessarily follow that it is the most effective. Indeed, depending on the way that exposure is measured, some scholars have argued that there is more exposure to newspapers than there is to television (Bogart, 1981).
effort on the part of audience members, and which supplies the most dramatic, exciting, and even negative presentations. Further, television now plays a central role in the candidate-screening process, a role which some feel it has pre-empted from the parties (McLeod et al. 1994; Patterson, 1994; Ranney, 1983).

Television news coverage of the parties is operationalized as news stories about the Democratic and Republican parties appearing in the evening news shows of the three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) during the national convention periods from 1968-1992. The convention periods are chosen because they are virtually the only times during the campaign season that the party becomes the focus of electoral politics and of media coverage (Patterson, 1994). It is the period of time in which the party comes together as a party and engages in its most important collective activities: not only the gathering and seating of delegates and the nominating roll-call vote, but also committee work, debating the platform, attending to constituent groups, and communicating partisan rhetoric to the party faithful as well as to the nation at large. Thus, it is during the convention period, more than any other period of the campaign season, that television coverage of the parties as groups should predominate. If it does not predominate here, it probably will not elsewhere.
An analysis of the 1968-1992 time period has two important advantages. First, the period begins with a year, 1968, before the implementation of party reforms, and ends with a time span during which the direct primary became the key nomination mechanism. Second, the period comprises years in which television was found to be the predominant source of Americans' political information. Evening news shows are chosen for analysis because, while the total amount of air time that networks devoted to convention coverage varied considerably over the period,\(^2\) the network evening news shows have remained a constant thirty-minute broadcast feature each night of the convention for all years under analysis. They are thus expected to present the highlights of each convention day and to focus on the important elements of the conventions as well as on other campaign news. Moreover, videotapes of these shows over the time period are available for analysis at the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives.

Using a tripartite approach to the conceptualization of party structure, the party is defined in this model as the party organization and the party-in-government.\(^3\) Thus the

\(^2\)The networks cut back on their convention coverage in 1980 from their previous gavel-to-gavel coverage. Consequently, coverage dropped from approximately 4100 minutes in 1968 to just 1300 in 1984 for each network (Shafer, 1988, p.274).

\(^3\)While the tripartite model includes the party-in-the-electorate, that segment is treated in this model as a constituent interest of the party and will be discussed as such in the following pages. Delegates, on the other hand, are considered as part of the party.
party includes party officials; delegates; ideological, issue, and traditional support group leaders; current and former elected officials; and former presidential candidates present at the national convention. These individuals are considered here to be spokespersons for the parties.

Party coverage is operationalized by identification of the themes that are used by the media to portray the parties. This thematic approach utilizes a theoretical framework taken from Shafer’s (1988) theory of a "bifurcated" convention, which he defines as one in which there is a disjuncture between versions of the convention as experienced by participants and as viewed by the television audience. Shafer argues that several areas of conflict occur within the bifurcated convention, stemming from the recurring struggle between the parties and the media over the presentation of and messages about the central group of convention actors on television.

Shafer holds that in an era of post-reform politics, the main purpose of the party convention is no longer to nominate a candidate, but to launch the fall campaign for the front runner, who has already been chosen by voters during the primary season. This, then, is the main item on the agenda for party leaders, but the ways in which the media will cover the launching of the campaign are affected by coverage of the conflict occurring within the party itself. One source of this intraparty conflict is between
the supporters of the successful nominee and those of alternative candidates. Another source pits individual issue activists and/or interest group representatives against the nominee and official party figures.

Thus, Shafer's work suggests several topics which can be utilized as a framework for a thematic analysis of network news content: launching the fall campaign of the front-running candidate as well as providing a forum for interest and policy debates, for party publicity, and for media commentary. The content analysis will also determine the types of coverage thought to be favorable or unfavorable from the parties' viewpoint.

**Dependent Variables**

Effects of party coverage on three dependent variables are explored in this dissertation: attitudes toward the parties, support for the party system, and importance of party ties in candidate evaluations. While they are operationalized below, the specific measures used to tap each are discussed in Chapter Four.

**Attitudes About the Parties:** First, the model looks at how exposure to thematically framed news story content affects attitudes toward the Democratic and Republican parties. Attitudes are operationalized as affect and cognitions about the parties. These two attitudinal
components are analyzed separately in order to ascertain whether audience members use the affective or cognitive route, or both, when regarding parties.

**Support for the Party System:** Second, the model explores how the content of news stories affects support for the American party system. The level of party system support is defined as the degree to which audience members think that: the best rule in voting is to pick a candidate regardless of party label, it is better to be a firm party supporter than to be an independent, parties do more to confuse issues than to provide clear choices, it would be better if we had no party labels on the ballot, and that we probably do not need parties anymore.

**Importance of Party Ties in Candidate Evaluations:** Third, the model examines how the content of party stories affects the level of importance accorded to a candidate’s party ties. Such ties are operationalized by a series of questions asking how important various party-related traits would be in candidate evaluations. Those traits include a candidate’s effectiveness as a party member, competence as a party representative, and strength of party loyalty.

**Moderating Variables**

Two dispositional characteristics, the strength of audience members’ party identification and level of political knowledge, are considered appropriate moderating
variables in this study. Both can provide an indication of the strength of prior attitudes about the three dependent variables of interest here. As discussed in Chapter One, the strength of those predispositions help to determine a subject's hypothesized resistance or susceptibility to the persuasive effects of news story content.

The classical conceptualization of party identification views it as a stable long-term psychological attachment to a party (Campbell et al. 1960; but see revisionists such as MacKuen et al. 1989, for an opposing viewpoint). It involves both direction and extremity and has been a consistently robust determinant in many political science studies. Partisan strength is operationalized by self-identification as a strong Republican, weak Republican, independent, weak Democrat, strong Democrat, no preference, or other party.

Level of political knowledge is operationalized as an awareness of simple facts about the American party system, such as the number of U.S. senators, the term of office for representatives, and identification of the commander-in-chief. Additionally, more party-specific measures define knowledge. These involve identification of past and present public officials as either Democrats or Republicans (Spiro

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4Certainly other audience characteristics can affect attitudes about political phenomena. For example, attention to mediated messages about public affairs, complexity of information-processing strategies, and assessments of media images have been found to exert an influence on efficacy and trust in government (Becker and Kosicki, 1995).
HYPOTHESES

The model of media effects described in this chapter is intended to test several hypotheses. Specifically, audience members who are exposed to unfavorable news story content about parties are expected to report less favorable affect and cognitions about the Democratic and Republican parties, lower levels of support for the American party system, and attribute less importance to candidates’ party ties than are those who are exposed to favorable news story content.

Further, susceptibility to persuasion effects is expected to be moderated by partisan strength and political knowledge level. In general, those who possess stronger partisanship and more political knowledge are expected to be less susceptible to persuasion effects than are those who hold weaker levels of partisan strength and knowledge.

An explication of these hypotheses are presented in Chapter Four, while the results of testing them are presented in Chapter Five.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the research design which is used in subsequent chapters to examine the effects of
media coverage of parties. Relevant research questions have been proposed and a model of media effects has been advanced. The multimethod approach incorporates an analysis of actual news content as well as a laboratory experiment. Independent, dependent, and moderating variables have been operationally defined and hypotheses set forth.

The next chapter defines measures, discusses methodological considerations, and reports on findings of the content analysis.
CHAPTER 3

THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The content analysis presented in this chapter explores the ways in which television covers the Democratic and Republican parties. This analysis is intended to accomplish an important goal: to provide a portrait of the "real world" of television coverage. The findings will be used primarily as a basis for developing the independent variables in the experimental analysis to follow. Secondarily, the analysis will also provide an empirical test of contentions found in the literature that television coverage of the parties is either virtually nonexistent or negative in nature (as reviewed in Chapter One).

In order to fulfill the goal of this analysis, two dimensions of party coverage need to be determined: the focus, or subject, of coverage, as well as its valence, or degree of favorability.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the quadrennial national convention periods are virtually the only times that the parties as entities come into being. The convention affords
the party an opportunity to present itself to the public --
to define its image, so to speak. And a principal means of
disseminating that image is through network television
coverage. Since the networks no longer provide gavel-to-
gavel coverage, the "gatekeeping" and editing decisions they
make have important ramifications about how the party's
image is presented to the public. That is, when the
television camera remains trained on the podium or leaves
the convention floor, decisions are made by the networks
about what will be included in or excluded from coverage.
Thus, in the present study, an analysis of news content
during the convention period can be considered a reflection
of the ways in which television covers the parties.

The analysis seeks answers to two key research
questions. First, in order to explore the focus of party-
centered stories, what are the frames, or themes, with which
parties are covered on television? And second, in order to
ascertain its valence, what is the proportion of
unfavorable, favorable, and neutral party coverage?

The Sample

The procedure utilized in choosing the sample of
stories for analysis was intended to maximize the likelihood
that references to the political parties would be found. Thus, as much party-referenced material as possible was included in the population of stories from which the sample was selected. The Vanderbilt University Television News Archives Abstracts was chosen as the most appropriate data base for sample selection, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The Abstracts divide up network evening newscasts into general story topics. The time each story starts and stops and a short description of the story content are also provided. The population of stories was considered to be all campaign stories in the newscasts for the national convention period of each party (designated here as "convention" stories). The description of each convention story was first reviewed, then those which seemed to provide the most party-centered content were categorized as such. Other convention stories were categorized as candidate-centered or as containing other content. Table 3.1 below displays the distribution of story types in the population of campaign stories.¹

¹Population story time for 1968 was not available from The Abstracts. Therefore, population and sample data for that year have been dropped from the totals and percentages on Tables 3.1 and 3.2.
As indicated, party-centered stories comprised the overwhelming proportion of convention stories for both parties (81% of total story time). These party-centered stories appeared under various headings in The Abstracts, but all of them contained key words such as "Convention," "Democrats," or "Republicans." But some stories with those key words designated in the title were found to actually contain candidate-centered or other coverage when the descriptions were reviewed.

For example, the 1988 Republican convention period contained two stories, one headed "Campaign 88/Republican Convention/Quayle Hometown" and the other, "Campaign 88/Quayle." Yet both stories were actually found to be candidate-centered stories and were thus designated as such. Simply put, topic headings designated in The Abstracts were
found to be only a rough guide to story content; hence, the story descriptions were relied upon for categorization purposes.

After the population of stories was determined in this manner, the sample for analysis was drawn at random from the group of stories categorized as party-centered (i.e., the group of stories which survived the selection process based on their descriptions as party-centered stories in The Abstracts). Table 3.2 below displays the percentage of population (convention) story time and of party-centered stories which comprised the final sample for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic Party</th>
<th>Republican Party</th>
<th>Both Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Time</td>
<td>12,430</td>
<td>12,350</td>
<td>24,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total Pop. (Convention) Time</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Party-Centered Story Time</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Time entries are the number of seconds of story time. Percentages are based on story time (as shown in Table 3.1) for the categories indicated.

**Table 3.2**
**Final Story Sample:**
**Percentage of Story Population For 1972-1992 Period**

As indicated, the sample selected represents 16% of all of the convention stories in the population and a full one-fifth (20%) of all party-centered stories for the period.
In order to capture a complete picture of television coverage of the parties, each year's convention was divided into three time periods and stories were selected at random from each. Table 3.3 displays the data for the final sample of party-centered stories that was used in the analysis. As shown in the top portion of the table, a proportionate distribution of party-centered stories by convention period comprises the sample for the two parties. Ten percent of the sample for each party is from the pre-convention period, drawn from newscasts the day before the opening of the conventions. Eighty percent of the Democratic sample and 78% of the Republican sample are stories from newscasts appearing on days that each convention was actually in session. And 10% of the Democratic and 12% of the Republican sample are from the post-convention period, newscasts shown the day after the convention. The total sample comprises almost eight full hours of coverage (28,470 seconds).

As displayed in the middle section of Table 3.3, the final sample includes 125 stories. Of these, 97 are straight news stories, 19 are those designated by the networks as opinion segments, and seven are mixed news and opinion. The three national broadcast networks were systematically sampled such that a proportionate distribution of stories is accomplished across the period.

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2 See chapter two for a full description of operationalizations. See appendix A for coding protocols and the content analysis codebook.
The bottom section of Table 3.3 shows the percentage of sample story time per network (31% for ABC, 39% for CBS, and 30% for NBC).

Sample selection conducted as described, then, provides a group of stories for analysis that can be considered as representative of coverage of the major parties' nominating conventions as presented by the three major networks.

THE "REAL WORLD:"
THEMATIC FRAMES OF PARTY COVERAGE

Research Question 1: In order to ascertain the focus of actual television coverage of the parties for the purpose of developing stimuli in the experiments to follow, the first order of business is to ask: what thematic frames are used to cover the parties on television?

Drawing on Shafer's (1983) analysis of national party conventions, as discussed in the previous chapter, four main themes are utilized as a theoretical framework for analysis of network news content: 1.) launching the fall campaign of the front-running ticket; and providing a forum for 2.) interests and policy debate, 3.) for party publicity, and 4.) for media commentary. A set of sub-themes that are thought to comprise each of these main themes was then

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3The "media commentary" theme as used here includes segments set aside by the networks as opinion, as well as those in which reporters provided opinion-based commentary.
developed and coded in the content analysis. (See Appendix A for a complete categorization of these sub-themes.)

**Campaign Launching Sub-Themes:** There are three sub-themes that are thought to make up the campaign launching theme. The first, *party unity*, consists of stories that emphasize a party or interest group unified behind the front-running ticket, the party's image as an electoral winner, and the party's campaign strategy for winning the general election.

Stories in this category range from the arrival of the front runner in the convention city to the requisite post-acceptance speech podium rally, where the candidates are joined by family members and party notables to accept accolades from convention delegates.

Party unity is also often depicted by stories of reconciliation, such as the report on a breakfast meeting between 1988 Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis and contender Jesse Jackson, announcing that Jackson forces would join with those supporting Dukakis (CBS, July 18, 1988). An ABC report on July 18, 1992, also exemplifies this sub-theme. It portrays Democratic delegates' excitement about prospects for the White House and recounts the party's strategy of luring middle-class voters "home" to a moderate-based party.
The second sub-theme, *party division*, includes news stories of party conflict due to challengers' candidacies or the vice-presidential nominee, the unpopularity of the front runner, the party's image as an electoral loser, interest groups divided over the front-running ticket, and stories of general party disagreement.

The July 18, 1992, ABC report, which exemplified Democratic party unity above, also included sub-themes of division as well, incorporated into the story by file footage of prior year conventions: challenger Edward Kennedy's "underwhelming" support of 1980 Democratic nominee Jimmy Carter, illustrated by a "grudging" handshake on the podium.

In the earlier years of the time period under study, 1968 and 1972 in particular, the direct primary had not been institutionalized as the main mechanism for nomination of the party's presidential candidate to the degree that it was in later years. Thus, the networks' delegate counts for each of the contenders for the nomination often typified the division sub-theme. Here, before the eventual winner would be named by a roll-call of states, the dissension among the party's delegates over the nominee became readily apparent.

In later years, after the nomination of the presidential candidate was determined ahead of time in pre-convention primaries, the focus of the division sub-theme often shifted to party disputes over vice-presidential
contenders. For example, after Barbara Jordan "electrified" the 1976 Democratic convention, a movement by then black caucus leader Jesse Jackson to put her on the ticket with Jimmy Carter was quelled only by Jordan herself, who refused such a "symbolic" move (NBC, July 13, 1976).

Similarly, Republican conservatives were prepared to propose Jesse Helms for the 1980 vice-presidential spot on the Ronald Reagan ticket if Reagan chose instead to name a moderate candidate. Their movement folded after Reagan named George Bush, however, despite Helms backers' "Stop Bush/Stop (Howard) Baker" campaign (NBC, July 15, 1980).

Bush became the focal point of another party division story, this time when he ran for re-election as the Republican nominee in 1992. ABC reported that the "true believers" were not happy with Bush's nomination, and complained of his "phoney conservatism." This segment ended with reporter Jim Wooten's contention that some Republicans would not mind if Bush lost the general election, as it would give them time to recapture the party by 1996, to separate it from the "ideological impurities" of a president "who's just not one of them (ABC, August 17, 1992)." In 1984, NBC anchor Tom Brokaw even went so far as to follow a retrospective of Democratic party convention failures with a quote from Will Rogers, who reportedly said, "I don't belong to an organized party ... I'm a Democrat (NBC, July 16, 1984)."
Television's depiction of a party as a loser can be subtle or explicit. For example, one story opens with talk of the Democrats' efforts to be seen as winners in 1992, but quickly switches to vignettes of past failed candidates George McGovern, Walter Mondale, and Michael Dukakis (ABC, July 18, 1992). In a more blatant example of the division sub-theme, anchor Frank Reynolds simply declared that the 1968 Republican delegates would be viewing a televised message from hospitalized former President Dwight Eisenhower, "the only winner they have had since (Herbert) Hoover," as well as a speech by Barry Goldwater, "their most recent loser (ABC, August 5, 1968)."

The third sub-theme, candidate image, consists of segments about the personalities, campaigns, chances of winning, and campaign strategy of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and about third party and independent candidates.  

These types of stories were found to cast both negative and positive slants on the candidate's image, as typified by the presidential candidacies of George Bush. During convention coverage in 1988, an evening news segment featured a Brokaw interview with Bush, who strove to portray himself as a "regular guy," telling of the heartache of the

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4 While the final sample was drawn from stories whose descriptions were primarily party-centered, segments devoted to sub-themes of candidate personality and image were still found. Those segments constitute this third category of campaign launching sub-themes, designated as 'candidate coverage.'
death of an infant child and his early entrepreneurial years in Texas (NBC, August 15, 1988).

In 1992, however, network television reported on Bush’s rumored long-term "personal relationship" with a woman who worked for him, complete with reported contentions by then-dead officials of arranged hotel rooms, and Bush’s angry denial at a press conference (ABC, August 11, 1992).

**Forum for Interests and Policy Debate Sub-Themes:** The sub-themes which comprise this main theme have to do with the degree to which the party is united over ideological, issue, and policy interests. They also involve how well the party addresses the concerns of issue, ideology, and traditional support groups, and of the electorate, as well as how closely the party’s policy positions reflect those espoused by these groups. For ease of presentation, these sub-themes are simply labeled "representation" and "nonrepresentation."

The representation sub-theme is characterized often by summaries of the final party platform, particularly as it is juxtaposed against the platform of the opposition party. During these segments, the party is usually presented as unified behind its platform, ready to do battle with the other party, which is similarly unified behind its program (for example see network news shows on ABC, August 21, 1972 and ABC, August 16, 1988). This sub-theme can be depicted
too by reports of the party's ideological harmony with rank-
and-file partisans. For instance, the 1992 Democratic ticket
was featured in one ABC story, in which the reporter states
that there is "not a liberal in sight ... Democrats are
happily moving from their liberal past to their centrist
future (ABC, July 13, 1992)."

As for the nonrepresentation sub-theme, stories often
include reports of surveys which portray convention
delegates as out of step with party members and the populace
at large. In 1992, for instance, ABC showed poll results
indicating that 70% of Republican delegates were
conservative, compared to only 44% of Republicans nationwide
and 32% of all Americans (ABC, August 17, 1992).

Dissension over policy issues is also a common way in
which nonrepresentation is depicted. For example, the split
among members of both parties in 1968 and 1972 over the Viet
Nam war was covered extensively. In 1968, contending
Democratic candidates Hubert Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy, and
George McGovern appeared at a convention forum, each
speaking for a faction of the party, with reporter Frank
Reynolds declaring that "Viet Nam remains the one burning
issue before this convention (ABC, August 27, 1968)."

