COVERTLY CONSOLIDATED:

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS, ISSUES AND LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

IN THE AGE OF BIG-MONEY POLITICS

by

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“Our major obligation is not to mistake slogans for solutions.”

Edward R. Murrow
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ABSTRACT

Media ownership structures have a tremendous impact on the quality of information in local places. Following the 1996 Telecommunications Act, various deregulatory reforms diminished the number of independent voices in local broadcast media. One such arrangement, involving the ownership of local television stations, covertly consolidates news operations and often duplicates content within markets. As a result of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), there are more participants presenting political information at a time when there are fewer journalists to cover those claims. This study examined the Honolulu, Hawai‘i media market where three out of the five local stations have entered into an active Shared Services Agreement. A content analysis methodology was employed to examine whether the issues found in political ads were present in the political news stories of local broadcasts. It found that local television news programs did not critically evaluate the issues that were presented in the political advertisements.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A free press is essential to a robust and vigorous democratic society. Writing for the majority in *Associated Press v. United States* (1945), Justice Hugo Black famously proclaimed, “The [First] Amendment rests on the assumption that the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public […]” (p. 326). Reporters and journalists identify social problems, hold leaders accountable, and inform citizens of the important choices that are at stake in elections. In the U.S., these news media are comprised of private firms. These firms create content that generates revenue for corporate owners.

In theory, a private press should repudiate misinformation through the content that it sells; but more recent changes in American telecommunications policy have limited the press’ ability to do so (Just, Levine & Belt, 2001; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; McKean & Stone, 1992). Today, there are fewer voices in the U.S. news media (Stearns & Wright, 2011; Stelter, 2013, 2012; Waldman, 2011; Yanich, 2013) that carry less critical political information (Kaplan & Hale, 2010, 2002, 2001; Karr, 2012a, 2012b; Owen, 2013; Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2012a; Schudson, 1995).

Political advertisements, alternatively, are a highly visible source of information about public policy issues (Cho, 2008; Freedman, Franz & Goldstein, 2004; Johnston & Kaid, 2002; Nichols & McChesney, 2013; Rosenstiel, Mitchell, Purcell & Rainie, 2011; West, 2005, 1994). They are also a structural feature of
American campaigns that have become more numerous in recent years (Daunt, 2012). Since 2000, campaign spending more than doubled from $3 billion to $6.2 billion last year (Toner & Trainer, 2013). Campaigns spend enormous sums of money on ads (Washington Post/Kantar Media, 2012) that are often geographically targeted (Nichols & McChesney, 2013; Stelter, 2013) and frequently describe policy issues in local places (Freedman, Franz & Goldstein, 2004; Johnston & Kaid, 2002; Patterson & McClure, 1976; West, 2005).

Local news frequently presents information to the same audience that watches political ads, but does local news evaluate the claims made in those ads? This paper investigates the content of news programming and political advertisements at the intersection of two important political and economic phenomena: the consolidation of local broadcast news, and the proliferation of political advertisements on local television. Attention is afforded to the epicenter of political ad placement: local news broadcasts. Are the issues that are presented in political ads reflected in news coverage during the campaign? What is the nature of the information available to citizen consumers? This introductory chapter examines these two phenomena. A methodology is later developed to explore these research questions.

**Political Ad Deluge**

There is more money in American politics than ever before. In 2000, candidates George Bush and Al Gore spent a combined $300 million in the general election. Last year, candidates Mitt Romney and Barack Obama spent $1.2 billion—a fourfold increase (Toner & Trainer, 2013). Most of this money was pumped into

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1 Some say 2012 spending was even higher—upwards of $10 billion when “dark money” is included (Nichols & McChesney, 2013).
political advertising campaigns that consumed 51 and 52 percent of Romney and Obama’s campaign budgets, respectively (Washington Post/Kantar Media, 2012). Traditional media dominated ad revenues (Goldstein, Schweidel & Wittenwyler, 2012) and television alone “[…] remains the gold standard for political advertising” (Owen, 2013, p. 110). Speaking about televised political advertisements, senior Obama campaign strategist David Axelrod affirmed, “It’s still the nuclear weapon” (Nichols & McChesney, 2013, p. 138).