Similarly, a considerable amount of air time was
devoted to anti-war demonstrators throwing rocks and
slashing car tires in an attempt to keep 1972 Republican
delegates from reaching the convention hall. The delegates did eventually arrive and later nominated Richard Nixon for re-election (CBS, August 23, 1972).

*Forum for Party Publicity Sub-Themes: Orchestrated events* such as delegate floor demonstrations and campaign "hoopla" comprise one sub-theme within this category. These stories range from the now-requisite balloon drop on the convention floor to descriptions of the podium, such as a report on the Democrats' "million-dollar video wall (ABC, July 13, 1992)."

The other sub-theme in this category involves non-orchestrated events such as platform debates and fights, characterizations of party members and delegates, and electorate comment on the party and convention. For example, the platform debates among Republicans on social issues has been shown in television news stories for many years. In 1980, Senator Charles Percy's failed attempt to strike a plank calling for the appointment of judges who "respect traditional family values and innocent human life" was featured (NBC, July 15, 1980). Likewise, television highlighted 1992 controversies over Republican planks on anti-gay rights, public funding for the arts, and the right to bear arms (ABC, August 17, 1992).

Of course, Democrats have not escaped the spotlight either. In 1968, a hawkish Viet Nam war draft proposal
passed out of a draft committee to go on to the full platform committee, with reporter Daniel Schorr gravely declaring that "the lines had been drawn" between hawks like Humphrey and doves like McCarthy and McGovern (CBS, August 26, 1968). A bitter debate among members of the Democratic women's caucus in 1976 illustrated this nonrepresentation sub-theme as well. Here, during "three hours of parliamentary challenges and podium grabbing," feminist leaders debated whether to press for a plank requiring 50% female delegate representation or to opt for nominee Jimmy Carter's compromise language, in which 50% would be encouraged (NBC, August 13, 1976). And, in 1988, Jesse Jackson's struggle to include platform language about first-strike nuclear capability and distribution of social welfare funding was profiled (CBS, July 18, 1988).

**Forum for Media Commentary Sub-Themes:** This theme consists of segments in which the media comment on the convention, the party, or themselves. Sub-themes are categorized as satisfied press, involving characterizations of the convention as stimulating or exciting; dissatisfied press, including depictions of the convention as boring or of speakers as inaccurate; and neutral press, comprising comments about the media's job at the convention.

The dissatisfied press sub-theme is exemplified by anchor Frank Reynolds' recap of the first session of the 1968 Republican convention:
The first session of the 1968 Republican convention is now history -- dim history. The convention was called to order at the appointed hour and it came to an end approximately on schedule. That's about all that can be said about it. The delegates ignored the half-hearted pleas to please take their seats and clear the aisle. They also predictably ignored just about everything that was said from the rostrum (ABC, August 5, 1968).

These main themes (launching the fall campaign, forum for interests, party publicity, and media commentary) and their respective sub-themes, then, form the framework for the thematic content analysis.

**Method**

In order to describe the content of media convention coverage, the amount of time, in seconds, that television devotes to each theme and its sub-themes is computed. Time is used as the unit of content analysis for three reasons. First, even though counting individual words would provide the most thoroughly disaggregative method of analysis, it would prove unwieldy in a thematic analysis such as the one set forth here. The number of words which would have to be included as designating any of the themes or sub-themes would be virtually unlimited. Thus, a word-by-word content analysis would be impractical as well as more prone to error.

Second, using the entire story as the unit of analysis would be problematic as well, in view of the large number of sub-themes which are actually included in any given story. For example, a story may start out with a reporter
describing the convention floor, then talking about a state delegation, then asking a delegate for opinions about candidates as well as issues.

Thus, several sub-themes are often incorporated in one story, as shown in several of the examples in the theme sections above.

Third, the method used, disaggregation by time, provides a practical and reliable method of analyzing thematic content. Because the videotapes provided by Vanderbilt University feature a running clock (calibrated in ten-second increments) at the top of the video screen, coding is accomplished by simply noting the time whenever the sub-theme changes within the story content. Analyzing stories every ten seconds, then, allows for the most efficient method of coding quite complex and subtle themes.

The news story content is analyzed for each of the parties, and for both parties together, from the perspective of the 1968-1992 period as a whole. In this way, a composite picture of how television has covered the parties for the time period can be seen.

Only the audio portion of the television news stories is analyzed for this study, and results should be considered with this in mind.\(^5\) Certainly, when dealing with

\(^{5}\)In the few instances in which visuals are not accompanied by verbal messages, the time is allotted to an appropriate sub-theme (e.g., balloon drops and band music coded as orchestrated events).
television, its visual component cannot be discounted. Visuals play an important role in the transmission of television news, and coding verbal messages alone does occasion some information loss.

The work done by Graber (1990) on the contribution of visuals to learning provides useful insights on this matter. Her content analysis of television news stories showed that visuals did add to verbal content, either by contributing new information (in 29% of the stories), identifying unfamiliar people and places (10%), enhancing verbal clarity (6%), or adding relevant emotional content (4%) (Graber, 1990, p.140).

Certainly, in the sample of convention coverage analyzed in the present study, the information lost by excluding visuals may be of a similar nature. Nevertheless, the present study focuses on the verbal content of television news stories for two reasons. First, the primary interest of this dissertation is to examine how the content of television coverage determines people's views of the parties, so it is important that the content analysis be guided by the method employed in the experiments. There, the audio content of the experimental news stories is manipulated, while the visual content is held constant for

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6It is important to note, however, that in over half (51%) of the television stories coded in Graber's study, visual information added only "irrelevant" or "redundant" information to verbal story lines (Graber, 1990, p.140).
the most part. Thus, it is appropriate to analyze only verbal content in this portion of the analysis.

Second, visual images often change so rapidly, remaining on-screen for only a few seconds at a time, that coding them in addition to verbal messages would prove unnecessarily cumbersome. Coding only verbal content, on the other hand, provides an uncomplicated and practicable method of analyzing thematic content. Furthermore, it would be almost impossible to code most visuals (e.g., reporters, individuals, crowd scenes, the convention hall, graphics) as valenced either favorably or unfavorably.

**Results**

**Main Themes:** Launching the fall campaign was clearly the most prevalent main theme for the period for both parties, as indicated in the top portion of Table 3.4. This theme constituted two-thirds (66%) of total story time for the period. Thus, the contention of Shafer (1983) and others that launching the fall campaign has become the main purpose of the national convention was born out in this analysis.

Campaign launching was followed in importance by forum for interests and policy debate (24%), party publicity (7%), and media commentary (3%). In this and the subsequent

---

7Some segments representing main and sub-themes appear during the convention of the opposing party. These are coded as themes and sub-themes for the subject of the story rather than for the party holding the convention.
analyses of content discussed in this chapter, the order of prevalence of sub-themes for each of the parties individually is similar to that found for both of the parties combined. Therefore, for ease of presentation, only the findings for both parties are discussed.

**Campaign Launching Sub-Themes:** Interestingly, even though the final sample of stories was drawn from only those considered to be party-centered, rather than candidate-centered, the most prevalent sub-theme focused on candidate image. These stories about the candidates' personalities and campaigns comprised 26% of total story time, as displayed in the bottom portion of Table 3.4. This category was followed in magnitude by party division (21%) and party unity (18%).

**Forum for Interests and Policy Debate Sub-Themes:** Table 3.4 also presents data summarizing the percentage of time that the parties were shown as representative of their constituency interests and the percentage when they were portrayed as nonrepresentative. Seven percent of total story time was given over to sub-themes of party representation, while 14% was devoted to nonrepresentation.

**Forum for Party Publicity Sub-Themes:** Only 1% of total story time was devoted to orchestrated convention events, while 6% was consigned to non-orchestrated ones, as shown in Table 3.4.
Forum for Media Commentary Sub-Themes: The table also indicates that the dissatisfied press sub-theme was the focus of coverage 2% of the time, with neutral press representing 1% and satisfied press less than 1% of story time.

In summary, during the 1968-1992 period, the national parties were most often portrayed on television in their role as candidate supporters, with the convention seen as the official kick-off of the fall campaign. Moreover, coverage of candidates as individuals constituted over a quarter of total story time for both parties. This coverage of candidate image predominated over that of parties, even within the context of the party convention period and within stories which had been screened and designated as party-centered.

When the parties themselves were the focus of network television, it was most often in the context of supporting their candidates to varying degrees. Specifically, they were most often portrayed as divided over their front-runners (21% of total story time), rather than united behind them (18%). Thus, two main foci of party coverage emerged from the content analysis of actual coverage for the period: candidate image and the parties' degree of support for their candidates, categorized as either unified or divided.
Research Question 2: In order to investigate systematically the valence of party coverage, this section of the chapter attempts to answer: what is the proportion of coverage unfavorable, favorable, and neutral to political parties for the 1968-1992 period?

Valence is conceptualized here as that from the point of view of the parties (i.e., the degree to which a sub-theme reflects on the parties favorably or unfavorably). To begin with, from the parties' perspective, coverage which emphasizes sub-themes of unity and representation is assumed to be favorable. Disunity and nonrepresentation are considered to be unfavorable, however.

Certainly a case could be made for considering disunity and nonrepresentation as favorable instead. For example, both could be seen as signs of healthy democratic debate. However, scholars and analysts agree that the party needs to show the nation a united front during the convention period and on into the general election campaign after what may have been a fractious primary season. Indeed, party leaders and convention managers work very hard on unification, taking great pains to present a unified front to the public. Thus, disagreements over the winner of those primaries and over issue positions would not bode well for realization of the parties' electoral objectives.
Simply put, portraying the party as integrated reinforces the goals of the party. The assumption that a primary goal of political parties is to win elections and subsequently guide policy making is a cornerstone of the responsible party model. This model suggests that a unified party is in a better position to attain that goal than is one that is divided. In the American case, "celebrating party unity, especially after a divisive spring of primaries and caucus battles ... has steadily grown in importance since the advent of televised conventions (Buell and Jackson, 1991, p.240)."

Coverage of orchestrated events, which are presumably under the control of the parties, as well as media commentary, in which reporters express satisfaction (e.g., describing the convention as "exciting"), are also assumed to be favorable from the parties' standpoint.

On the other hand, journalists' observations that the convention is meaningless, predictable, boring, or slow, or that party speakers are inaccurate (which comprise the dissatisfied press sub-theme) are considered to be unfavorable.

One other sub-theme included in the unfavorable category is that of candidate image. Because the candidate's personality and the candidate's campaign organization are emphasized in these segments, they can be seen as representing a "nonparty candidate" focus. In other words,
image predominates over a candidate's party membership or role as party representative. The assumption is made, then, that this type of coverage of candidates as individuals, without party ties, reflects unfavorably on the parties. That is, it portrays the party as not in control of its own nominee. Other sub-themes that are not considered to be valenced or that are non-classifiable are consigned to the neutral category.

**Method**

In order to assess the valence of party coverage, then, the sub-themes are re-categorized, with the resultant classifications including: 1.) favorable (unity, representation, orchestrated events, and satisfied press sub-themes); 2.) unfavorable (division, nonrepresentation, dissatisfied press, and candidate image sub-themes); and 3.) neutral (non-orchestrated events, neutral press, and other sub-themes).

The amount of time devoted to sub-themes in each of these valence categories was analyzed for the entire 1968-1992 period as a whole.

**Results**

Table 3.5 displays the percentage of total story time devoted to these favorable, unfavorable, and neutral sub-themes. An examination of the table shows that unfavorable
sub-themes were allotted considerably more air time (63% of total story time) than were favorable ones (26%) for both parties. Of those unfavorable sub-themes, candidate image comprised the largest percentage of time (26%), followed by division over the front-running candidate (21%).

Recall that any type of coverage that focuses on a candidate’s image is considered to be unfavorable from the party’s viewpoint, because it detracts from the candidate’s position as party representative. In other words, whether stories reflect positively or negatively on the candidate’s image is immaterial. What matters is that it is image-centered candidate coverage at all. Thus segments focusing on presidential and vice presidential nominees’ personalities and families with no mention of their party ties are included in this category. Similarly, stories of candidates’ campaigns and chances of winning (rather than the party’s campaign and chances) are included here. These segments involve candidate strategy, issue stands, and ideology; rhetoric about other candidates; and campaign organizations’ control of the convention.®

Of the favorable sub-themes, party unity represented the most air time (18%), followed by representation of constituency interests (7%). Interestingly, an alternative

®Note that, even if candidate image was dropped from the unfavorable category in Table 3.5, the percentage of coverage devoted to unfavorable themes would still be more (37%) than for favorable (26%) or neutral (11%) coverage.
dimension of candidate coverage in which the link between the candidate and the party might be emphasized, a "party candidate" dimension, was not observed in this sample of stories. Because this type of candidate coverage would be considered as favorable from the parties’ perspective, no favorable candidate coverage classification is reported in Table 3.5.

In the neutral classification, non-orchestrated events comprised the largest proportion (6%) of total story time.

In summary, results indicate that the parties were much more likely to be shown on television in an unfavorable than a favorable light. And the greatest proportion of that unfavorable coverage came as a result of focusing on the image of the candidates. When parties themselves were the focus of coverage, their portrayal as divided over the front-runners constituted most of the unfavorable coverage, with unity behind the front-runners constituting most of the favorable coverage.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this chapter have served to provide a "real world" portrait of the parties as they are portrayed.

9Of course, one could argue that, simply because a story about a candidate was aired during the convention period, a link to the party is implied. However, the coding protocol used in this analysis calls for an explicit focus on a sub-theme.
on television. They suggest that coverage centers around two primary foci: the candidates and the degree to which the parties support those candidates. Additionally, results show that coverage is chiefly unfavorable in nature, from the parties' perspective.

Moreover, these findings confirm the speculations advanced by others (e.g., Ranney, 1983 and Graber, 1991) that television spends relatively little time covering the parties and/or does so with a negative slant.

This study indicates that, while the parties as groups are covered on television, the amount of time spent on them is eclipsed by coverage of candidates as individuals. Furthermore, coverage of candidate image is found to comprise a substantial percentage of television time during the national conventions, a period when the parties, rather than the candidates, would more likely be the focus of attention. Thus, the proportion of candidate-image coverage found in this analysis can be presumed to be even higher during the other, much longer, periods of the presidential campaign season.

This dearth of party coverage may not be as adverse for the parties as one might initially suppose, however, considering the unfavorable bent of what party coverage there is. As found in this study, the parties are more often portrayed as divisive and nonrepresentative of not only their own constituent groups and party identifiers but also
of the electorate at large. They are apt to be shown much less often as united and representative. This unfavorable slant may be the result of media bias or it might, in fact, be a faithful representation of the ways in which the parties operate. The data as quantified here cannot determine which is the case. ¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The nature of the focus (parties and candidates) and valence (favorable and unfavorable) of party-centered television coverage has been determined in this chapter. The balance of this dissertation now turns to the effects that exposure to these types of party coverage has on viewers. The next chapter explicates the use of the focus and valence of party coverage as experimental stimuli, along with other methodological considerations of experimental analysis.

¹⁰ However, a common occurrence within party stories does provide a basis for speculation on this subject. When television leaves the convention hall, it often turns to clips from prior years, particularly years in which the parties were plagued by protest demonstrations in the streets or particularly divisive vice-presidential nominations. Once caught on film, these types of clips are often repeated during subsequent conventions.
### Stories by Convention Period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic Party</th>
<th></th>
<th>Republican Party</th>
<th></th>
<th>Both Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day Before Conv.</td>
<td>Days Of</td>
<td>Day After Conv.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Day Before Conv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Time in Seconds</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>11,750</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>14,730</td>
<td>1,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and % of Story Time</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of Stories by Story Type:

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<td>News</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Stories by Network:

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<th>Republican Party</th>
<th></th>
<th>Both Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story Time in Seconds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>4,860</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3,980</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>5,740</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>5,360</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>11,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>4,130</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>8,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>14,730</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13,740</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>28,470</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3

Final Story Sample Data For 1968-1992 Period
Table 3.4
Amount of Coverage Devoted to Main and Sub-Themes
For 1968-1992 Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic Party</th>
<th>Republican Party</th>
<th>Both Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconds %</td>
<td>Seconds %</td>
<td>Seconds %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Themes:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launching Fall Campaign</td>
<td>9,920 67%</td>
<td>8,840 64%</td>
<td>18,760 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Debate Forum</td>
<td>3,340 22%</td>
<td>3,530 26%</td>
<td>6,870 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Publicity Forum</td>
<td>940 7%</td>
<td>1,010 7%</td>
<td>1,950 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Commentary</td>
<td>410 3%</td>
<td>320 3%</td>
<td>730 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Coverage</td>
<td>120 1%</td>
<td>40 &gt;1%</td>
<td>160 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>14,730 100%</td>
<td>13,740 100%</td>
<td>28,470 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Themes:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launching Fall Campaign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Unity</td>
<td>3,070 21%</td>
<td>2,020 15%</td>
<td>5,090 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Division</td>
<td>3,110 21%</td>
<td>2,950 21%</td>
<td>6,060 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Image</td>
<td>3,700 25%</td>
<td>3,810 28%</td>
<td>7,510 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40 &gt;1%</td>
<td>60 &gt;1%</td>
<td>100 &gt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9,920 67%</td>
<td>8,840 64%</td>
<td>18,760 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Debate Forum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>910 6%</td>
<td>1,220 9%</td>
<td>2,130 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrepresentation</td>
<td>1,970 13%</td>
<td>1,910 14%</td>
<td>3,880 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>460 3%</td>
<td>400 3%</td>
<td>860 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,340 22%</td>
<td>3,530 26%</td>
<td>6,870 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Publicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestrated Events</td>
<td>110 1%</td>
<td>140 1%</td>
<td>250 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-orchestrated</td>
<td>830 6%</td>
<td>870 6%</td>
<td>1,700 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>940 7%</td>
<td>1,010 7%</td>
<td>1,950 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Commentary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied Press</td>
<td>30 &gt;1%</td>
<td>--- --</td>
<td>30 &gt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied Press</td>
<td>290 2%</td>
<td>220 2%</td>
<td>510 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Press</td>
<td>90 1%</td>
<td>100 1%</td>
<td>190 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>410 3%</td>
<td>320 3%</td>
<td>730 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Coverage</td>
<td>120 1%</td>
<td>40 &gt;1%</td>
<td>160 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Totals</strong></td>
<td>14,730 100%</td>
<td>13,740 100%</td>
<td>28,470 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entries are number of seconds. For each party, percentages are based on each party’s total story time; for both parties, on total story time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic Party</th>
<th>Republican Party</th>
<th>Both Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconds %</td>
<td>Seconds %</td>
<td>Seconds %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Unity</td>
<td>3,070 21%</td>
<td>2,020 15%</td>
<td>5,090 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>910 6</td>
<td>1,220 9</td>
<td>2,130 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestrated Events</td>
<td>110 1</td>
<td>140 1</td>
<td>250 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied Press</td>
<td>30 &gt;1</td>
<td>--- --</td>
<td>30 &gt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4,120 28%</td>
<td>3,380 25%</td>
<td>7,500 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Division</td>
<td>3,110 21%</td>
<td>2,950 21%</td>
<td>6,060 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrepresentation</td>
<td>1,970 13</td>
<td>1,910 14</td>
<td>3,880 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied Press</td>
<td>290 2</td>
<td>220 2</td>
<td>510 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Image</td>
<td>3,700 25</td>
<td>3,810 28</td>
<td>7,510 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9,070 61%</td>
<td>8,890 65%</td>
<td>17,960 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-orchestrated</td>
<td>830 6</td>
<td>870 6</td>
<td>1,700 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Press</td>
<td>90 1</td>
<td>100 1</td>
<td>190 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>460 3</td>
<td>400 3</td>
<td>860 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,540 11%</td>
<td>1,470 10%</td>
<td>3,010 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,730 100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,740 100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,470 100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entries are number of seconds. For each party, percentages are based on each party's total story time; for both parties, on total story time.

**Table 3.5**

Amount of Coverage: Favorable, Unfavorable, & Neutral
For 1968-1992 Period
CHAPTER 4

LABORATORY EXPERIMENT: METHODS

The content analysis presented in Chapter Three showed that television coverage of the political parties has been predominantly unfavorable in nature. But that is only a piece of a much larger puzzle. The other question to be addressed is how such coverage affects public attitudes. In order to look at these effects, experimental methodology is employed.

The advantages which an experiment offers lend themselves to the study of these effects. First, experiments allow an environment in which independent variables can be manipulated, while other factors which could be affecting the dependent variable are, to a considerable extent, held constant. The independent variable can be created and its variation controlled; thus, it becomes the stimulus in the experiment and the values assigned to it define the experimental conditions.
Values of the dependent variable, then, depend on changes in the independent variables. In this way, causality, rather than only association, can be inferred.

A second advantage of an experiment is that it provides a vehicle for minimizing systematic error in the study. As suggested by Aronson et al. (1990), one way of accomplishing the elimination of systematic error is "to convert it to random error (p.16)." In an experiment, this is done by randomly assigning subjects to experimental conditions, thus minimizing the possibility that one type of subject will be overrepresented in any one condition. If, by chance, this does occur despite random assignment, the error would be random rather than systematic.

While random error can cause problems such as confounding effects from extraneous variables, in an experiment which uses random assignment, these effects are equally likely in any of the conditions. However, experiments allow a certain level of control on these extraneous variables by holding them constant in the experimental setting and procedure and in the creation of the stimulus.

This chapter now turns to a discussion of the methodological considerations encountered in the design and
implementation of the laboratory experiment, the results of which are presented in Chapter Five. After providing an overview of the experimental method and design, it characterizes the subjects who participated and describes the experimental procedure. A discussion of the independent variables involves an account of how the special news stories, which provide the experimental stimuli, were produced. Their tie to the content analysis as well as findings from a pilot study will be considered. The chapter then closes with an explication of the post-test questionnaire which contains measures of the dependent and moderating variables.

OVERVIEW OF METHOD AND DESIGN

Subjects were told that they would be viewing an excerpt from a newscast and would then fill out a questionnaire. The video shown consisted of the opening of a newscast and anchor persons' introductions, two innocuous news stories and a commercial, followed by the specially produced experimental news story. This last story focused on either the political parties (divided over or united behind their candidates), or the candidates themselves (as nonpartisan or partisan contenders).
While each experimental news story contains the thematic content for only one experimental condition (division, unity, candidate-image or party-candidate), each covers both the Democratic and Republican parties. Because both parties are covered in each story, a determination was necessary initially as to which party would be mentioned first in each sentence or phrase of the scripts. In order to minimize possible order effects, two tapes were prepared for each of the conditions, with the order of presentation rotated (e.g., two division tapes, one with the Democratic party first and the Republican second and the other with the Republican first and the Democratic second). This process resulted in eight experimental news stories (2 division, 2 unity, 2 candidate-image, and 2 party-candidate).

Thus, because each group of subjects was exposed to one of the eight tapes, representing the four conditions, a 2 (Focus: Party or Candidate) x 2 (Valence: Favorable or Unfavorable) x 2 (Party Order: Democratic Party First or Republican First) factorial design was originally employed.

Subsequent analysis showed little if any indications of order effects, so the original eight conditions were simply collapsed into four groups for analysis, as presented in the 2 (Focus) x 2 (Valence) factorial shown in Figure 4.1 below:
Subjects' assessments of the parties and the candidates were then measured in the post-test questionnaire, as were their general political attitudes and involvement. The study was designed in this way in order to test hypotheses specific to the ways in which the media were found to cover parties in Chapter Three and to the dependent variables previously defined in Chapter Two:

Subjects who are exposed to the unfavorable stories (division and candidate-image) are expected to report

1. less favorable affect and cognitions about the Democratic and Republican parties,

2. lower levels of support for the American party system, and

3. that candidates' party ties are less important in their candidate evaluations

than are those who are exposed to favorable stories (unity and party-candidate).
The next section describes the selection process and qualities of subjects who participated in the experiment.

SUBJECTS

The experiments were conducted in the summer and fall of 1995, involving 126 Ohio State University undergraduates who participated for extra credit in introductory political science classes. Exemption from review by The Ohio State University's Human Subjects Committee had been obtained beforehand, in May of 1994. Students were contacted and assigned to pre-planned dates and times which were convenient for them. As each small group of subjects gathered, they were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions and were thus exposed to whichever videotape had been pre-scheduled to be shown in that time slot.

The distribution of subjects' party identification,^ gender, ethnicity, and age are reported in Table 4.1. As indicated, many subject characteristics are remarkably similar to those of the population at large. Besides these characteristics, the validity of the sample was checked to determine its typicality in terms of subjects' party identification. To that end, attitudes toward the Democratic

^Weak and leaning identifiers are grouped together (called simply "weak identifiers"), since research has shown that leaners resemble weak partisans quite closely in terms of political attitudes and behavior (Keith et al., 1992). Subjects who prefer neither party are grouped with pure independents.
and Republican parties were compared for each level of subject party identification. Results showed that partisan subjects were not atypical of the electorate at large. That is, the favorability of their feelings and beliefs about their own and the opposition party were reasonably directed. A complete report of this validity check can be found in Appendix B.

**PROCEDURE**

Subjects came in to a small conference room and filled out appropriate consent forms. They were then simply told that they would be shown an excerpt from a newscast and would be asked to fill out a questionnaire afterward. The last story shown in the newscast was a specially produced news story, the experimental manipulation.

The different ways in which the political parties and the candidates are portrayed in this news story comprise the independent variables in this study. The effects that exposure to them has on subjects' attitudes toward the parties and candidates constitute the dependent variables; these effects were measured in a series of questions in the post-test questionnaire.

For all sessions, during the showing of the videotape as well as during administration of the questionnaire, the
experimenter remained in the room, seated by the door at the back of the room. As subjects finished and turned in their questionnaires, they were debriefed before leaving.

**Independent Variables**

The thematic content of the experimental news stories constitutes the independent variables. That is, each condition presents a different thematic stimulus to the subjects. Two of these conditions are party-centered (division and unity) and two are candidate-centered (candidate-image and party-candidate).

Production of the videotapes involved two main concerns. First, in order to maximize external validity, it was essential that the content reflect actual news coverage as closely as possible. Replicating actual content, rather than just using actual stories as the stimuli, was done because each experimental manipulation needed to focus solely on just one of the four themes, something that actual news stories do not always do. Additionally, possible confounding effects from subjects' predispositions about nationally known news reporters and political figures needed to be minimized. This would have been impossible if actual clips had been used.

**Content Analysis of Oversample:** In order to replicate actual news content, it was necessary, first of all, to determine just what makes up that content. Utilizing the
thematic framework and news story sampling procedure recounted in Chapter Three, the content of an oversample of 1988 and 1992 news stories was analyzed. Stories from these two most recent presidential election years were used in order to increase the level of mundane realism; that is, to ensure that subjects would be more likely to view the experimental news stories as realistic. Table 4.2 below shows the percentage of total story time devoted to the three most prevalent sub-themes in the oversample of news stories.²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Democratic Party</th>
<th>Republican Party</th>
<th>Both Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seconds</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate-Image</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3,470</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entries are number of seconds. For each party, percentages are based on each party's total story time; for both parties, on total story time.

Table 4.2
Amount of Coverage Devoted to Sub-Themes
For 1988-1992 Oversample Period

As can be seen, the same three sub-themes emerged as the dominant ones in this oversample, just as they did in

²The news stories in the oversample are those designated as party coverage during the national convention periods (see Chapter Three for full sample selection criteria.)
the content analysis presented in Chapter Three for the entire 1968-1992 period. These three sub-themes are party unity and division over the front-runner and candidate-image.

As discussed previously, two of these sub-themes, division and candidate-image, are those thought to be unfavorable from the parties' point of view. They were thus categorized as unfavorable party-centered and candidate-centered news stories, respectively, becoming the bases for the two unfavorable experimental news story conditions. It is the effect of these unfavorable stories that is of concern in the experimental analysis.

In order to provide a basis for comparison, two favorable sub-themes for similarly focused news content were selected. The party unity sub-theme serves as the favorable party-centered story. For the favorable candidate-centered story, a candidate-partisanship theme was chosen. While this type of news story content was not found to be prevalent in the content analysis, it does provide a positive counterbalance to the candidate-image story. Because it focuses on a nominee's connection to the party, the party is seen playing a significant role in the nomination process, certainly favorable from the parties' perspective.

Thus, the production of the videotapes maximized external validity by replicating actual thematic content as closely as possible. Only one experimental condition, party-
candidate, was not found to be prevalent in the content analysis but, as pointed out, it was chosen for comparison purposes. The four experimental conditions, then, represent the independent variables in this analysis: two party-centered (division and unity) and two candidate-centered (candidate-image and party-candidate) stories.

The second area of concern in producing the experimental news stories involved internal validity: specifically, subjects' perceptions of the four themes. In short, it was necessary to find out what kinds of content suggested these themes to audience members.

Pilot Study: In the summer and fall of 1994, a pilot study was conducted in order to address this question. The pilot involved Ohio State University undergraduate subjects, who watched actual news stories obtained from the Vanderbilt University Archives and then reported what the stories were about, whether they were party-centered or candidate-centered, and why.\(^3\) Nine of the news stories were considered to be party-centered and 24 candidate-centered.\(^4\)

\(^3\)A total of 272 subjects participated in this pilot study as well as a study reported in the dependent variable section of this chapter. The 39 news stories chosen for the pilot study were presented by the three networks during the 1968-1992 convention period. The sample was chosen from two categories in The Vanderbilt University Abstracts: "19xx Campaign/National Party Convention" (for stories focusing on the parties) and "19xx Campaign/Candidate" (for stories focusing on candidates).

\(^4\)Each story was considered to be party- or candidate-centered if all or most of the subjects who saw it reported it to be so. Reports of "Equal" or "Neither" were not counted.
**Party-Centered Stories:** From these reports, party-centered content was designated as either that of unity or division, based on pilot subjects' perceptions. (Exact question wording of the pilot study questionnaires can be found in Appendix C.) Stories perceived as party-centered in the pilot study included accounts of the party's platform and issue positions; past party leaders; convention delegates; and the ideology of the party, its constituent groups, and candidates.

Those which were seen as focusing on party unity involved party members' excitement about the front-runner and endorsements by his former primary foes. Unity stories also involved a movement by party leaders and the candidates away from extreme policy stands and rhetoric and toward a more moderate ideological stance. Party division stories, on the other hand, included those about primary contenders or party leaders who did not endorse the front-runner, or who did endorse but still were not happy about the candidate's issue positions. Past convention failures and confusion, a lack of party identity, and infighting by party leaders and constituent groups over platform planks also comprised division content.

**Candidate-Centered Stories:** The content of candidate-centered stories was categorized as virtually all image-based. That is, no stories were perceived as being about a front-runner's party ties, but rather about his
individuating characteristics. These candidate-image stories involved interviews with candidates and their family members, or showed the candidates surrounded by throngs of people. In interviews, candidates were portrayed as ordinary citizens who have experienced family tragedies and have overcome adversity. Their military and business experience as well as their leadership qualifications were emphasized. They were portrayed as caring people who love their families, and segments often featured family photos. If candidates were shown among crowds, their families were usually with them, and they smiled as they accepted accolades and shook hands with supporters.

In sum, the pilot studies helped to determine the kinds of content that audience members perceived as party- and candidate-centered.

**Experimental News Stories**: The themes of actual news stories as indicated by the content analysis and the pilot study were then incorporated into development of the experimental news stories. Besides reflecting actual news content, any bias introduced by subjects' predispositions also needed to be minimized. To that end, recognition of specific names and places was eliminated: commonly occurring American names were used for the fictitious candidates, towns, and regional colleges mentioned in the scripts. Further, an intern news reporter for a Dayton, Ohio television station was employed to portray the news reporter
who provided the lead-ins, voice-overs, and interview questions. In order that the experimental news stories look and "feel" like the real thing, they were videotaped by a professional photographer and were edited at a commercial production studio in the Columbus, Ohio area.

Besides attempting to keep the audio script, visuals, and graphics faithful to that found in actual news footage, an effort was also made to standardize these three elements across the two party-centered stories and across the two candidate-centered stories. That is, in the party division and unity stories, the same audio scripts, visuals, and graphics were used, limited of course by the necessity to convey certain thematic content. The same situation pertained to the candidate-image and party-candidate stories. This standardization was done in an effort to control possible confounding effects caused by differences in verbal syntax and visual and graphic messages. Thus, the main story element being manipulated was the verbal message intended to convey the theme of the story. An example from the audio scripts for the two stories shows these changes in wording (in bold print), which manipulated thematic content:

Division:

Especially disheartening for county Democrats later today was the lack of support by the party's business and farmer groups who voted unanimously not to back Drake's candidacy. Local Republican farmer and business organizations had earlier announced their decision not to back the Republican candidate, a disappointing signal for both Johnson and county Republicans.
Especially heartening for county Democrats later today was the support promised by the party’s business and farmer groups, who voted unanimously to back Drake’s candidacy. Local Republican farmer and business organizations had earlier announced their decision to back the Republican candidate, a welcome signal for both Johnson and county Republicans.

In addition, the experimental news stories remain faithful to actual footage in terms of their length (three to four minutes each) as well as in terms of insertion of footage featuring current and former party leaders and public officials. To some extent, they also utilize clips from actual footage of news broadcasts about the parties obtained from the Archives. (Complete scripts for each condition can be found in Appendix D. Changes in wording are designated by bold print.)

The experimental news story was imbedded among other actual stories, so that the entire videotape resembled an actual newscast as closely as possible. The tape opened with an introduction to the newscast and greetings by the news anchors, followed by two filler stories, a commercial, and the experimental news story.

The first filler story is about a technological breakthrough in diagnosing early cases of prostate cancer, using DNA testing. The second is about high school students...
helping to build homes for Habitat for Humanity. The commercial is an advertisement for an American-made minivan.

Each group of subjects was then exposed to the same newscast, but to only one of the specially-produced news stories:

Party-Centered Stories:

Division: Both the Democratic and Republican parties are portrayed as divided over their candidates.

Unity: Both parties are portrayed as united behind their candidates.

Candidate-Centered Stories:

Candidate-Image: The reporter emphasizes the personal characteristics of the two candidates, who talk about themselves in interviews, but neither their ties to their parties nor their partisanship is mentioned.

Party-Candidate: The partisanship of both parties' candidates and their ties to their parties are emphasized by the reporter and in interviews, while their personal characteristics are not discussed.

This chapter now turns to a discussion of the measurement of effects produced by exposure to these stories.

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5In order to minimize the effects of subjects' predispositions, anchors and reporters in the filler stories were chosen from actual news footage shown in broadcast markets outside of the Columbus, Ohio area. While call letters of stations were shown in the graphics, in no case was the location of the news story given.

6Candidate statements used in the scripts were taken from videotapes of two actors posing as fictitious candidates for a state legislative seat. These tapes were prepared by Wendy Rahn for her research and are used with her permission in this study. Fortunately, it was possible to choose clips from her tapes which reflect the two candidate-centered conditions quite well.
**Dependent Variables**

After viewing the newscast, with the experimental news story inserted last, questionnaires were filled out by subjects, who were asked to answer as completely and accurately as possible. (See Appendix E for exact questionnaire wording and order.)

Among other things, the questionnaire involved items intended to measure subjects' attitudes (affect and cognitions) about the parties, level of support for the American party system, and the importance of candidates' party ties in candidate evaluations. These measures comprise the dependent variables used in the analysis presented in Chapter Five. They are summarized below, presented in the order that they appeared on the post-test questionnaire. (See Appendix F for specific scale construction methods.)

**Importance of Party Ties in Candidate Evaluations:**
Questions ask subjects how important each of several traits would be in evaluating each of the candidates. Three of the traits have to do with the candidate's party membership: effective party member, competent party representative, and party loyalist. The others involve the candidates' personal characteristics.

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These items as well as all subsequent attitudinal items (outside of the feeling thermometers) are seven-point scales.
The purpose of this series of questions is not to ask what traits subjects actually use in describing candidates, but what traits subjects would consider important in candidate judgments. Thus, the question asks how important each trait "would be" in judgments rather than how important each "is." The traits are adapted from the competence/leadership component of Rahn et al.'s (1990) study of candidate appraisal and represent characteristics pertaining to the professional role of candidates.

**Attitudes About the Parties**: Cognitions about and affect toward the parties are measured in two ways. One is by utilizing the methods employed by previous researchers. Affect is thus measured by the standard NES feeling thermometer ratings and cognitions by simply subtracting the number of "dislikes" about the party from the number of "likes."

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8Exact question wording in the post-test questionnaire is as follows: "In judging these two candidates, how relevant (that is, how important) would the following statements be in your judgments?" (Instructions were then given for each candidate separately on seven-point scales, anchored by "Not Relevant At All" and "Extremely Relevant.") Traits comprising the index for importance of party ties are in bold print here, but were not on the questionnaire.

1. His effectiveness as a leader.
2. **His effectiveness as a member of his political party.**
3. His competence as a lawmaker.
4. **His competence as a representative of his political party.**
5. The strength of his personal convictions.
6. **The strength of his loyalty to his political party.**

9Affect and cognitions are measured separately for theoretical reasons, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. The correlation (Pearson r) between party affect and cognitions for the group of subjects in this study is .80 for the Democratic party and .85 for the Republican.

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A second way that they are measured is by applying to the parties those affect and cognition questions usually used for evaluating candidates. In order to measure affect, then, subjects are asked if each of the parties makes them feel ashamed or proud, relaxed/confident or tense/uneasy (adapted from Abelson et al. 1982). In addition, the extent to which they like or dislike each party is measured.

Along the same lines, the cognitive component is measured by having subjects evaluate each of the parties on sets of adjective pairs. These pairs have been previously used by researchers to tap candidate personality and character (Rahn et al. 1990), but are used here to tap characteristics of the parties. These adjective pairs are: untrustworthy-trustworthy, selfish-unselfish, cool and aloof-warm and friendly, effective-ineffective, competent-incompetent, and strong-weak.

This second way of measuring attitudes, by utilizing affect questions and adjective pairs, is utilized in order to provide a richer framework from which to gauge cognitions and affect than the instruments used in previous works on party attitudes. Additionally, these questions correspond more closely to measures which appear in the evaluation literature, albeit for candidate evaluations rather than for party assessments.

**Party Support Scale:** Subjects were asked the extent to which they disagree or agree with the five party support
index questions as they appear in the 1980 NES. While Craig (1985) has argued that this index actually taps multiple dimensions of support, the reliability coefficient in this study (Cronbach's alpha = .79) is considered sufficiently respectable to use the five items as a single scale.

**Moderating Variables**

Party identification is measured by a standard two-part question, while level of political knowledge is estimated by a series of questions about general political as well as about party-specific knowledge, as discussed in Chapter Two. The questionnaire concluded with several demographic questions.\(^\text{11}\)

Subjects were able to watch the videotape and complete the questionnaire within an hour or less. Before leaving, each subject was given a written debriefing statement.

\(^\text{10}\)Exact question wording in the post-test questionnaire is as follows: "Next are some general statements about American political parties in general." (Instructions were then given for seven-point scales, anchored by "Disagree Very Strongly" and "Agree Very Strongly.")