Much has been written about money in American politics. Less has described who benefits from profuse campaign spending. A simple and under-advertised fact is exactly this: local television station owners bring in the lion’s share of political ad revenues. In 2012, they brought in $2.9 of the $3.1 billion spent on political ads (Potter, Matsa & Mitchell, 2013). Put another way, local television “captured 80 percent of total television spending […]” (TVB Local Media Marketing Solutions, 2013, para 4). Much of this money saturated electorally competitive markets in “swing states” like Ohio, Florida, and Virginia, but not all (Baum, 2012; Washington Post/Kantar Media, 2012). Forty-two percent of all spending was directed at the presidential contest, but there was also the 37 percent that went to congressional campaigns, 18 percent that funded ballot initiatives, and three percent that propelled local campaigns (Bachman, 2012). Beyond the marquee presidential contest, ubiquitous political advertising accompanied competitive races nationwide.

Any station with a transmission signal that reached an electorally competitive audience saw a boost in ad revenues—as did its parent company. The E.W. Scripps Company, which reaches 13 percent of U.S. households, reported a 41 percent increase in revenue over the third quarter of 2011. Sinclair Broadcasting Group, which
reaches 35 percent of U.S. households, widened profit margins by 49 percent (Potter, Matsa & Mitchell, 2013). While political advertising dollars seem to double every election cycle, the pool of beneficiaries shrinks. In 1996, there were 1,130 commercial television stations with 450 owners. By 2010, there were one-third fewer owners and 172 more stations (Federal Communications Commission, 2010).

The more recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*, decided in 2010, effectively increased in the amount of money in politics. In *Citizens United*, a majority of the Court struck down major provisions of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act that prohibited outside groups from broadcasting ads within 30 days of a primary election and 60 days of a general election. In 2008, independent expenditure groups spent $144 million. Four years later, they spent $1 billion (Center for Responsive Politics, 2013a). “[In 2010] political advertisers spent an estimated $2 billion to $3 billion in local TV stations, which may be as much as 100 percent more than 2008—despite the fact that 2008 was a presidential election year and 2010 was not” (Waldman, 2011, pp. 74-75). According to Potter, Matsa and Mitchell (2013), local stations in the Roanoke-Lynchburg, Virginia television market felt the ad saturation. Four years ago local stations there earned $5.6 million in political ad revenues. In 2012, profits soared to $27 million—a fivefold increase. Nationwide, local station profits increased by 38 percent over 2010, and almost doubled over 2008 (Potter, Matsa & Mitchell, 2013). Current projections indicate that by 2016, local television stations will earn an additional $3.6 billion in political ad revenues (Daunt, 2012) (Figure 1).
The prospect of capturing a slice of the political advertising pie has hastened the pace of media consolidation (Family, 2013). Media conglomerates know that political ad purchases flood local markets every two years. In Washington, where transmission signals reach the D.C. suburbs in Virginia, local stations raked in $74 million in political ads (Washington Post/Kantar Media, 2012). WJLA, a local television station in D.C., earned $33 million in political ad revenue last fall. When the station went up for sale earlier this year, it was appraised at over $300 million (Stelter, 2013). In June 2013, the Gannett Company bought the Belo Corporation and its 20 local television stations for $1.5 billion. Gannett now controls local television stations in 21 of the top 25 U.S. markets—many of which will bring in political ad revenue (Stelter & de la Merced, 2013). Less than three weeks later, the Tribune Company bought 19 local television stations at $2.7 billion. In that deal, Tribune sought to
enlarge its holdings in politically competitive states like Ohio, Virginia, Colorado, and Pennsylvania (James, 2013).

Local newscasts attract the largest audiences for local television stations. Seventy-four percent of Americans watch local news broadcasts or visit local news websites at least once a week—more than radio (51 percent), newspapers (50 percent), or online sources (47 percent) (Rosenstiel et al., 2011). Forty-eight percent of Americans “regularly” watch local television news (Jurkowitz et al., 2013, para. 5) and 41 percent say they do on a daily basis (Edmonds, 2013). The cumulative nightly audience for local news easily surpasses the audience for network television news (Potter, Matsa & Mitchell, 2013). For this reason, local news has been called the “biggest game in town” (Graber, 2010, p. 276).

Audiences attract political advertisers. In 2008, over 50 percent of all political ads were broadcast during local news programs (Ridout, Franz, Goldstein & Feltus, 2012). In the same year, newscasts generated 44 percent of all local station profits (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010). The relationship between advertisers and media firms is explicit (Bagdikian, 1983; McManus, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Advertisers pay for public attention (McManus, 1995, 1994) that local stations provide at a cost (Pew Research Center, 2010). It is no coincidence that two stations in Washington, D.C. added an extra half-hour of local news programming during last fall’s campaign (Stelter, 2013). Local news programs often manipulate story selection, presentation modes, and the choreography of story placement to maximize audience share, and correspondingly increase advertising dollars (Yanich, 2012).
With so many Americans tuned in to evening broadcasts, what are the attributes that characterize political news stories on late breaking nine o’clock newscasts? Do the economic motivations of broadcasters manifest in local news coverage of American political campaigns? What counts as political news in local places?

**Local News Drought**

Local television news broadcasts presumably attract large audiences because citizens want to know about news that directly affects them and their communities. Obama campaign manager David Plouffe (2009) recounts, “What really mattered—and our research was clear as a bell on this—was local news. True swing state voters watched their local TV station and read their regional paper” (p. 315). Indeed, Rosentiel et al. (2011) found that political news stories are the third most demanded story type, next to weather and breaking news.

What passes for political news, however, frequently lacks substantive discussion of campaign issues. Political news stories are often framed around entertaining strategic or game frames that “privilege the poll-driven horse race between candidates, the campaign tactics, and the battle to gain the upper hand in made-for-media campaign events, like debates” (Owen, 2013, p. 106). To be sure, this frame is not new. In an analysis of 74 stations in 58 markets just before the 2000 General Election, Kaplan and Hale (2001) uncovered the strategic frame in 55 percent of local news stories. Only 24 percent were issue-based. In a follow-up analysis, Kaplan and Hale (2001) investigated the focus of stories. In addition to the 55 percent of stories that framed campaign strategy and 24 percent that framed issues, the authors also uncovered 19 percent that focused on “other” frames (general campaign,
Kaplan and Hale (2002) later investigated 122 stations in the top 50 U.S. markets during the 2002 Midterm Elections. Forty-eight percent of stories employed the strategy frame and 27 percent focused on issues or analyzed political advertising. Regardless of election cycle, the strategic frame is predominately used by local television news to cover politics. Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (2012a) more recently found that 44 percent of political news stories used the strategic frame.³ Again, only 22 percent covered policy.⁴ “Local television news in most communities is unashamedly show business, not journalism, and devotes only the slightest amount of airtime to local electoral candidates and issues” (Schudson, 1995, p. 215). The simple fact is that strategically framed political news stories attract larger audiences, which in turn increase ratings. Higher ratings boost the profitability of the news division (Allen, Stevens, Marfleet, Sullivan & Alger, 2007; Just, Crigler & Buhr, 1999; Kaniss, 1991).

What benefits the corporate “bottom line” does not necessarily help citizens make informed decisions in a democratic society. Classical democratic theory presumes citizens have access to information facilitates rational decision-making based on deliberative consideration of voting options (Berelson, 1952; Downs, 1957).

³ Pew Research Center did not explicitly identify the strategy frame in these stories; however, Pew did operationalize news content as being about “advertising, fundraising, endorsements and the media’s coverage of itself.” These elements characterize the strategic frame definition applied in this paper.