1. The best rule in voting is to pick a candidate regardless of party label.
2. It is better to be a firm party supporter than to be a political independent.
3. The parties do more to confuse the issues than to provide a clear choice on issues.
4. It would be better if, in all elections, we put no party labels on the ballot.
5. The truth is we probably don't need political parties in America anymore.

\(^\text{11}\)Additional pilot studies were conducted in order to determine if any questions were confusing for subjects and to time how long it took subjects to finish the questionnaire.
CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the methods used for the experimental analysis of the effects of unfavorable television news content about the political parties, namely themes of division and candidate-image. It has described the subjects who participated in the experiment and the process used to produce the videotapes which became the stimuli for introducing the independent variables. It has also discussed the dependent variables as measured in the post-test questionnaire. Chapter Five presents the findings and discusses the analysis based on this experimental method.
**Party Identification**

- Strong Republicans: 15%
- Weak or Leaning Republicans: 23
- Independents/No Party Preference: 16
- Weak or Leaning Democrats: 25
- Strong Democrats: 13

**Partisan Strength**

- Independents: 16%
- Weak Partisans: 48
- Strong Partisans: 29

**Partisan Strength x Knowledge**

- Independents:
  - Low: 19%
  - High: 14%
- Weak Partisans:
  - Low: 57
  - High: 48
- Strong Partisans:
  - Low: 23
  - High: 38

**Gender**

- Male: 40%
- Female: 60%

**Registered to Vote**

- Registered: 83%
- Not Registered: 17%

**Race/Ethnicity**

- White: 90%
- Non-White: 10%

**Age**

- Range: 18-48
- $M$: 22

Entries do not include subjects who reported "Don’t Know" or who refused to answer.

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**Table 4.1**

Subject Characteristics

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CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS

The results of the content analysis reported in Chapter Three indicated that coverage of the Democratic and Republican parties focused on unfavorable party-centered and candidate-centered themes. Specifically, party-centered coverage during the convention periods was predominantly divisive in nature, while candidate-centered coverage emphasized candidate image over partisanship.

Now that the ways in which the parties have been covered in the "real world" of television broadcasting have been determined, the next question is how exposure to these types of news stories affects viewers. That is, after audience members watch unfavorable division or candidate-image stories, will they report less favorable attitudes about the parties and less support for the party system, and attach less importance to a candidate's relationship with the party when evaluating him?

In an effort to answer these questions, the results of the laboratory experiment are presented in this chapter. In
particular, the findings seek to demonstrate whether experimental subjects are persuaded to hold opinions which correspond in valence to that of the news story content. The influence of moderating factors (subjects' strength of partisanship and level of political knowledge) will be examined as well.

**Method**

Analysis of variance is the statistical test used to examine the data for all three dependent variables in this chapter. This test is appropriate because the focus of this study is whether differences in the dependent variables exist among experimental groups of subjects and, within those groups, among levels of partisanship and knowledge. Analysis of variance allows for the measurement of these differences through a comparison of the means for the dependent variables for each subgroup of subjects.

A significant summary \( F \) statistic for each of the independent and moderating variables (story type, partisan strength, or knowledge level) indicates whether that variable alone has a significant main effect on the dependent variable. In addition, analysis of variance deals with interaction effects among these individual variables. A significant \( F \) statistic for an interaction term thus indicates the joint effect of the variables in the term on the dependent variable.
While the significance of the F statistic can indicate that there is a difference in means across a set of groups, it does not indicate which differences are significant. For that purpose, t tests are used to compare means for two independent samples, with significance ascertained by one-tailed significance tests.

**FIRST DEPENDENT VARIABLE: ATTITUDES ABOUT THE PARTIES**

The question to be examined in this section is whether viewing the unfavorable stories prevalent in the content analysis (about intraparty division or candidate image) results in less favorable attitudes toward the Democratic and Republican parties than does viewing favorable stories (about unity or candidate partisanship).

**Hypotheses**

**Hypothesized Effect of Media Story:** After exposure to the unfavorable party-centered story (division), subjects are expected to report lower means for the Democratic and Republican party affect and cognition indices than after the favorable story (unity).

Further, lower means on the indices are also expected after the unfavorable candidate-centered story (candidate-image) than after the favorable one (party-candidate). The
lower means after the candidate-image story are expected because the parties are treated there as irrelevant; actually, they are not even mentioned. They are portrayed as an important candidate characteristic in the party-candidate story, however, and more favorable party attitudes are expected to follow.

**Hypothesized Effect of Partisan Strength:** Viewing just one unfavorable story is not expected to have much effect on strong partisans, who are assumed to hold relatively strong favorable attitudes toward the parties regardless of the message content. In particular, after viewing the division and candidate-image stories, strong partisans are expected to exhibit little movement toward more unfavorable attitudes about the parties.

However, because weak partisans are thought to hold rather ambivalent prior convictions about the parties, they are expected to show more susceptibility to the persuasiveness of the messages they see. Thus, they should report less favorable party attitudes after the two unfavorable news stories. And independents, who are posited to hold the most meager preconceptions about the parties, are expected to be the most susceptible of all to persuasion effects.

**Hypothesized Effect of Knowledge:** Subjects with lower levels of political knowledge are expected to be more susceptible to persuasion by news story content than are
those with higher levels. As discussed previously, the assumption here is that people who are more knowledgeable about American political leaders and the political system are better able to mount counterarguments, consisting of previously held opinions, in the face of persuasive efforts by news story messages. Thus, subjects with higher levels of knowledge are more likely to report their pre-exposure attitudes toward the parties while those with lower levels are more likely to report attitudes valenced in accordance with that of the news story message. This means that the less knowledgeable should be more likely to report less favorable means after viewing the division and candidate-image stories than after the unity and party-candidate stories.

**Hypothesized Effect of Partisan Strength x Knowledge:**
Certainly, the prior convictions held by viewers with differing levels of partisan strength may be moderated by their levels of political knowledge. Thus, less knowledgeable independents are expected to demonstrate the most powerful persuasion effects, since neither their prior party attitudes nor knowledge about politics would provide them with beliefs strong enough to counterargue. On the other end of the spectrum, more knowledgeable strong partisans should prove the most resistant to the persuasive effects of the news stories, using their prior strong favorable party attitudes to counterargue instead.
Those subgroups which fall in the mid-range between these two extremes (low-knowledge strong partisans, weak partisans of both knowledge levels, and high-knowledge independents) are expected to be susceptible to the persuasive effects of mediated messages. For members of those subgroups, their prior lack of partisan strength moderated by their knowledge level are thought to impede the construction of strong counterarguments.

**Design**

Two fully between-subjects analyses of variance were performed on affect and cognitions about the Democratic and Republican parties. The first consisted of a 2 (party-centered story) x 3 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) design, while the second was a 2 (candidate-centered story) x 2 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) design.¹

**Results**²

**Effect of Media Story:** A significant main effect for candidate-centered news story type on cognitions about the Democratic party was demonstrated ($F = [1,43] 5.12, p = .03$).³

¹Because no subjects fell in the high-knowledge independent category in the candidate-image condition, independents are dropped from the candidate-centered story condition in these analyses.

²The significance or non-significance for only those main and interaction effects involving news story type are reported and discussed in these analyses.

³The notations in brackets for the $F$ statistic indicate the degrees of freedom.
In addition, a significant main effect for candidate-centered news story type was found on affect about the Democratic party \( (F=1,44) 7.69, \ p=.01 \). These findings indicate that exposure to different types of candidate-centered coverage did make a difference in the favorability of subjects' beliefs and feelings about the Democratic party. However, for both of these main effects, the means are not in the direction posited to indicate persuasion. As shown in Figure 5.1, the mean for Democratic party cognitions was higher after the candidate-image story \( (M = 4.73) \) than after the party-candidate story \( (M = 4.55) \). Comparable means for Democratic party affect were 4.41 and 4.03, respectively.

No significant main effects for party-centered stories were found. That is, attitudes about the parties were not dependent on whether subjects were exposed to the division or unity story content. (See Appendix G for the F statistics for non-significant effects as well as the t statistics for non-significant mean differences for the analyses presented in this chapter.)

**Effect of Moderating Variables:** A significant two-way (candidate-centered story x partisan strength) interaction on affect about the Republican party was demonstrated \( (F=1,46) 3.38, \ p=.07 \). This suggests that watching either the candidate-image or party-candidate story did matter to
subjects when they reported feelings about the Republican party, but only as moderated by their partisan strength.

Figure 5.2 displays the means for Republican party affect for both strong and weak partisans after the favorable and unfavorable candidate-centered stories. While the means displayed for strong partisans are in the posited persuasion direction, they, as well as the means for weak partisans, are not significantly different using the t test as a standard.

A significant three-way (candidate-centered story x partisan strength x knowledge) interaction on Democratic party cognitions was demonstrated ($F=[1,43] 2.90, p=.10$). Thus, exposure to the candidate-centered story types did affect the degree of favorability of cognitions about the Democratic party, moderated by level of partisan strength and knowledge. No significant interactions on Democratic party affect were found, however.

The means for cognitions about the Democratic party are presented in Figures 5.3 and 5.4, which compare means for low- and high-knowledge subjects of differing partisan strength levels after the candidate-centered stories. Differences in means were found to be significant for only two subgroups: low-knowledge weak partisans ($t=-1.77, p=.05$) and high-knowledge strong partisans ($t=-3.49, p=.005$).

^Note that, for this and subsequent figures, higher means of the dependent variable (as indicated on the Y axes) signify increased favorability.
For both subgroups, however, the means for favorability of cognitions about the Democratic party are not in the direction hypothesized to indicate persuasion. That is, after the candidate-image story, both subgroups exhibited more favorable beliefs about the party than they did after the party-candidate story ($M's=4.35$ vs. $5.22$ for low-knowledge weak partisans and $1.44$ vs. $4.35$ for high-knowledge strong partisans).

In sum, significant main and interaction effects on both party cognitions and affect were found only for candidate-centered stories. This suggests that candidate-centered stories do make a difference in how subjects view the parties. In terms of main effects, differences in means for the experimental groups reached significance but did not indicate the hypothesized persuasion effect. In terms of interaction effects, differences in means reached significance for only two subgroups of subjects. Members of one of these subgroups (high-knowledge strong partisans) were hypothesized to be resistant to persuasion and indeed they were. That is, their means for cognitions about the Democratic party did not correspond in direction to that of the news story content.

The other subgroup whose means reached significance (low-knowledge weak partisans) was expected to be susceptible to persuasion effects, but was not. That is,
those who saw the candidate-image story reported more favorable beliefs about the Democratic party than did those who saw the party-candidate story.

**SECOND DEPENDENT VARIABLE: SUPPORT FOR THE PARTY SYSTEM**

During the 1968-1992 period, researchers found that support for the party system declined among Americans who were contacted as survey respondents. During this same time period, the content analysis as reported in Chapter Three found that television coverage of the parties was more likely to be unfavorable than favorable. The question, then, is how the two might be associated: specifically, whether viewing unfavorable party- or candidate-centered coverage persuades viewers to report lower levels of support for the American party system.

**Hypotheses**

**Hypothesized Effect of Media Story:** After exposure to the unfavorable stories (division and candidate-image), viewers are expected to report decreased support for the American party system than after the favorable stories (unity and party-candidate). The notion here is that
audience members will observe depictions of the Democratic and Republican parties as conflictual or irrelevant and then, in turn, report less support for the party system in general. Thus, the persuasive effects of news story content are expected to extend beyond attitudes toward the two specific parties to the system of party politics which sustains their existence.

**Hypothesized Effect of Partisan Strength:** As in the previous study, viewing just one unfavorable story is not expected to have much effect on strong partisans, who are assumed to support the party system to a high degree. Thus, this subgroup is hypothesized to show little evidence of persuasion effects. But weak partisans and independents are expected to show more susceptibility to the persuasiveness of the news stories. In particular, they are expected to report lower levels of support for the party system after the unfavorable news stories than after the favorable ones.

**Hypothesized Effect of Knowledge:** Similar to the case with the first dependent variable, those with lower levels of political knowledge are expected to be more susceptible to persuasion than are those with higher levels. Thus, the less knowledgeable should be more likely to report lower levels of support for the party system after the division and candidate-image stories than after the unity and party-candidate stories. More knowledgeable subjects, on the other hand, should be less likely to report such lower levels.
Hypothesized Effect of Partisan Strength x Knowledge:
Here, as in the case of party attitudes, less knowledgeable independents are expected to be most susceptible to persuasion effects, with more knowledgeable strong partisans expected to be least susceptible. Mid-range subgroups, however, are expected to demonstrate susceptibility to the news story’s persuasive effects, reporting lower levels of support for the party system after the division and candidate-image stories than after the ones about unity and party-candidates.

Design
Two analyses of variance models were specified. A 2 (party-centered story) x 3 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) as well as a 2 (candidate-centered story) x 2 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) fully between-subjects analyses of variance were performed on the party system support index.

Results
Effect of Media Story: No significant main effect for type of media story was found. That is, there were no significant differences in level of support for the party system between the two party-centered story groups or between the two candidate-centered story groups.

Effect of Moderating Variables: However, a significant three-way (candidate-centered story x partisan strength x
knowledge) interaction was demonstrated ($F=1,51\] 3.21, $p=.08$). Thus, differences in levels of party system support do exist among viewers who saw the candidate-image and party-candidate stories, moderated by level of partisan strength and knowledge. The means for these subgroups are presented in Figures 5.5 and 5.6 (for low- and high-knowledge subjects of varying partisan strength). For all four subgroups, differences in means were found to be significant (for low-knowledge strong partisans $t=-1.47$, $p=.10$; for low-knowledge weak partisans $t=-1.29$, $p=.10$; for high-knowledge strong partisans $t=-2.05$, $p=.04$; and for high-knowledge weak partisans $t=-2.66$, $p=.01$).

For only one of these subgroups, however, were means found to be consistent with the hypothesized persuasion effects. Surprisingly, it was the more knowledgeable strong partisan subgroup which was persuaded by the candidate-centered news stories ($M'{}s = 3.25$ after candidate-image and $4.00$ after party-candidate). The rest of the subgroups exhibited more support after the unfavorable candidate-image story ($M'{}s = 3.50$ for low-knowledge strong partisans, $2.55$ for low-knowledge weak partisans, and $2.50$ for high-knowledge weak partisans) than after the favorable party-candidate story ($M'{}s = 2.33, 2.00$, and $1.63$ for each subgroup, respectively).

In sum, watching candidate-centered stories did make a difference for all subgroups. However, members of these
subgroups did not behave as expected. Mid-range groups did not accord less importance to the American party system after seeing the candidate-image story. But high-knowledge strong partisans were persuaded by such news story content.

THIRD DEPENDENT VARIABLE: IMPORTANCE OF PARTY TIES IN CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS

While the two previous dependent variables were concerned with attitudes about the political parties and support for the party system, the third dependent variable has to do with evaluations of candidates, specifically the importance of the connection between candidates and their parties. Here, viewers were asked to report how relevant, or important, three party-related traits would be in judging the candidates depicted in the news stories: the importance of each candidate’s party membership, his position as a party representative, and his party loyalty. In short, then, this dependent variable involves the degree to which a candidate’s link to his party would be considered an important attribute in evaluations.

The question to be addressed in this section is whether the importance accorded party ties in candidate evaluations is less for those subjects viewing the unfavorable stories than for those viewing the favorable ones.
Hypotheses

Hypothesized Effect of Media Story: In the division story, candidates are portrayed as the source of disagreement within their parties, implying that their connection to those parties is relatively tenuous, while in the candidate-image story, that connection is not presented at all. Hence, audience members are expected to consider the importance of party ties to be less important after these unfavorable stories. Conversely, they are expected to be more important after the unity and party-candidate stories, where candidates’ connections to the parties are portrayed as solid.

Hypothesized Effect of Partisan Strength: Again, strong partisans are expected to be the most resistant to the persuasive effects of the news stories. For strong partisans, presumed prior convictions that a nominee’s party connection is an important consideration in candidate judgments are expected to prevail no matter the news story content. So, as in the case of party attitudes and party system support, this subgroup is hypothesized to show little evidence of persuasion effects. Thus, weak partisans and independents remain as the groups which are expected to show more susceptibility to the persuasiveness of the news stories.

Hypothesized Effect of Knowledge: Recall that the questions tapping level of political knowledge specifically
ask about the partisanship of political leaders. Those with higher levels of such knowledge are assumed to place relatively high worth on such party ties. Because of this strong preconception, they are hypothesized to be less susceptible to the persuasive effects of news story content. Conversely, those with less knowledge are posited to be more susceptible. Thus, they are expected to rate party ties as less important after the division and candidate-image stories than after the unity and party-candidate stories.

**Hypothesized Effect of Partisan Strength x Knowledge:**
Similar to the situation for the first two dependent variables, less knowledgeable independents as well as those groups which fall in the mid-range of partisan strength and/or knowledge are expected to be more susceptible to persuasive effects. They should report lower levels of importance for a candidate’s party ties after the unfavorable news stories than after the favorable ones. Strong partisans, on the other hand, are posited to be less susceptible to such persuasion effects.

**Design**

Both a 2 (party-centered story) x 3 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) and a 2 (candidate-centered story) x 2 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) fully between-subjects analyses of variance were performed on a combined candidate party importance scale.
Results

Effect of Media Story: No significant main effects were found. That is to say, no significant differences in importance of party ties in candidate evaluations were found between the two party-centered story groups and the two candidate-centered groups.

Effect of Moderating Variables: Significant differences in the importance of party ties in candidate judgments were found for subjects who saw the party-centered stories, dependent on the moderating variables. A significant three-way (party-centered story x partisan strength x knowledge) interaction was demonstrated ($F=\{2,48\} 5.01, p=.01$). The means for the low- and high-knowledge subgroups are presented in Figures 5.7 and 5.8. Three of the six subgroups were found to have significantly different means for party-tie importance after the division and unity stories: two low-knowledge subgroups, weak partisans ($t=.01, p=.005$) and independents ($t=-2.29, p=.003$), as well as high-knowledge strong partisans ($t=2.29, p=.035$).

Evidence of persuasion effects are exhibited for both less knowledgeable weak partisans as well as more knowledgeable strong partisans. In other words, these viewers accorded less importance to a candidate's relationship with his party after the story of party

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A significant two-way (party-centered story x knowledge) interaction was found as well ($F=\{1,48\} 3.25, p=.08$). However, only the higher order interaction is discussed here.
division ($M'$s = 2.63 for low-knowledge weak partisans and 2.83 for high-knowledge strong partisans) than after the one about party unity ($M'$s = 4.70 and 5.28 for each subgroup, respectively). This suggests that when parties are portrayed as conflicted about a candidate's nomination, the relationship that candidate has to his party becomes a relatively unimportant factor in candidate assessments for these viewers.

The only subgroup that was not persuaded in the hypothesized direction by news story content was the low-knowledge independent subgroup. After seeing a story devoted to party contentiousness over candidates, these subjects reported that party ties would be more important in their evaluations, rather than less important ($M'$s = 5.08 after the division story and 2.50 after unity).

In sum, one mid-range subgroup, which had been hypothesized to be susceptible to persuasion effects (low-knowledge weak partisans) did behave as expected. After the story of party division, members of this subgroup accorded less importance to a candidate's party ties. The other two subgroups, however, responded in an unexpected fashion. Low-knowledge independents, hypothesized to be highly susceptible, were not persuaded, and high-knowledge strong partisans, hypothesized to be resistant to persuasion, were influenced by the news story content.
In general, the analyses of variance reported in this chapter showed that the unfavorable news stories that were prevalent in the content analysis (division and candidate-image) can influence some audience members, although in some unexpected ways. The next section will summarize and discuss the findings for each of the three dependent variables, then for subgroups of subjects, and finally for each of the two unfavorable story types used in the analysis.