⁴ It is important to note that Pew Research Center’s (2012) content analysis relied on network television news, magazine, and newspaper content, which often have more access to resources than local television news (Kaniss, 1991).
“In a republic where the people are sovereign, the ability of the citizenry to make informed choices among candidates for office is essential” [emphasis added] (Buckley v. Valeo, 1976, pp. 14-15). Berelson (1966) points out that an informed citizenry is first prerequisite to democratic theory: “This is a requirement nearly everyone sets down for a democratic electorate; politicians and statesmen, adult educators, journalists, professors of political science—all of them pay deference to the need for enlightened public opinion” (p. 493).

It is not that journalists simply disregard the importance of an informed citizenry when constructing news stories. Rather, journalists are participants in a broader system that manufactures news within the confines of economic influences (Bagdikian, 1999, 1997, 1983; Bennett, 2001; Hamilton, 2004; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; McManus, 1995, 1994). This market-driven structure is pervasive in the sense that it subtly affects every aspect of news production in local places; content is simply its byproduct.

**Market-Driven Journalism**

Over the past thirty years, the walls between the news and entertainment divisions of newsrooms have gradually come down (Auletta, 1997; Bagdikian, 1999, 1997, 1983; Graber, 2010, 1994; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; McManus, 1995, 1994, 1990). Prior to 1986, television news programs operated at a financial loss to parent companies. Journalistic norms dictated that reporters to uncover the issues that were important to society. During this era, journalists exposed the Watergate scandal and excavated the dangers of nuclear technology (McChesney & Nichols, 2010). Aspiring young journalists such as Bob Woodward, and broadcasters like Tom Brokaw, were inculcated with the virtues of skepticism, aggressive reporting, and fair-
mindedness that characterized the norms of the journalism profession (Cannon, 1997). In his memoir, As It Happened, CBS Chief Executive William S. Paley (1979) affirmed that the true strength of CBS News was its “high standards of accuracy, honesty, and integrity […]” (p. 290). Paley himself forbade editorializing on the air and felt that CBS News was a gift to the American people, funded, in part by the incredible success of highly-rated television programs like I Love Lucy (Paley, 1979).

During the mid-to-late 1980s the emergence of tabloid television and syndicated talk shows attracted viewers and applied pressure on networks to heighten the entertainment quality of news programming. Tabloid TV and syndicated talk shows “offer[ed] witches, bigamists, bigots, male strippers, and child molesters—what critics dubbed Freaks of the Week” (Auletta, 1997, p. 77). In 1987, NBC ventured into the fray, offering programs such as Scared Sexless that uncovered topics like singles bars, AIDS, and unwanted pregnancies that attracted one-third of the viewing public. Auletta (1997) points out that NBC News soon offered specials on “Women Behind Bars,” “American Men in the 80s,” and “Stress” that were “[s]andwiched between […] sober documentaries on the homeless and Islam” (p. 78). The gradual capitulation of traditional journalism to entertainment was in part captured by the New York Times review of Scared Sexless that read: “The NBC News report, on Channel 4 at 10 o'clock tonight, acts as if it just discovered s-e-x” (Corry, 1987, para 1). The move toward infotainment in journalism was so palatable that journalist Carl Bernstein (1992) commented, “In this new culture of journalistic titillation, we teach our readers and viewers that the trivial is significant, that the lurid and loopy are more important than real news” (p. 1C).
The emergence of entertainment journalism gave birth to the common broadcast aphorism, “If it bleeds, it leads.” After NBC was sold to General Electric in 1986, Chairman Jack Welch and NBC News President Larry Grossman reduced the NBC News budget from $257.8 million in 1987 to $237 million in 1990. According to Auletta (1997), NBC News boosted revenues and made sharp cost reductions, which involved attracting large audiences to generate more ad revenue. Within the newsroom, broadcasters had to select content that would accomplish this goal while available resources slowly diminished. Outside the newsroom, changes in federal telecommunications policy scaled back broadcasters’ public affairs requirements. The current condition of free market journalism resulted from these influences.