**DISCUSSION**

**The Dependent Variables:** Differences in means that were both significant (using $t$ tests) and indicated persuasion were found for two of the three dependent variables in this study. Results indicated that there is a persuasive effect on overall support for the American party system, especially for high-knowledge strong partisans. But even though they were persuaded in terms of party system support, members of this subgroup were not persuaded to hold more unfavorable attitudes about the Democratic and Republican parties.

This lack of correspondence between effects on party system support and party attitudes suggests that two distinct dimensions are being tapped by these dependent
variables. Thus, just because unfavorable news story content affects one of these dependent variables, it does not necessarily affect the other.

Findings also showed that unfavorable news stories influence the importance that viewers impart to one of the attributes used in candidate evaluations, namely the candidate's connection to the party. After the division story, especially, two subgroups of subjects were persuaded to accord less importance to a candidate's party ties. Thus, this dependent variable seems quite responsive to the persuasive effects of unfavorable party-centered news story content. Certainly, to the extent that a candidate's party ties become unimportant, other, probably personal, attributes increase in importance. Thus, unfavorable news coverage was shown to not only directly affect beliefs about the parties and support for the party system, but also to affect the ways in which party enters into the candidate judgment process.

For the other dependent variable, cognitions and affect about the Democratic party, differences in means for candidate-centered story groups reached significance but were not in a direction posited to indicate persuasion. Moreover, after the unfavorable candidate-centered story, two subgroups of subjects reported more favorable beliefs

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6 The correlation (Pearson r) for party system support and cognitions about the parties in this study is .31 (p=.001), and .20 (p=.04) for affect about the parties.
about the party, rather than less favorable ones. Thus, a
story devoid of party content and focused solely on
candidates' personal attributes engendered a relatively
favorable view of the party.

Recall that this story features two fictitious
candidates from an ambiguous part of the country. Normal
cues that could provide context with which to judge
candidates, such as issue positions and partisanship, are
missing from this news story. Members of one subgroup, high-
knowledge strong partisans, who would be most likely to use
party identification as a guide in voting, understandably
regarded the party as a relatively favorable cue when it was
missing from story content. But low-knowledge weak partisans
also reported more favorable beliefs about the parties after
such a story. Even though they express no partisan affinity
themselves, this suggests that they still may see a role for
the party to play in providing guidelines for
differentiating between candidates, especially when issue
cues are not present in news story content as well.

An additional word about effects on attitudes toward
the parties is in order here. While the direction of means
for party attitudes did not correspond to the hypotheses
proposed in this study, significant differences were still
found between subjects who saw the candidate-centered
stories. However, these differences were not confined to
cognitions; affect was significantly different as well.

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Thus, the usually more enduring affective component proved to be just as susceptible to change in the face of news story content as was the more short-term cognitive component, a finding inconsistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter One.

**Subgroups of Subjects:** As hypothesized, high-knowledge strong partisans were found to be resistant to persuasion, but only in the candidate-centered story condition and only in terms of cognitions about the Democratic party. Certainly, these subjects can be considered to hold the strongest attitudes about the parties -- the groups with which they have formed a psychological attachment. And, as expected, the strength of that attachment minimized the persuasion effects of the unfavorable candidate-image story.

However, high-knowledge strong partisans were persuaded in a hypothesized direction in other instances. First, they reported less support for the party system after the candidate-image story. This finding suggests that members of this subgroup may not hold strong pre-existing support for the party system after all. Even though these subjects possess knowledge about politics and can identify political figures as either Democrats or Republicans, and even though they profess allegiance to one of the parties, that does not mean that they necessarily support the party system.

Second, high-knowledge strong partisans were persuaded to accord less importance to a candidate’s party ties after
viewing the unfavorable party division story. Here, news story content about party dissension over the naming of a candidate induced even politically savvy strong identifiers to regard the candidate’s party ties as less important than when the party is portrayed as united behind the front-runner. The parties’ calls for unity in the post-primary season can go a long way toward portraying them as essential players in the election process, a process which has become increasingly candidate-centered. The findings here suggest that such calls for unity may not be a matter of converting only the unfaithful to a view of the party as an important factor in elections. Those who are the most likely to follow the party’s banner into the fall campaign, the politically knowledgeable strong identifiers, may need such conversion as well.

Members of the subgroup expected to be the most susceptible to persuasion effects, less knowledgeable independents, did not demonstrate such effects. After viewing the story about party division, this group did not report that a candidate’s party ties would be less important in their evaluations, but more important. In other words, news content about parties squabbling over candidates produced a heightened awareness of the candidate-party connection. It is unclear from the data analyzed here whether that connection is viewed as favorable for the candidate, only that it is important. However, this group of

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subjects is made up of those who are the least likely to pay attention to politics and the most "turned off" by partisanship. Thus, one could assume that the candidate-party link is seen by them as a negative. And that unfavorable link is more salient when party in-fighting is portrayed, a situation not dissimilar to that of the primary season. These findings suggest, then, that the contentiousness of the primary process may be a contributing factor in the alienation of these independents from partisan politics.

Mid-range subject subgroups were found to be susceptible to persuasion effects, as hypothesized, in the case of the party division story. Here, less knowledgeable weak partisans were influenced to report that the candidate’s relationship to his party was a relatively unimportant factor. Mid-range subgroups were not persuaded by the candidate-image story to decrease the favorability of their beliefs nor their party system support, however.

An understanding of the role of candidate partisanship in candidate evaluations will perhaps prove helpful in this case. Even though we are in an age of candidate-centered politics, certainly the partisanship of a candidate can still play an important role in the ultimate candidate evaluation: vote choice. And it is precisely for citizens in these mid-range subgroups that this cue may prove an invaluable aid in choosing among candidates.
Such a partisanship cue was lacking in the candidate-image story. Perhaps because of this lack then, these subjects saw the party system as more worthy of support, rather than less. And, when asked how important certain traits would be in candidate judgments, they ranked party membership, loyalty, and representation as relatively more important. Thus, it seems as though when news coverage emphasized candidate personal characteristics to the exclusion of information about candidate partisanship, mid-range subjects found that personal information alone was not enough to make reasoned judgments about candidates. The candidates' link to the party proved to be a very important factor.

Unfavorable Story Types: The content of both unfavorable stories used in this analysis, division and candidate-image, was found to be persuasive. The division story influenced some subgroups of subjects, including knowledgeable strong partisans, to lessen their party system support and to regard the candidate-party link as relatively unimportant. As for the candidate-image story, it was especially persuasive in decreasing the levels of party system support for knowledgeable strong partisans. Thus, both types of news stories found to be prevalent in the "real world" of televised party coverage, whether party- or candidate-centered, did make a significant difference in the attitudes held by some subjects in this study.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to explore how the predominantly unfavorable themes used in television news coverage of parties, as found in the content analysis, affect audience members. Experiments were used to determine whether those themes, specifically party division and candidate image, would persuade viewers to regard the parties less favorably, to demonstrate decreased support for the party system, and to consider party ties as relatively unimportant factors when evaluating candidates. However, the results of those experiments were disappointing in that they did not consistently show the expected persuasion effects.

This dissertation now turns to the concluding chapter. There, the findings of the experimental analysis, even though often unexpected, and those of the content analysis will be set within the broader context of implications for the American political parties and party politics. Ideas for future research generated by this study will also be discussed.
Figure 5.1: Democratic Party Attitudes: Candidate-Centered Coverage
Main Effects

PARTISAN STRENGTH

Figure 5.2: Affect About Republican Party: Candidate-Centered Coverage
By Partisan Strength
Figure 5.3: Cognitions About Democratic Party: Candidate-Centered Coverage
Low Knowledge by Partisan Strength

Figure 5.4: Cognitions About Democratic Party: Candidate-Centered Coverage
High Knowledge by Partisan Strength
PARTISAN STRENGTH

Figure 5.5: Support For Party System:
Candidate-Centered Coverage
Low Knowledge By Partisan Strength

PARTISAN STRENGTH

Figure 5.6: Support For Party System:
Candidate-Centered Coverage
High Knowledge By Partisan Strength
PARTISAN STRENGTH

Figure 5.7: Importance of Party Ties: Party-Centered Coverage
Low Knowledge By Partisan Strength

PARTISAN STRENGTH

Figure 5.8: Importance of Party Ties: Party-Centered Coverage
Low Knowledge By Partisan Strength
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter reviews the findings of this dissertation and considers their implications for the role of political parties in the American electoral process. It also proposes topics for future research.

REVIEW OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Political parties have traditionally performed important functions integral to a democratic system. They have organized elections, chosen and funded candidates for office, mobilized voters, represented the interests of their constituencies to elected officials, and organized the party-in-government. Moreover, they have communicated their policy positions to the citizenry, thus providing an important cue in voting decisions. By performing these functions, political parties can provide a continuity to the electoral process that would otherwise be dominated by more transient factors such as candidates and issues.
The Democratic and Republican parties have performed these functions to varying degrees over the course of American history. Over the last few decades, however, they have suffered an erosion in power. Scholars have proposed various theories about the parties' loss of power, most of them focusing on historical and structural factors. For example, the institutionalization of the direct primary has resulted in an electoral process that revolves around candidates rather than parties. Because of this, the party can no longer take its once-dominant role in the nominating process for granted. The primary season now offers an opportunity for candidates to court the electorate directly, bypassing the need for the party as a link between candidates and voters.

Particularly at the presidential campaign level, this rise in candidate-centered electoral politics has resulted in a primary season in which a party's candidates vie among themselves for votes and thus delegates at the subsequent national party convention. Unless the party is in the position of nominating an incumbent president for the ticket, these primary contests can become quite fractious. The party can do little but sit back and wait for its nominee to be chosen by the primary process, then issue calls for unity behind the front-running ticket.

Because of these structural changes, the role of the party convention has changed dramatically as well. No longer
the forum for actually nominating the presidential ticket, it has become the venue for formalizing the nomination of the presidential candidate who has won in the preconvention caucuses and primaries. Perhaps more importantly, it has also become the means of communicating the party's unified image to the public. Especially after a contentious primary season, the picture that the party seeks to disseminate during the convention is one of an undivided actor, ready to support its nominee in the fall campaign. As Shafer (1988) remarks, "conventions ... became more than just a way to introduce a presidential candidate; they became the means to reintroduce an entire, composite political party (p.154)."

The convention goes a long way, then, toward setting the stage for how unified the party looks to the American people.

At the same time that these structural changes have taken place, survey research has shown that the parties are viewed increasingly by the public as either insignificant or negative political forces. Moreover, many Americans do not support the two-party system to a high degree and calls can be heard from many quarters for the establishment of a viable third-party movement. In addition, many Americans have become reluctant to profess any party affiliation at all, opting instead to label themselves as independents.

All of these changes call to mind important questions about the future role of American political parties in the
electoral process: the part they will play in nominating and funding candidates, conducting campaigns, representing citizen interests, organizing elected officials, and providing a reference group with which citizens can identify.

Many scholars have noted that this diminution of party power, the rise of candidate-centered campaigns, and public disregard for the parties in the United States have been accompanied by another phenomenon: the ascendancy of the media as central players in the electoral process. It is through the media, and particularly television, that primary and general election campaigns are now waged and the image of the party as portrayed during the convention period is conveyed to the public. Because of the increasingly important role played by television, some have even advanced the notion that the medium has taken over the function of screening candidates, a role previously fulfilled by the parties.

While prior researchers have examined media coverage of campaigns and issues, they have not systematically examined how the parties are covered on television. Further, they have not dealt with how coverage of the political parties might affect the opinions of audience members. Certainly, whether television coverage of the parties has taken a back seat to coverage of political personalities and whether parties are portrayed in a negative fashion have important
implications for the way the public views the parties. Moreover, television coverage of the parties may affect the degree to which the public supports the current two-party system as well as how candidates' relationships to their parties are regarded. The effects of watching television coverage of parties, then, are important considerations in discerning the future role of the parties in the American political process.

This dissertation has sought to examine such coverage and its effects. Some scholars have speculated, and rightly so, that complex interactions with other variables might prevent an empirical examination of the effects of the media. Acknowledging these concerns, this study implemented a multimethod design, involving a content analysis of television news shows and a laboratory experiment. The content analysis was intended to determine the nature of party coverage, and the experiment examined the effects of that coverage while minimizing the influence of confounding variables.

In general, during the 1968-1992 period, the national parties were most often found to be covered on television as supporters of the front-running tickets, with the conventions as the start of the fall campaign. Even within the context of convention coverage, however, candidate image sub-themes still predominated over party sub-themes. When the parties were the focus of coverage, they were most often
portrayed as divided over their front-runners, rather than united behind them. In addition, the parties were much more likely to be shown on television in an unfavorable light. Thus, candidate-image and party division stories were found to predominate. Both were conceptualized as being unfavorable from the parties’ point of view.

The experimental analysis explored how these unfavorable stories might affect audience members. Specifically, effects on attitudes toward the parties, support for the party system, and the importance of a candidate’s party ties were investigated. While significant effects were found, they were not always consistent with hypothesized persuasion effects, as discussed in Chapter Five.

News story content about party division produced significant persuasion effects on candidate evaluations but not on party attitudes or party system support. Specifically, after viewing this story, candidates’ ties to their parties were judged to be relatively unimportant evaluative traits, as hypothesized. In short, when the candidates’ party ties were portrayed as tenuous, as they were in the division story, those ties became relatively unimportant factors for some viewers. Presumably alternative, probably personal, candidate traits instead became important considerations. When party in-fighting is the focus of coverage, then, individuating candidate traits
seem to take precedence over party-connected attributes. Clearly, the instinct of candidates to separate themselves from a contentious party is supported by the findings in this study.

The other unfavorable news story found to be prevalent in the content analysis had to do with an emphasis on candidate image to the exclusion of candidate partisanship. This story was found to have significant persuasion effects on party system support, but not on attitudes toward the parties or the importance of the candidate-party tie. In particular, the candidate-image story persuaded some subjects to express less party system support, suggesting that a focus on candidate personality can be detrimental to the continuance of the American two-party system.

While these persuasion effects are interesting and have important implications for the parties, those instances in which significant findings were not in the hypothesized persuasion direction may perhaps be just as important. That is, many subjects held more, rather than less, favorable cognitions and affect about the parties and were more, rather than less, supportive of the party system after the candidate-image story. Likewise, some subjects accorded more import to the candidate-party tie, rather than less, after the party division story.

These unexpected results may have been found for two reasons. One is that these subjects may indeed not have been
persuaded by the story content. Another possible reason is that subjects may have been persuaded by the story content, but in a direction opposite of that hypothesized in this study. Certainly further research is necessary in order to ascertain which of these instances predominates. However, because of the preponderance of these unexpected significant findings, they will be included in the discussion here.

The first unexpected result was found after the party division story. Independents reported that the candidate-party tie would be a relatively important trait when judging candidates, after viewing a story about party in-fighting. Presumably, for these independent subjects, that tie would be looked upon negatively. Thus the unfavorable connection between candidate and party was made even more salient for independents in this study after seeing the party division story.

A second unexpected finding had to do with effects of the candidate-image story on party system support. Here, subjects in the mid-range subgroups reported higher degrees of party system support after a story that did not even mention the parties. But the lack of a party cue in this story may be precisely why support for the party system increased. Mid-range subjects may be just the ones for whom a party cue is most important when making political judgments. When
partisanship was found lacking in the candidate-image story, then, these subjects perceived the party system as more worthy of support.

A third unexpected finding arose from exposure to the candidate-image story, when subjects reported more favorable, rather than less, cognitions and affect about the parties. Similar to the situation discussed above, when story content focuses on candidate-image to the exclusion of other decision cues such as party and issue positions, subjects seemed to favor the parties. Perhaps, then, image-based coverage influences not only heightened party system support but also more favorable attitudes about the Democratic and Republican parties themselves. Indeed, "absence may make the heart grow fonder" for the parties.

In summary, the hypotheses which guided this study basically were not supported by the experimental evidence. That is, expectations that subjects would report decreased levels of favorability in attitudes about the parties, of party system support, and of importance of the candidate-party tie after the unfavorable stories did not materialize. While significant differences were found among subjects who viewed the unfavorable and favorable stories, many were in a direction opposite that hypothesized. However, whether expected or unexpected, these findings have important implications for the role of the parties in American politics.
First, news content about party in-fighting seems to cause the partisanship of candidates to take a back seat to personal traits. But, for independents, especially those with low knowledge levels, such news content can produce an opposite effect, with candidate partisanship seen as a relatively important, presumably negative, trait in judgments.

Second, news story content about candidate image can persuade subjects to become relatively nonsupportive of the two-party system. However, mid-range subjects, especially, increase their party system support when party cues are absent from candidate-centered news story content. Moreover, for all subjects in this study, this absence produced more favorable attitudes toward the Democratic and Republican parties.

These findings, then, suggest that television coverage of the parties can be a mixed blessing for the parties. On the one hand, coverage of parties as divided can influence viewers to either de-emphasize the role of the party’s connection to the candidate or to perceive that connection as a more important, but probably unfavorable, trait. Moreover, candidate-image news content can result in decreased support for the party system. In any case, the role of the parties in the electoral system is either diminished or viewed negatively. On the other hand, stories centering solely on candidate image produced favorable views
of the Democratic and Republican parties across all subjects, as well as increased party system support for mid-range subjects. Of course, news coverage of actual candidates, at least at the presidential level, almost always carries a connotation of party membership, even if it is not expressed. Thus, one must interpret these findings with that in mind.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

The questions addressed in this dissertation are complex and many are thus not fully explored without further study. Besides further work to ascertain the nature of the persuasion effects of unfavorable party coverage, as previously discussed, other avenues for future research are suggested by this study.

Additional work is warranted in order to strengthen the findings of the current study. For example, differences in means between subgroups of subjects did not always reach statistical significance, particularly when comparisons were made between subjects by partisan strength and knowledge level. The number of subjects in each cell became quite small for those comparisons, and in the case of high-knowledge independents, no subjects fell in the candidate-image condition. Replicating this study using more subjects should help increase the incidence of significant differences in means as well as indicate the effects for
independents who are knowledgeable about politics. Ultimately, it would aid in a more complete understanding of the persuasive effects of the news story content types found in the content analysis.

Furthermore, the stimuli used in the experiments may not have been powerful enough to engender the hypothesized persuasion effects. The experimental news stories used were quite short, presenting only a few minutes of information about the parties or candidates. In actuality, such coverage comprises a much larger proportion of total network evening news show time when the conventions are in session. Certainly most Americans do not watch one single story about the parties, but many such stories, over a longer period of time. Further investigation of persuasive effects using longer news stories viewed over a period of time is thus warranted.

Another avenue of future research involves using a longitudinal study to investigate attitudinal decay. While the study as designed here can ascertain effects immediately after exposure to news story content, it does not address what may perhaps be a more important issue, how long those effects last.

Further work can also aid in increasing the study's approximation to the "real world." Actual news story content usually presents a mixture of sub-themes within one story rather than a focus solely on one sub-theme. Designing
an experimental news story which uses multiple sub-themes would present opportunities for exploring the effects of such real world coverage. In addition, actual convention footage could be used as stimuli, although doing so presents opportunities for the influence of confounding effects from attitudes toward actual candidates and issues.

Replicating the study with a community-based sample in order to generalize the findings to a broader population would help increase its external validity. Such an analysis would examine persuasive effects on people who have had more years of experience dealing with politics and who represent a more diverse population than do college undergraduates.

Besides future research to strengthen this study's findings, other avenues of exploration suggest themselves as well. For one thing, assumptions were made about the favorability and unfavorability of coverage from the parties' perspective. Certainly an empirical analysis of just what types of thematic frames are considered by the party organizations to be negative or positive is in order. The administration of a survey as well as interviews with party elites and activists would help to determine the valence of coverage from their perspective.

Finally, this study explores only how one medium, television, covers the parties and how that coverage affects audience members. Extending this work to print media and studying the two comparatively would provide a richer
understanding of the ways in which the media in general portray parties and affect political opinion.

This dissertation has sought to investigate the ways in which the television medium covers parties and how exposure to such coverage affects viewers' attitudes toward the Democratic and Republican parties, support for the American party system, and the importance of party ties in candidate evaluations. It has also proposed new avenues of research which might shed more light on the role of television in the American electoral process. If television is a potent socializing agent and enforcer of political norms, the ways in which it regards and portrays the political parties and their candidates hold important implications for the role that the public allows those parties to play. And whether television plays a central role in the nomination process or is only an intermediary between political elites and the public, the choices that television journalists make can be seen as vital to the nature of political campaigns in the United States as well as to the functioning of our democracy.
APPENDIX A

CONTENT ANALYSIS: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
The content analysis was performed at the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives from June 20-June 24, 1994. A random sample of news programs broadcast by the three major networks during the Democratic and Republican national conventions from 1968 to 1992 was selected for content analysis. The resulting data base involved 163 news stories comprising almost nine hours of coverage. These stories were presented during the fourteen conventions over the time period as well as the day prior and subsequent to each convention.

The 163 news stories included an oversample of the 1988-1992 period which was used as a basis for the experimental stimuli discussed in Chapter Four. When that oversample was dropped for the content analysis in Chapter Three, the resulting data base comprised 125 stories totalling approximately eight hours of coverage.

**Thematic Content Analysis:** Rather than coding each news story wholly as one theme or another, the content
analysis was accomplished by stopping the videotape every ten seconds and coding the segment appropriately. In this way, a mosaic of themes across the period was assembled. Especially in more recent years, as television's technology advanced, changes in themes were found to occur quickly, often every 10 seconds or less, as journalists' audio reports attempted to keep up with quickly shifting pictures. Time was kept according to a timer provided on videotapes at Vanderbilt.

The thematic coding was done solely by the author, based on a preliminary list of categories suggested by the work of Shafer (1983). The list was revised by test-coding several videotapes ordered ahead of time from Vanderbilt. Once a comprehensive list of themes and sub-themes was prepared, the on-site coding began. That list was quickly elaborated upon once the coding of the actual sample of stories got underway. The final code book of all coding variables, themes and sub-themes, and explanatory remarks follows.

**CONTENT ANALYSIS CODEBOOK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable Label</th>
<th>Value Labels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Case ID (Story)</td>
<td>1=Pre-Convention (day before)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>2=Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3=Post-Convention (day after)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTE</td>
<td>Story Month &amp; Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YR</td>
<td>Story Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY</td>
<td>Day of Convention</td>
<td>1-5 (for Period 2 only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

129
PTY  Party  1=Democratic
       2=Republican

NET  Network  1=ABC
       2=CBS
       3=NBC

POS  Story Position  1=Lead Story
       2=1st Party Story (not lead)
       3=Middle Story
       4=Last Party Story

TYP  Story Type  1=News
       2=Opinion
       3=Mixed (News, then Opinion)

NOP  Party Mentions

NOC  Candidate Mentions

NOI  Issue Mentions

CNO  Comments on Mentions  1=Yes, 0=No

TOT  Total Story Time  (in seconds)

SEG  No. of Segments  (Segment=theme changes)

MIN  Min. No. of Segments

MAX  Max. No. of Segments

CTH  Comments on Themes  1=Yes, 0=No

TH101-888  Themes (See Below)

T101-888  Time per Theme

**Themes and Sub-Themes**

101  **LAUNCH FALL CAMPAIGN**
102  Party Unified Behind Front Runner
103  Party Divided Due to Challengers' Candidacies (Includes stories about challengers' campaigns.)
104  Party Divided due to Other Reasons (SPECIFY: Coded as Below)
130  General Disagreement and Disunity
131  Unpopularity of Front Runner
132  Change in Characteristics of Delegates
133  Organizational Disputes
134  Actions of Elected Officials (non-candidates who are party members)
105  Party Image as Electoral Winner (past, present, or future)
106  Party Image as Electoral Loser (past, present, or future)
107  Strategy of Party (the party's campaign rather than the candidate's) to Win in the Fall (Includes rhetoric against opposite party.)
108  V.P. Nominee: Party Unified Behind (Includes stories about apologists/defenders of V.P. nominee, after nomination.)
109  V.P. Nominee: Party Divided Over (Includes problems with V.P. nominee, after nomination/)

130
| 120 | V.P. Candidate Possibilities (Includes coverage of possible nominees before announcement.) |
| 121 | V.P. Candidate Image/Personality (Includes family stories and campaign after nomination.) |
| 110 | Candidate Image/Personality (Includes family-member stories.) |
| 111 | Candidate Campaign/Chances of Winning (Includes candidate strategy, horse race, candidate’s issue stands and ideology, one candidate’s rhetoric against the other, and candidate campaign in control of convention.) |
| 112 | Candidate, Other (SPECIFY) [No segments fell into this category.] |
| 113 | Issue/Policy Interest Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 116 | Issue/Policy Interest Not Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 114 | Ideological Interest Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 117 | Ideological Interest Not Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 115 | Traditional Party Support Group Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 118 | Traditional Party Support Group Not Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 123 | Third Party/Independent Candidate Covered |

**Campaign Launching Themes: Opposite Party**

| 153 | Party Divided Due to Challengers’ Candidacies |
| 155 | Party Image as Winner |
| 156 | Party Image as Loser |
| 157 | Strategy of Party |
| 158 | V.P. Nominee: Party Unified |
| 159 | V.P. Nominee: Party Divided |
| 160 | Candidate Image/Personality |
| 161 | Candidate Campaign |
| 163 | Issue Interest Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 166 | Issue Interest Not Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 168 | Traditional Support Group Not Unified Behind Front Runner |
| 171 | V.P. Candidate Image/Personality |

**FORUM FOR INTERESTS/POLICY DEBATES** (Includes platform fights over, and references to healthy debate or diversity in a democracy.)

| 210 | Ideological Interests (Includes non-party specific ideological interests.) |
| 212 | Party Unified (intraparty) |
| 213 | Party Divided (intraparty) |
| 214 | Party Representative of Party-in-Electorate |
| 215 | Party Representative of Electorate |
216 Party Unrepresentative of Party-in-Electorate
217 Party Unrepresentative of Electorate
218 Party Addressing Interests of Ideological Interest Group
219 Party Not Addressing Interests of Ideological Interest Group

220 **Issue/Policy Interests**
221 Party Unified (intraparty)
222 Party Divided (intraparty) (Includes gaining access for minority planks on the floor, including challenger and candidate sponsored planks.)
223 Party Representative of Party-in-Electorate
224 Party Representative of Electorate
225 Party Unrepresentative of Party-in-Electorate
226 Party Unrepresentative of Electorate
227 Issue-Specific Protest Demonstrations
228 Party Addressing Issues/Policies
229 Party Not Addressing Issues/Policies

230 **Traditional Party Support Groups**
231 Party Unified (intraparty)
232 Party Divided (intraparty)
230 Party Representative of Party-in-Electorate
231 Party Representative of Electorate
232 Party Unrepresentative of Party-in-Electorate
233 Party Unrepresentative of Electorate
234 Party Addressing Concerns of Traditional Support Group
235 Party Not Addressing Concerns of Traditional Support Group

Policy Debate Forum: Opposite Party
264 **Ideological Interests:** Party Representative of Party-in-Electorate
269 Party Not Addressing Interests of Ideological Interests
274 **Issue Interests:** Party Representative of Electorate
278 Party Addressing Issues/Policies
279 Party Not Addressing Issues/Policies

282 Traditional Party Support Group: Party Divided (intraparty)
283 Traditional Party Support Group: Party Unrepresentative of Electorate
284 Party Addressing Concerns of Traditional Support Group

400 **FORUM FOR PUBLICIZING PARTY**
301 Platform Fights (other than about categories above): Seating, Credentials, Rules
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>302</td>
<td>Characteristics of Party Members/Delegates/Elites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401</td>
<td>Mentions of Pre-Recorded Propaganda Films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>402</td>
<td>Delegate Feature Stories/Interviews (Includes stories of convention city.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>403</td>
<td>Tangibles: Hall, Podium, Screen, Balloons, Entertainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404</td>
<td>Call to Order/Close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>405</td>
<td>Delegate Demonstrations On Floor: &quot;Hoopla&quot; for Candidate/Party/Cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406</td>
<td>Speeches (Includes generic, patriotic, or inane speeches, or generic media comments about a speech.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451</td>
<td>Demonstrators/Demonstrations/Protests: Party Specific, Past and Present (See Notes to Codebook below.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>452</td>
<td>Citizens/Electorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>Forum for Publicizing Party: Orchestrated Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501</td>
<td>Demonstrators/Demonstrations/Protests (See Notes to Codebook below.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>407</td>
<td>MEDIA COMMENTARY: Media on the Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>411</td>
<td>Conventions Exploit Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412</td>
<td>Media's Job at Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>413</td>
<td>Media Target of Police Beatings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>408</td>
<td>Convention Meaningless/Predictable/Boring/Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>409</td>
<td>Convention Interesting/Exciting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>410</td>
<td>Party Speakers Inaccurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>Reporter Announcement of Further Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>888</td>
<td>Other (SPECIFY): All were coded into above categories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes to Codebook**

**TYP:** Commentary determined by designation as such in Abstracts or when dialogue in story is reporter-to-reporter; e.g., reporters ask each other for opinions on the news. Mixed stories are those in which news is disseminated first, followed by a commentary within the same news story.

**Opposite Party:** This designation means that, during a story which is shown during the convention of Party A, a segment covers a theme about Party B, the opposite party. (Theme code numbers are simply the original ones + 50.) All notes pertaining to original code numbers apply.

**Candidate:** The successful presidential candidate who ends up getting the nomination (the "front runner"). All others in the race for the nomination are considered challengers.
V.P. Nominee: The nominee after the nomination; all others are considered v.p. candidates.

Interests (in Campaign Launching Categories): When a group is considered to be a traditional supporter of a party (e.g., blacks of the Democratic party), it is coded as such. When coverage shows support from a nontraditional source (e.g., blacks of Republicans), it is coded as either an ideological or issue interest.

If an ideological interest group and/or spokesperson is covered, it is coded as an ideological interest, unless specific issues are mentioned; then it is coded as in issue interest.

Interests (in Policy Debate Categories): When a story is about representation or nonrepresentation of a traditional support group, it is classified as such, unless the focus of the segment is on ideology or issues, in which case those categories are used.

Party-in-the-Electorate: Coded as traditional support group for variables 113-118 (Interests Support/Nonsupport of Front Runner).

Main Theme Categories: Variables 101, 210, 211, 220, 230, 300, and 400 are used for stories which cannot be categorized in sub-themes; they designate general, or other, stories within the main theme.

Visuals: Verbals only are coded, except when visuals only are shown and they can fit into a theme category (e.g., balloons falling and bands playing are coded as 403, Tangibles).

Speeches: Coded as 110/111 if candidates are shown preparing for them, or 406 if clips of old speeches are shown. If candidates are shown giving a speech, it is coded as 406, unless speech excerpt has thematic message, in which case it is coded within the specific theme or sub-theme.

Protest Demonstrations: Vars 451 and 501 are re-categorized as "party unrepresentative of electorate" for use in classifying representation and nonrepresentation sub-themes. (See Chapter Three.)
APPENDIX B

SUBJECT PARTY IDENTIFICATION:
VALIDITY CHECK
APPENDIX B

SUBJECT PARTY IDENTIFICATION:
VALIDITY CHECK

In order to check the typicality of the association between subjects' party identification and the attitudes they hold about the parties, an analysis of variance was performed. Specifically, a 2 (Unity or Division) x 5 (Party Identification Direction and Strength) x 2 (Knowledge) x 2 (Target Party) repeated measures analysis of variance, with Target Party (Democratic or Republican) in the repeated measures, was performed on affect and on cognitions about the Democratic and Republican parties.

A significant interaction between party identification and target party for both affect ($F=[4,48] 16.52, p=.00$) and cognitions ($F=[4,45] 10.69, p=.00$) was demonstrated. Figures B.1 and B.2 show the means for affect and cognitions toward each of the target parties associated with levels of party identification.

As indicated, strong partisans of both parties reported more favorable affect and cognitions about their own parties.
than they did for the opposition, while the means for independents fell between those of partisans of each camp.
Figure B.1: Affect About the Parties
By Subject Party Identification

Figure B.2: Cognitions About the Parties
By Subject Party Identification
APPENDIX C

PILOT STUDY POST-QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX C

PILOT STUDY POST-QUESTIONNAIRE

I.D. No. ________________ Date ______ Group No. ______

Please answer the following questions about the story which you've just seen. If you need more room for a comment, please continue on the back of the page.

1. What would you say the story was about?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. How would you rate the technical quality of the news story (i.e., the camera work and sound quality)?
   __ Excellent
   __ Very Good
   __ Good
   __ Poor

3. How would you rate the dramatic quality of the news story (i.e., how well the story "hung together")?
   __ Excellent
   __ Very Good
   __ Good
   __ Poor

4. Would you say the theme of this story was about:
   __ Entirely Candidate(s)
   __ Mostly Candidate(s)
   __ Almost Equal Candidates & Parties
   __ Mostly Party/Parties
   __ Entirely Party/Parties
5. What was the message that the story presented about candidates?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. What kind of image of political candidates did this story portray?

  ___ Positive Image of Candidates
  ___ Neutral Image of Candidates
  ___ Negative Image of Candidates

7. What about the story promoted this image?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. What was the message that the story presented about the political party?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. What kind of image of political parties did this story portray?

  ___ Positive Image of Parties
  ___ Neutral Image of Parties
  ___ Negative Image of Parties

9. What about the story promoted this image?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

9. Was the story presented in a coherent manner by the anchor/reporter?

  ___ Yes  ___ No  ___ Undecided

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10. Was the story presented in an interesting manner by the anchor/reporter?
   ___ Yes  ___ No  ___ Undecided

11. Was the story presented in an informative manner by the anchor/reporter?
   ___ Yes  ___ No  ___ Undecided

12. Are there any other comments you'd like to make about this news story?
    __________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________

Please turn in the questionnaire when you are finished filling it out.
APPENDIX D

SCRIPTS FOR EXPERIMENTAL NEWS STORIES
APPENDIX D

SCRIPTS FOR EXPERIMENTAL NEWS STORIES

Scripts 1 - 4: Democrats Mentioned First

Condition: Unity

Script 1:

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The fall campaign for state senate is heating up in district 32 for both Democrats and Republicans and it promises to be a lively race.

At the county Democratic convention today, the party was united in its support of front-runner Larry Drake as its candidate in the upcoming election for statehouse this fall.

Graphic: (About half way through reporter's lead-in) Picture of Candidate with "Democrats Unified" caption

CONVENTION CROWD: (VOICE OVER) The announcement, made by Democratic party chair Charles Madison, drew cheers from the unified party membership, whose delegates had just unanimously voted to support Drake.

REPORTER AT CONVENTION: The county Republican convention committee also announced today that the party is unanimously supporting front-runner Ron Johnson as its candidate for the district 32 seat.

Graphic: (About half way through reporter's lead-in) Picture of Candidate with "Republicans Unified" caption
VISUALS OF DELEGATES SPEAKING:

Graphic: "(Name), Republican Delegate" under each one speaking.

(VOICE OVER) Many Republican delegates in attendance at this year’s convention expressed enthusiasm about working for the popular Johnson campaign. No dissenters in this group -- all seem happy about today’s announcement.

FILE FOOTAGE OF TWO GENERIC CHEERING CROWD SCENES:

Graphic Scene 1: "Democratic National Committee File Footage"

Graphic Scene 2: "Republican National Committee File Footage"

(VOICE OVER DURING BOTH SCENES): So, both Democratic and Republican parties continue to demonstrate the tradition of party unity they’ve shown in the past. Not only are the parties unified in support of their candidates, but they continue the tradition of unity Democratic and Republican national parties have displayed at past national conventions.

REPORTER AT CONVENTION: Especially heartening for county Democrats later today was the support promised by the party’s business and farmer groups, who voted unanimously to back Drake’s candidacy.

Local Republican farmer and business organizations had earlier announced their decision to back the Republican candidate, a welcome signal for both Johnson and county Republicans.
This year's campaign is off to a smashing start and, if the Democratic and Republican parties remain as unified as they are today, the contest will be a toss-up until the polls close.

This is Amy Kaufeldt, reporting from convention headquarters, downtown.

**Condition: Division**

**Script 2:**

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The fall campaign for state senate is heating up in district 32 for both Democrats and Republicans and it's left both parties in disarray.

At the county Democratic convention today, the party was divided over its support of a candidate. The news disappointed backers of Larry Drake, who assumed they had more than enough delegates lined up to support their candidate.

Graphic: (About half way through reporter's lead-in) Picture of Candidate with "Democrats Divided" caption

CONVENTION CROWD: (VOICE OVER) The announcement, made by Democratic party chair Charles Madison, was met with frustration by the divided party membership. The winning candidate was able to come up with barely enough delegate votes to win party support.

REPORTER AT CONVENTION: The county Republican convention committee also announced today that only a bare majority of its party supported Ron Johnson as its candidate for the district 32 seat. Johnson had been considered front runner for party backing by many political observers.
Graphic: (About half way through reporter’s lead-in)
Picture of Candidate with "Republicans Divided" caption

VISUALS OF DELEGATES SPEAKING:

Graphic: "(Name), Republican Delegate" under each one speaking.

(VOICE OVER) Many Republican delegates in attendance at this year’s convention expressed concerns about Johnson who has lost popularity with many delegates. Many dissenters in this group -- all seem frustrated about today’s close vote.

FILE FOOTAGE OF TWO GENERIC ANGRY CROWD SCENES:

Graphic Scene 1: "Democratic National Committee File Footage"

Graphic Scene 2: "Republican National Committee File Footage"

(VOICE OVER DURING BOTH SCENES): So, both Democratic and Republican parties continue to demonstrate the tradition of party division they’ve shown in the past. Not only have the state parties not been able to agree on support for candidates, but the Democratic and Republican national parties have also displayed shows of dissent at past national conventions.

REPORTER AT CONVENTION: Especially disheartening for county Democrats later today was the lack of support by the party’s business and farmer groups who voted unanimously not to back Drake’s candidacy.
Local Republican farmer and business organizations had earlier announced their decision not to back the Republican candidate, a disappointing signal for both Johnson and county Republicans.

This year’s campaign is off to a confusing start with many Democratic and Republican party activists not knowing if they can support their party’s candidate this fall.

This is Amy Kaufeldt, reporting from convention headquarters, downtown.

**Condition: Party Candidate**

**Script 3:**

**REPORTER IN NEWSROOM:** Both Democratic candidate Larry Drake and Republican Ron Johnson announced today that they have gained their parties’ support as district thirty-two candidates for state senate in the upcoming election.

Graphic: (About halfway through reporter’s lead-in: Picture of both candidates with "Democratic Candidate" and "Republican Candidate" captions.

**CONVENTION CROWD SCENE:**

Graphic: "Democratic Party Gathering"

(Voice Over) In a speech to Democratic party members, Drake expressed his appreciation to the party, saying that victory in November will not be possible without the hard work of Democrats throughout the district.
REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: We have both candidates on a remote feed. First, Mr. Drake ...
(REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ...
Thank you for being with us, sir. You told Democratic party members in your speech earlier today that you plan to run on traditional Democratic ideals. What did you mean by that?

CLIPS FROM EXISTING RAHN FOOTAGE

Graphic under candidate for the first 10 seconds:
"Larry Drake, Democratic Party Candidate"

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: I'm running as a Democrat because all across the country and especially in this state, the small rural community is the backbone of what this country stands for. The little guy, the individual, the next door neighbor, the farmer, the small business man, that's who the Democratic party stands for and represents. When this country was flat on its back it was the Democratic party under Franklin Delano Roosevelt that put out its hand and said, "We'd better do something," and sure enough it got the country -- everybody-- to pull together as a nation once again.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what message will your campaign be bringing to voters?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: Of course, a lot of us in this state are too stubborn to be knocked down again. But I don't see any Republicans going around and saying, "Let me help you back on your feet" to those who haven't been so lucky. I don't see anything but trouble trickling down on my neighbor the farmer and my neighbor the small business man and my neighbors in all the communities of this state. So on behalf of the Democratic party, I am proud to offer my services and hard work as your representative in the state senate.
REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Larry Drake, the candidate in district 32, who was backed by the Democratic party today.

CONVENTION CROWD SCENE:

Graphic: "Republican Party Gathering"

(VOICE OVER) Ron Johnson met with Republican party members today as well, saying that he appreciates their support. Johnson also called for party workers throughout the district to work hard for a Republican victory in the fall.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: We'd like to turn to Mr. Johnson now ... ... (REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ... Mr. Johnson, we just saw a clip from your meeting with Republicans earlier today... Are you planning to make traditional Republican ideals a part of your campaign?

CLIPS FROM EXISTING RAHN FOOTAGE

Graphic under candidate for the first 10 seconds: "Ron Johnson, Republican Party Candidate"

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: If the last few years of the Reagan administration have shown us anything, it's that the Republican party can make a big difference in how the business of government is conducted. And I just want to say that I'm proud to be able to run for this office as a life-long member of the Republican party. My dad is a Republican, my brother is a Republican, and so am I. Even when I was a kid on the farm, we liked Ike because we knew that Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Republican party supported the American farmer. From my first experience in public office on the park board of this city, I found that the Republican party stands for giving the taxpayer a fair deal for his or her tax dollars.
REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what would you like to tell the voters in district 32?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: Whether you're a farmer or a small business man, whether you work in a factory or in an office or in the home, you know what you need to make a good life for yourself and your family. You need good government. You need government that will get out of your way so your hard work can go to building a future. So let's keep the economy moving ahead so that you and I can do what we do best, to work hard and build a better future for our families.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Ron Johnson, the Republican candidate in district 32, who gained strong Republican party support today.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The polls show the Democratic and Republican candidates in a virtual tie at this point, even before the campaign heats up.

Both candidates' campaign managers say that their candidates' position papers will be out next week, but to expect no surprises -- they will echo the stands traditionally taken by the Democratic and Republican parties on the issues. So we can expect a race based on true Democrats versus true Republicans in district thirty-two.

Condition: Non-Party Candidate

Script 4:

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Both Larry Drake and Ron Johnson announced today that they are running as district thirty-two candidates for state senate in the upcoming election.
In a press conference today at his campaign headquarters, Drake expressed his appreciation to his supporters, saying that victory in November will not be possible without their continuing support in the district.

We have both candidates on a remote feed. First, Mr. Drake ...

For those of our viewers who aren't familiar with your background, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: I was born in Barton, North Dakota, but was raised in several cities in the Midwest. My father was a physician in general practice and he moved the family to this state when I was fourteen, as he accepted a position at the clinic in Carroll county. My education includes a bachelors degree from Notre Dame in chemistry, and a doctor of pharmacy from the school of pharmacy at the state university. I married Janet Lambert and we have two children, Carrie and Rebecca. Although I'm a politician, I am also a small business man, having owned and operated a pharmacy in Browning, where we have lived for the last fifteen years. My wife Janet also operates her own small business -- an antique store adjoining the Hoover museum down the road in West Branch. Janet and I are active in the PTA.
In fact, Janet is president now. And we are both members of Saint Olaf’s Church in Browning.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what about your experience in politics?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: My introduction to politics came when I was asked to take part in a concerned citizens’ lobby in the county that worked to represent the interests of citizens concerning the routing of the interstate highway. Well, we got our exit, and the community of Browning and the surrounding area is prospering. Later I served two terms as mayor of Browning and I have also served on the governor’s council on rural communities.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Larry Drake, the state senate candidate in district 32.

CROWD SCENE:

Graphic: "Johnson Press Conference"

(VOICE OVER) Ron Johnson also held a press conference today, thanking supporters throughout the district for their hard work. Johnson also predicted a victory in the fall.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: We’d like to turn to Mr. Johnson now ... ... (REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ... Mr. Johnson, we just saw a clip from your press conference earlier today... Could you tell us a little bit about yourself, sir?

CLIPS FROM EXISTING RAHN FOOTAGE

Graphic under candidate for the first 10 seconds: "Ron Johnson, District 32 Candidate"
FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: I grew up on a farm near Cresko, a family farm that I'm proud to say has stayed in the family. It's operated by my older brother Russell. It's a long way from my dad's farm to the statehouse, and I'm not there yet. But here's how I've done so far. I went to high school in Cresko, where I learned about hard work, helping out on the farm and playing center for the football team. I attended State University where I earned a degree in Business Administration and met a young woman named Marlys Kling from right here in Cedar Center, who I'm happy to say, consented to be my wife. Marlys is a teacher in the local school system and we've been active members in the First Methodist Church, where I've been a deacon and Marlys has taught Sunday school. We have three children -- Lisa, sixteen, Ron Junior, fourteen, and Bradley, who's ten.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what about your qualifications for office?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: Now many of the voters in the Heartland - Triangle Cities already know me from my work with the Main Street renewal task force here in Cedar Center, and as the drive chairman of the United Fund campaign. After college, I left this area for a few years to serve my country in the Army and then to attend law school at the University of Illinois. I was glad to get back when Marlys and I moved to Cedar Center where I practiced law for eleven years before getting involved in local politics. First working for, then chairing the neighborhood caucus and later on the city council, where I served on the zoning and planning commission that worked to revitalize downtown Cedar Center.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Ron Johnson, one of the candidates in district 32, who announced his candidacy today.
The polls show the two candidates in a virtual tie at this point, even before the campaign heats up. Both candidates' campaign managers say that their candidates' position papers will be out next week, but to expect no surprises -- they will echo the stands they've taken on the issues over the course of their political careers. So we can expect a race in district thirty-two in which the two candidates go head-to-head.

Scripts 5 - 8: Republicans Mentioned First

Condition: Unity

Script 5:

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The fall campaign for state senate is heating up in district 32 for both Republicans and Democrats and it promises to be a lively race.

At the county Republican convention today, the party was united in its support of front-runner Ron Johnson as its candidate in the upcoming election for statehouse this fall.

Graphic: (About half way through reporter's lead-in) Picture of Candidate with "Republicans Unified" caption

CONVENTION CROWD: (VOICE OVER) The announcement, made by Republican party chair Charles Madison, drew cheers from the unified party membership, whose delegates had just unanimously voted to support Johnson.
The county Democratic convention committee also announced today that the party is unanimously supporting front-runner Larry Drake as its candidate for the district 32 seat.

Many Democratic delegates in attendance at this year's convention expressed enthusiasm about working for the popular Drake's campaign. No dissenters in this group -- all seem happy about today's announcement.

So, both Republican and Democratic parties continue to demonstrate the tradition of party unity they've shown in the past. Not only are the parties unified in support for their candidates, but they continue the tradition of unity Republican and Democratic national parties have displayed at past national conventions.
REPORTER AT CONVENTION: Especially heartening for county Republicans later today was the support promised by the party's business and farmer groups, who voted unanimously to back Johnson's candidacy.

Local Democratic farmer and business organizations had earlier announced their decision to back the Democratic candidate, a welcome signal for both Drake and county Democrats.

This year's campaign is off to a smashing start and, if the Republican and Democratic parties remain as unified as they are today, the contest will be a toss up until the polls close.

This is Amy Kaufeldt, reporting from convention headquarters, downtown.

**Condition: Division**

**Script 6:**

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The fall campaign for state senate is heating up in district 32 for both Republicans and Democrats and it's left both parties in disarray.

At the county Republican convention today, the party was divided over its support of a candidate. The news disappointed backers of Ron Johnson, who assumed they had more than enough delegates lined up to support their candidate.

Graphic: (About half way through reporter's lead-in) Picture of Candidate with "Republicans Divided" caption
CONVENTION CROWD: (VOICE OVER) The announcement, made by Republican party chair Charles Madison, was met with frustration by the divided party membership. The winning candidate was able to come up with barely enough delegate votes to win party support.

REPORTER AT CONVENTION: The county Democratic convention committee also announced today that only a bare majority of its party supported Larry Drake as its candidate for the district 32 seat. Drake had been considered front runner for party backing by many political observers.

Graphic: (About half way through reporter’s lead-in) Picture of Candidate with "Democrats Divided" caption

VISUALS OF DELEGATES SPEAKING:

Graphic: "(Name), Democratic Delegate" under each one speaking.

(VOICE OVER) Many Democratic delegates in attendance at this year’s convention expressed concerns about Drake, who has lost popularity with many delegates. Many dissenters in this group -- all seem frustrated about today’s close vote.

FILE FOOTAGE OF TWO GENERIC ANGRY CROWD SCENES:

Graphic Scene 1: "Republican National Committee File Footage"

Graphic Scene 2: "Democratic National Committee File Footage"
(VOICE OVER DURING BOTH SCENES):
So, both Republican and Democratic parties continue to demonstrate the tradition of party division they’ve shown in the past. Not only have the state parties not been able to agree on support for candidates, but the Republican and Democratic national parties have also displayed shows of dissent at past national conventions.

REPORTER AT CONVENTION: Especially disheartening for county Republicans later today was the lack of support by the party’s business and farmer groups who voted unanimously not to back Johnson’s candidacy.

Local Democratic farmer and business organizations had earlier announced their decision not to back the Democratic candidate, a disappointing signal for both Drake and county Democrats.

This year’s campaign is off to a confusing start with many Republican and Democratic party activists no knowing if they can support their party’s candidate this fall.

This is Amy Kaufeldt, reporting from convention headquarters, downtown.

Condition: Party Candidate

Script 7:
REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Both Republican candidate Ron Johnson and Democrat Larry Drake announced today that they have gained their parties’ support as district thirty-two candidates for state senate in the upcoming election.
(About halfway through reporter’s lead-in: Picture of both candidates with "Republican Candidate" and "Democratic Candidate" captions.

CONVENTION CROWD SCENE:

Graphic: "Republican Party Gathering"

(VOICE OVER) In a speech to Republican party members, Johnson expressed his appreciation to the party, saying that victory in November will not be possible without the hard work of Republicans throughout the district.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: We have both candidates on a remote feed. First, Mr. Johnson ...

(REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ... Thank you for being with us, sir. You told Republican party members in your speech earlier today that you plan to run on traditional Republican ideals. What did you mean by that?

CLIPS FROM EXISTING RAHN FOOTAGE

Graphic under candidate for the first 10 seconds: "Ron Johnson, Republican Party Candidate"

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: If the last few years of the Reagan administration have shown us anything, it’s that the Republican party can make a big difference in how the business of government is conducted. And I just want to say that I’m proud to be able to run for this office as a life-long member of the Republican party. My dad is a Republican, my brother is a Republican, and so am I. Even when I was a kid on the farm, we liked Ike because we knew that Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Republican party supported the American farmer. From my first experience in public office on the park board of this city, I found that the Republican party stands for giving the taxpayer a fair deal for his or her tax dollars.]
REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what message will your campaign be bringing to voters?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: Whether you're a farmer or a small business man, whether you work in a factory or in an office or in the home, you know what you need to make a good life for yourself and your family. You need good government. You need government that will get out of your way so your hard work can go to building a future. So let's keep the economy moving ahead so that you and I can do what we do best -- to work hard and build a better future for our families.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Ron Johnson, the candidate in district 32, who was backed by the Republican party today.

CONVENTION CROWD SCENE:

Graphic: "Democratic Party Gathering"

(VOICE OVER) Larry Drake met with Democratic party members today as well, saying that he appreciates their support. Drake also called for party workers throughout the district to work hard for a Democratic victory in the fall.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: We'd like to turn to Mr. Drake now ... ... (REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ... Mr. Drake, we just saw a clip from your meeting with Democrats earlier today... Are you planning to make traditional Democratic ideals a part of your campaign?

CLIPS FROM EXISTING RAHN FOOTAGE

Graphic under candidate for the first 10 seconds: "Larry Drake, Democratic Party Candidate"
FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: I'm running as a Democrat because all across the country and especially in this state, the small rural community is the backbone of what this country stands for. The little guy, the individual, the next door neighbor, the farmer, the small business man, that's who the Democratic party stands for and represents. When this country was flat on its back it was the Democratic party under Franklin Delano Roosevelt that put out its hand and said, "We'd better do something," and sure enough it got the country -- everybody -- to pull together as a nation once again.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what would you like to tell the voters in district 32?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: Of course, a lot of us in this state are too stubborn to be knocked down again. But I don't see any Republicans going around and saying, "Let me help you back on your feet" to those who haven't been so lucky. The Republican hand has always been extended only to the wealthy and to big business. I don't see anything but trouble trickling down on my neighbor the farmer and my neighbor the small business man and my neighbors in all the communities of this state. So on behalf of the Democratic party, I am proud to offer my services and hard work as your representative in the state senate.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Larry Drake, the Democratic candidate in district 32, who gained strong Democratic party support today.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The polls show the Republican and Democratic candidates in a virtual tie at this point, even before the campaign heats up.
Both candidates' campaign managers say that their candidates' position papers will be out next week, but to expect no surprises -- they will echo the stands traditionally taken by the Republican and Democratic parties on the issues. So we can expect a race based on true Republicans versus true Democrats in district thirty-two.

**Condition: Non-Party Candidate**

**Script 8:**

**REPORTER IN NEWSROOM:** Both Ron Johnson and Larry Drake announced today that they are running as district thirty-two candidates for state senate in the upcoming election.

Graphic: (About halfway through reporter's lead-in: Picture of both candidates with "Johnson" and "Drake" captions.

**CROWD SCENE:**

Graphic: "Johnson Press Conference"

(VOICE OVER) In a press conference today at his campaign headquarters, Johnson expressed his appreciation to his supporters, saying that victory in November will not be possible without their continuing support in the district.

**REPORTER IN NEWSROOM:** We have both candidates on a remote feed. First, Mr. Johnson... (REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ...Thank you for being with us, sir. For those of our viewers who aren't familiar with your background, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?
CLIPS FROM EXISTING RAHN FOOTAGE

Graphic under candidate for the first 10 seconds: "Ron Johnson, District 32 Candidate"

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: I grew up on a farm near Cresko, a family farm that I'm proud to say has stayed in the family. It's operated by my older brother Russell. It's a long way from my dad's farm to the statehouse, and I'm not there yet. But here's how I've done so far. I went to high school in Cresko, where I learned about hard work, helping out on the farm and playing center for the football team. I attended State University where I earned a degree in Business Administration and met a young woman named Marlys Kling from right here in Cedar Center, who I'm happy to say, consented to be my wife. Marlys is a teacher in the local school system and we've been active members in the First Methodist Church, where I've been a deacon and Marlys has taught Sunday school. We have three children -- Lisa, sixteen, Ron Junior, fourteen, and Bradley, who's ten.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what about your experience in politics?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: Now many of the voters in the Heartland - Triangle Cities already know me from my work with the Main Street renewal task force here in Cedar Center, and as the drive chairman of the United Fund campaign. After college, I left this area for a few years to serve my country in the Army and then to attend law school at the University of Illinois. I was glad to get back when Marlys and I moved to Cedar Center where I practiced law for eleven years before getting involved in local politics. First working for, then chairing the neighborhood caucus and later on the city council, where I served on the zoning and planning commission that worked to revitalize downtown Cedar Center.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Ron Johnson, the state senate candidate in district 32.
(VOICE OVER) Larry Drake also held a press conference today, thanking supporters throughout the district for their hard work. Drake also predicted a victory in the fall.

REPORER IN NEWSROOM: We’d like to turn to Mr. Drake now...
... (REPORTER TURNS HER HEAD AS IF LOOKING AT A VIDEO MONITOR OFF CAMERA & ADDRESSES CANDIDATE) ... Mr. Drake, we just saw a clip from your press conference earlier today... Could you tell us a little bit about yourself, sir?

FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: I was born in Barton, North Dakota, but was raised in several cities in the Midwest. My father was a physician in general practice and he moved the family to this state when I was fourteen, as he accepted a position at the clinic in Carroll county. My education includes a bachelors degree from Notre Dame in chemistry, and a doctor of pharmacy from the school of pharmacy at the state university. I married Janet Lambert and we have two children, Carrie and Rebecca. Although I’m a politician, I am also a small business man, having owned and operated a pharmacy in Browning, where we have lived for the last fifteen years. My wife Janet also operates her own small business – an antique store adjoining the Hoover museum down the road in West Branch. Janet and I are active in the PTA. In fact, Janet is president now. And we are both members of Saint Olaf’s Church in Browning.

REPORER IN NEWSROOM: (STILL TURNED TO CANDIDATE) And what about your qualifications for office?
FROM CANDIDATE CLIPS: My introduction to politics came when I was asked to take part in a concerned citizens' lobby in the county that worked to represent the interests of citizens concerning the routing of the interstate highway. Well, we got our exit, and the community of Browning and the surrounding area is prospering. Later I served two terms as mayor of Browning and I have also served on the governor's council on rural communities.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: Thank you, sir. (TURNS BACK TO CAMERA) ... That was Larry Drake, one of the candidates in district 32, who announced his candidacy today.

REPORTER IN NEWSROOM: The polls show the two candidates in a virtual tie at this point, even before the campaign heats up.

Both candidates' campaign managers say that their candidates' position papers will be out next week, but to expect no surprises -- they will echo the stands they've taken on the issues over the course of their political careers. So we can expect a race in district thirty-two in which the two candidates go head-to-head.
APPENDIX E

EXPERIMENT: POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX E

EXPERIMENT: POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please take your time and answer the following questions. All of your responses are confidential and you will remain anonymous. Do not write your name on this form.

First of all, please consider the candidates who were mentioned in the last story of the news cast. Think about your feelings about each of the candidates. Circle the appropriate number on the following 7 point scale which represents the degree of your feelings about each of the candidates. If you don’t know, circle the “DK.”

Larry Drake:
1. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel angry?
   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
   Extremely Not Angry
   Angry At All

2. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel proud?
   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
   Extremely Not Proud
   Proud At All

3. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel afraid of him?
   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
   Extremely Not Afraid
   Afraid At All

4. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel disgusted?
   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
   Extremely Not Disgusted
   Disgusted At All
5. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel sympathetic toward him?

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<td>Extremely Not Sympathetic</td>
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6. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel hopeful?

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<td>Extremely Hopeful</td>
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7. To what extent does thinking about Larry Drake make you feel uneasy?

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<td>Extremely Uneasy</td>
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Ron Johnson:

8. Now, how about Ron Johnson? To what extent does thinking about Ron Johnson make you feel ...

(The same questions were then asked of Ron Johnson)

*****

Please rate your feelings toward the two candidates using a feeling thermometer. You may use any number from 0 to 100 for a rating. Ratings between 50 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm. Ratings between 0 and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel too favorable. If you don’t feel particularly warm or cold, you would place your rating at the 50 degree mark. If you don’t know, circle the “DK.”

Larry Drake:

15. The first candidate to rate is Larry Drake. How would you rate him using the feeling thermometer? Please circle the degrees below:

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 | DK |

(The same question was then asked about Ron Johnson.)

*****

Now, think about the good and bad points about the two candidates.

Larry Drake:

17. Is there anything in particular that you like about Larry Drake? (You can list as many as five points in the spaces below.)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.
18. Is there anything in particular that you don’t like about Larry Drake? (You can list as many as five points in the spaces below.)

   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 

(The same thing was then asked about Ron Johnson.)

   * * * * *

Next, please evaluate each of the candidates using the following scale. Each scale has 7 points, with pairs of adjectives anchoring each end. Circle the number on the scale which reflects the degree to which you think the adjectives apply to each of the candidates. If you don’t know, circle the "DK.

**Larry Drake:**

21. First, Larry Drake: how untrustworthy or trustworthy does Larry Drake seem to you?

   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7    DK
   Untrustworthy                  Trustworthy

22. How selfish or unselfish does Larry Drake seem to you?

   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7    DK
   Selfish                      Unselfish

23. How unfriendly or friendly does Larry Drake seem to you?

   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7    DK
   Unfriendly                   Friendly

24. How moral or immoral does Larry Drake seem to you?

   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7    DK
   Moral                       Immoral

25. How honest or dishonest does Larry Drake seem to you?

   1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7    DK
   Honest                      Dishonest

**Ron Johnson:**

26. Now, using the same scale, please rate Ron Johnson on these same sets of adjectives; how ... (The same questions were then asked about Ron Johnson.)

   * * * * *
Now, consider how well each of the following phrases describes the candidates, again using a 7 point scale. Circle the number on the scale which describes the degree to which you think the phrase describes the candidate. If you don’t know, circle the "DK."

**Larry Drake**

31. First, how well does the phrase, effective leader, describe Larry Drake?

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32. How well does the phrase, effective party member, describe Larry Drake?

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33. How well does the phrase, competent lawmaker, describe Larry Drake?

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34. How well does the phrase, competent party representative, describe Larry Drake?

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35. How well does the phrase, holds strong personal convictions, describe Larry Drake?

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36. How well does the phrase, holds strong party loyalties, describe Larry Drake?

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(These questions were then asked about Ron Johnson.)

** * * * * **

171
In judging these two candidates, how relevant (that is, how important) would the following statements be in your judgments? Again, circle the appropriate response on the 7 point scale. If you don’t know, circle the "D.K."

**Larry Drake:**
First, how relevant would these statements be in your judgment of Larry Drake?

43. His effectiveness as a leader.

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44. His effectiveness as a member of his political party.

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45. His competence as a lawmaker.

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46. His competence as a representative of his political party.

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47. The strength of his personal convictions.

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48. The strength of his loyalty to his political party.

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(These questions were then asked about Ron Johnson.)

**Now we would like to ask you several questions about the American political parties.**

Think about your feelings about the Democratic and Republican parties. Please circle the appropriate number on the following 7 point scale. If you don’t know, circle the "DK."
Democratic Party:

55. To what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel angry?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Angry
Angry At All

56. To what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel proud?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Proud
Proud At All

57. First of all, to what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel afraid of the party?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Afraid
Afraid At All

58. To what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel disgusted?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Disgusted
Disgusted At All

59. To what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel sympathetic toward the party?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Sympathetic
Sympathetic At All

60. To what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel hopeful?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Hopeful
Hopeful At All

61. To what extent does thinking about the Democratic party make you feel uneasy?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7  DK
Extremely Not Uneasy
Uneasy At All

(These questions were then asked about the Republican party.)

* * * * * *

Now, please rate your feelings toward the political parties using a feeling thermometer, which ranges from 0 to 100 degrees. You may use any number from 0 to 100 for a rating. Ratings between 50 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm. Ratings between 0 and 50 degrees
mean that you don't feel too favorable. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold, you would place your rating at the 50 degree mark.

**Democratic Party:**

69. How would you rate the Democratic party using the feeling thermometer? Please circle the degrees on the scales below. If you don't know, circle the "DK."

0 -- 10 -- 20 -- 30 -- 40 -- 50 -- 60 -- 70 -- 80 -- 90 -- 100 DK

degrees

(This question was then asked about the Republican party, people who call themselves political independents, and about the political parties in general.)

* * * * *

Now think about the good and bad points about the two national parties.

**Democratic Party:**

73. Is there anything in particular that you like about the Democratic party? (You can list as many as five points in the spaces below.)

a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. 

74. Is there anything in particular that you don't like about the Democratic party? (You can list as many as five points in the spaces below.)

a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. 

(These questions were then asked about the Republican party.)

* * * * *

Please evaluate each of the political parties using the following scale. Each scale has 7 points, with pairs of adjectives anchoring each end of the scale. Circle the number on the scale which reflects the degree to which you think it applies to the Democratic and Republican parties. If you don't know, circle the "DK."

174
Democratic Party:

77. First, the Democratic party; how untrustworthy or trustworthy does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Untrustworthy Trustworthy

78. How selfish or unselfish does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Selfish Unselfish

79. How unfriendly or friendly does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Unfriendly Friendly

80. How moral or immoral does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Moral Immoral

81. How honest or dishonest does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Honest Dishonest

82. How competent or incompetent does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Competent Incompetent

83. How strong or weak does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Strong Weak

84. How effective or ineffective does the Democratic party seem to you?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 DK
Effective Ineffective

(These questions were then asked about the Republican party.)

* * * * *

Next are some general statements about American political parties in general. Using a 7 point scale, please indicate how strongly you disagree or agree with each of the statements. Just circle the number on the scale which applies.
93. The first statement is: the best rule in voting is to pick a candidate regardless of party label.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7
Disagree Agree
Very Very
Strongly Strongly

94. It is better to be a firm party supporter than to be a political independent.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7
Disagree Agree
Very Very
Strongly Strongly

95. The parties do more to confuse the issues than to provide a clear choice on issues.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7
Disagree Agree
Very Very
Strongly Strongly

96. It would be better if, in all elections, we put no party labels on the ballot.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7
Disagree Agree
Very Very
Strongly Strongly

97. The truth is we probably don’t need political parties in America anymore.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7
Disagree Agree
Very Very
Strongly Strongly

* * * * *

138. Following are some general questions. First of all, some people follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say that you follow what’s going on in government: (circle the number which applies)

1 Most of the time
2 Some of the time
3 Only now and then
4 Hardly at all
139. **How much attention** do you usually give to news about government and politics?
   1. A lot of attention
   2. Some attention
   3. Occasional attention
   4. Hardly any attention

140. **How often do you watch the national news on television?**
   1. Very frequently
   2. Frequently
   3. Occasionally
   4. Never

141. **How often do you read a metropolitan or national newspaper?**
   1. Very frequently
   2. Frequently
   3. Occasionally
   4. Never

142. **How often do you discuss politics and public affairs** with people you know?
   1. Very frequently
   2. Frequently
   3. Occasionally
   4. Never

143. **How often do you vote?**
   1. In every election
   2. In most elections
   3. In a few elections
   4. Never

144. In the last four years, how often have you gone to any **political meetings or rallies, fund-raising dinners, speeches, or things like that in support of a particular candidate or party?**
   0. Never
   1. Once
   2. Twice
   3. Three times
   4. Four times
   5. Five times
   6. Six times
   7. More than six times: enter number of times ____

145. In the last four years, how often have you **given money** to an **individual candidate** running for public office?
   0. Never
   1. Once
   2. Twice
   3. Three times
   4. Four times
   5. Five times
   6. Six times
   7. More than six times: enter number of times ____
146. In the last four years, how often have you given money to a political party?
0 Never
1 Once
2 Twice
3 Three times
4 Four times
5 Five times
6 Six times
7 More than six times: enter number of times ______

147. In the last four years, how often have you done any work for one of the parties or for a candidate?
0 None
1 Once
2 Twice
3 Three times
4 Four times
5 Five times
6 Six times
7 More than six times: enter number of times ______

148. In the last four years, how often have you worn a campaign button or displayed a campaign poster or sticker?
0 None
1 Once
2 Twice
3 Three times
4 Four times
5 Five times
6 Six times
7 More than six times: enter number of times ______

* * * * *

Following is a list of some current and former political leaders. Please indicate whether they belong or belonged to the Democratic or Republican parties. Just circle the appropriate number.

149. Spiro Agnew
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don't Know

150. Michael Dukakis
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know

151. Richard Gephardt
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know
152. Newt Gingrich
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know

153. Ronald Reagan
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know

154. Jimmy Carter
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know

155. Jack Kemp
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know

156. Daniel Patrick Moynihan
1 Democrat
2 Republican
8 Don’t Know

* * * * *

Next are some general questions about the American political system. Please write in your response in the blank provided.

157. How many members are there in the U.S. Senate? __________ members

158. What is the term of office for members of the U.S. House of Representatives? __________ years

159. Who is the Commander in Chief in the United States? (Circle the number of your response.)
1 The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
2 The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
3 The President of the U.S.
4 The Speaker of the House of Representatives
8 Don’t Know

* * * * *

179
160. Now we have some questions for statistical purposes. Please circle the number of the appropriate response. First of all, generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a:

1 Strong Republican (go to question 162)
2 Not Very Strong Republican (go to question 162)
3 Independent (go to question 161)
4 Not Very Strong Democrat (go to question 162)
5 Strong Democrat (go to question 162)
6 No Preference (go to question 162)
7 Other Party: Please specify ______ (go to question 162)
8 Don’t Know (go to question 162)

161. If you circled Independent, would you say that you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or to the Democratic party? Circle the number of your response, then go to question 162:

1 Closer to Republican Party
2 Neither
3 Closer to Democratic Party

162. Turning to a new political topic, we hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Would you say that you are: (circle the number which applies)

1 Extremely Liberal (go to question 164)
2 Liberal (go to question 164)
3 Slightly Liberal (go to question 164)
4 Moderate or Middle of the Road (go to question 163)
5 Slightly Conservative (go to question 164)
6 Conservative (go to question 164)
7 Extremely Conservative (go to question 164)
8 Don’t Know (go to question 164)

163. If you answered Moderate or Middle of the Road, if you had to choose, would you consider yourself a liberal or a conservative?

1 Liberal
2 Moderate or Middle of the Road
3 Conservative

164. In what year were you born? (Enter year): ______

165. What is the highest level of education that your mother completed?

1 Less than high school graduate
2 High school graduate
3 Some college
4 College graduate
5 Some post-graduate work
6 Master’s degree
7 Doctorate or professional degree
8 Don’t Know

180
166. What is the highest level of education that your father completed?

1  Less than high school graduate
2  High school graduate
3  Some college
4  College graduate
5  Some post-graduate work
6  Master's degree
7  Doctorate or professional degree
8  Don't Know

167. Are you registered to vote?

1  Yes
2  No
8  Don't Know

168. How many years have you attended Ohio State University?
(Enter number of years) _________

169. What is your gender?

1  Male
2  Female

170. Is your ethnic background: (Circle appropriate number)

1  Native American
2  Asian or Pacific Islander
3  Black, Non-Hispanic
4  Hispanic
5  White, Non-Hispanic
6  Other (Please specify): ______________________

171. Are you a U.S. Citizen?

1  Yes
2  No

Thank you for participating in this experiment. You are free to go when you're finished. Please get a debriefing statement from the experimenter and read it before you leave.
APPENDIX F

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: SCALE CONSTRUCTION
APPENDIX F

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: SCALE CONSTRUCTION

Most of the variables used for analysis in Chapter Five were indices constructed from items in the post-test survey instrument which can be found in Appendix E.

The general method of construction involved first recoding items so that they all ranged from a low to high direction. In order to standardize scale items, they were then converted such that values ranged from 0 to 1. In most instances, the mean of the additive indices were used in order to minimize the occurrence of missing data.

The items included in the resultant indices are listed below, along with their reliability coefficients.

**Dependent Variables**

**Party Attitudes:**

**DEMCOG** = Net likes over dislikes about the Democratic party 
(Q73 - Q74) + Summary index of adjective pairs about the Democratic party (Q77 through Q84)

\[ \text{alpha} = .81 \]

**REPCOG** = Same as for DEMCOG, except corresponding questions about the Republican party were used.

\[ \text{alpha} = .82 \]
DEMAFF = Feeling thermometer rating about Democratic party (Q69) + Summary index of emotional reactions to the Democratic party (Q55 through Q61)

\[ \text{alpha} = .91 \]

REPAFF = Same as for DEMAFF, except corresponding questions about the Republican party were used.

\[ \text{alpha} = .94 \]

Party System Support Index:
PTYSUPRG = Summary index of party support battery (Q93 through Q97); Range divided at quartiles.

\[ \text{alpha} = .79 \]

Importance of Party Ties in Candidate Evaluations:
CNPTYREL = Relevance of partisanship for both Larry Drake and Ron Johnson (LDPTYREL + RJPTYREL) or (Q44 + Q46 + Q48 + Q50 + Q52 + Q54)

\[ \text{alpha} = .90 \]
APPENDIX G

Experimental Analyses:
Non-Significant F and t Statistics
APPENDIX G

Experimental Analyses:
Non-Significant F and t Statistics

D.V.1: Democratic Party Cognitions
Party-Centered Stories
Main Effects
Condition \( (F=1,51) .41, p=.53) \)

Interactions:
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=1,51) 1.32, p=.26) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=2,51) .57, p=.57) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=2,51) .30, p=.74) \)

Candidate-Centered Stories
Interactions:
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=1,43) .77, p=.39) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=1,43) 1.57, p=.22) \)

\textbf{t-Tests:}

Low-Knowledge x Strong Partisans \( t = -.31, p=.38) \)

High-Knowledge x Weak Partisans \( t = -.21, p=.42) \)

D.V.1: Democratic Party Affect
Party-Centered Stories
Main Effects
Condition \( (F=1,56) 1.74, p=.19) \)

Interactions:
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=1,56) 2.07, p=.15) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=2,56) 1.14, p=.33) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=2,56) .01, p=.99) \)

Candidate-Centered Stories
Interactions:
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=1,44) .18, p=.68) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=1,44) 1.86, p=.18) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength
x Knowledge
\( (F=[1,44] \ 0.14, \ p=.71) \)

**D.V.1: Republican Party Cognitions**

**Party-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**

Condition \( (F=[1,53] \ 1.12, \ p=.30) \)

**Interactions:**

Condition x Knowledge \( (F=[1,53] \ 0.00, \ p=.97) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=[2,53] \ 0.62, \ p=.55) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=[2,53] \ 0.48, \ p=.62) \)

**Candidate-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**

Condition \( (F=[1,43] \ 1.94, \ p=.17) \)

**Interactions:**

Condition x Knowledge \( (F=[1,43] \ 2.05, \ p=.16) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=[1,43] \ 2.00, \ p=.17) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=[1,43] \ 0.01, \ p=.92) \)

**D.V.1: Republican Party Affect**

**Party-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**

Condition \( (F=[1,55] \ 0.42, \ p=.52) \)

**Interactions:**

Condition x Knowledge \( (F=[1,55] \ 0.21, \ p=.65) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=[2,55] \ 1.60, \ p=.21) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=[2,55] \ 0.54, \ p=.59) \)

**Candidate-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**

Condition \( (F=[1,46] \ 2.55, \ p=.12) \)

**Interactions:**

Condition x Knowledge \( (F=[1,46] \ 0.17, \ p=.68) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=[1,46] \ 0.87, \ p=.37) \)

**t-Tests:**

Strong Partisans \( t = .52, \ p=.35 \)
Weak Partisans \( t = -.16, \ p=.43 \)

**D.V.2: Support for Party System**

**Party-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**

Condition \( (F=[1,58] \ 0.05, \ p=.82) \)

187
**Interactions:**
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=\[1,58\] 1.24, \ p=.27) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=\[2,58\] 0.18, \ p=.84) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=\[2,58\] 1.41, \ p=.25) \)

**Candidate-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**
Condition \( (F=\[1,51\] 2.19, \ p=.15) \)

**Interactions:**
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=\[1,51\] 1.64, \ p=.21) \)

**D.V.3: Importance of Party Ties**

**Party-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**
Condition \( (F=\[1,48\] 2.44, \ p=.13) \)

**Interactions:**
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=\[2,48\] 1.58, \ p=.22) \)

**t-Tests:**
- Low-Knowledge x Strong Partisans \( t = .20, \ p=.42 \)
- High-Knowledge x Weak Partisans \( t = .43, \ p=.34 \)
- High-Knowledge x Independents \( t = .59, \ p=.31 \)

**Candidate-Centered Stories**

**Main Effects**
Condition \( (F=\[1,45\] 0.06, \ p=.81) \)

**Interactions:**
Condition x Partisan Strength \( (F=\[1,45\] 1.86, \ p=.18) \)
Condition x Knowledge \( (F=\[1,45\] 1.39, \ p=.25) \)
Condition x Partisan Strength x Knowledge \( (F=\[1,45\] 0.22, \ p=.65) \)
APPENDIX H

MANIPULATION CHECK
APPENDIX H

MANIPULATION CHECK

Recall that the video clips in which the fictitious candidates in these stories talk about themselves were borrowed from another researcher. Because the scripts were originally intended for purposes other than those of this study, a manipulation check was performed in order to ensure that subjects detected the image or party-based content of the candidate-centered stories.

In the manipulation check portion of the post-test questionnaire, subjects were simply asked to describe candidates using either image-based or party-based attributes.\(^1\) Subjects were expected to do so to the extent

\(^1\)The question wording for the manipulation check was as follows: "Now, consider how well each of the following phrases describes the candidates ... Circle the number on the scale which describes the degree to which you think the phrase describes the candidate." The statements which follow ask "How well does the phrase describe (Larry Drake/Ron Johnson)?" Subjects were asked to report on seven-point scales anchored by "Does Not Describe At All" and "Describes Extremely Well," for:

"Effective party member"
"Competent party representative"
"Holds strong party loyalties"

"Effective leader"
"Competent lawmaker"
"Holds strong personal convictions"
that these traits were emphasized in the news story. Thus, those who viewed the candidate-image story were expected to describe candidates using higher levels of image-based attributes, while those who viewed the party-candidate story were expected to use higher levels of party-based traits.

No differences among levels of subject partisan strength or knowledge were anticipated. Subjects were simply asked to describe candidates in order to determine whether they perceived the news story content appropriately. For example, it was not anticipated that strong partisans would hesitate to describe candidates in terms of image nor independents to describe them in terms of party membership.

A 2 (candidate-image and party-candidate story type) x 3 (partisan strength) x 2 (knowledge) x 2 (image- and party-based attribute type) repeated measures analysis of variance, with attribute type in the repeated measures, was performed on descriptions of candidates.

A significant story frame x attribute type interaction emerged (F=[1,38] 14.67, p=.00). That is, subjects who viewed the candidate-image and party-candidate stories did
differ in the extent to which they described candidates using image-based and party-based attributes.

Subjects who viewed the party-candidate story did describe candidates using more party-based than image-based attributes ($M's = 4.16$ vs $3.19$). And those viewing the candidate-image story described candidates using more image-based than party-based attributes ($M's = 3.58$ vs $3.55$). There were no significant main effects for partisan strength or for level of knowledge or interaction effects from moderating variables found for description of candidates.

Thus, subjects who viewed the party-candidate story were more likely to describe candidates using party-based attributes, while those who viewed the candidate-image story used image-based. Subjects clearly discerned the content of these media frames, thus increasing confidence in the strength of the experimental manipulation.
LIST OF REFERENCES