Inside the Newsroom: Selecting Stories with Limited Resources

Newscasts are a social construction of economic phenomena, primarily influenced by fluid viewer interest, and in particular, ratings. Stories are frequently selected according to an economic logic of what content attracts each additional viewer (the “marginal consumer”). In political journalism, Hamilton (2004) writes: “[T]he interests of marginal consumers are similar to those of marginal voters, so that programmers trying to give marginal viewers what they want will also provide marginal voters with stories they like” (Hamilton, 2004, p. 117). In each case, the interests of marginal consumers are analogous to the interests of marginal voters: neither is likely to be entertained by hard-hitting political news stories. Because newsrooms are motivated to attract each additional consumer, content is selected and reported in a manner that appeals to them. Accordingly, Underwood and Stamm (1992) examined newsroom policies in 12 West Coast newspapers and found that
selection protocols often depended on reader interest. Thus, consumers dictate coverage (Hamilton, 2004; Yanich, 2012).

Logically, the types of stories that are presented on local television news programs are expected to be congruous with this reality. Crime stories are prevalent because they offer pre-packaged and compelling narratives that easily pique audience attention (Bennett, 2001; Hamilton, 2004; Kaplan & Hale, 2010; Yanich, 2012, 2004, 2001). Viewers also demand crime stories (Rosenstiel et al., 2011) and many consumers actively seek them out (Hamilton, 2004). Jurkowitz et al. (2013) found that crime accounted for 17 percent of local television news coverage in 2012, while political news accounted for three percent. Both were down from 29 percent and seven percent, respectively, in 2006. This disparity occurs in spite of the fact that the public demands local politics and crime stories equally (67 percent and 66 percent, respectively) (Rosentiel et al., 2011). Crime stories dominate local news coverage because the public can engage with them as narrative events. Some evidence even suggests that viewers create their own narrative scripts when viewing local television news (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000).

Political news, alternatively, does not immediately lend itself to easily compelling narratives. To be sure, the news media focus on the personal and dramatic elements of campaigns, but in the absence of entertaining conflict, mentions of political news are far less frequent than crime. Kimball (1999) describes the implications behind ratings-driven political journalism: the U.S. Supreme Court is no longer a regular beat for any of the major networks; the watchdog responsibilities of the media in reporting Congressional activities have been relegated to conflict stories; and more investigative reporting of the executive branch has been eclipsed by sexier
political beats, such as the White House and the State Department. In Washington, the focus on personality, drama and the reporting of information in fragmented bites (Bennett, 2001) garners disillusionment for the political process (Kimball, 1999). This may be partly responsible for the partisan gridlock and dysfunction experienced in American politics today.

Coverage of the Washington “horse race” and the latest campaign event get the most attention because they are cheaper to produce and most likely to attract marginal customers. The corollary is that there are fewer resources devoted to less “entertaining” stories. Today, much of what was international news has been relegated to wire services, so much so that none of the three major network television news programs retain foreign bureaus (Fleeson, 2003; Enda, 2011) and only the top four U.S. newspapers do (Enda, 2011). This depreciation in network resources manifests in news content. From 1989 to 2000, the total minutes devoted to international stories fell by more than half (Enda, 2011). Without resources, networks must find entertaining coverage that fills the perennial news hole.

The situation is exacerbated at the local level. Local television stations historically have access to fewer resources than network television news stations (Kaniss, 1991; Waldman, 2011). Reporters often function on demanding schedules and rely on few resources in pursuit of stories. Local reporters refer to press releases, follow police scanners, and use syndicated material to construct stories. Local news directors often air stories without the presence of an on-scene reporter (Waldman, 2011) and when a reporter is on scene, they are more likely to both report and shoot the story (Papper, 2010). The more recent growth of video news releases (VNRs) offer stations raw footage and script that is prepared to go on the air instantaneously.
Bennett (2001) warns: “[VNRs] deliver strategic political or economic messages wrapped in news packages produced in public relations, advertising, political consulting or corporate communications offices” (p. 9). These releases often appear seamlessly as real news items, and are frequently offered by third parties who are eager to contribute material. In the competition for time and space, it is easy for journalists to rely on these available resources. The reliance on prepackaged stories and scripts transfers much of reported content to third parties, or to information that is readily available. These practices present information that is interesting or entertaining, but not necessarily investigative or informative. It also vacates the news media of its traditional gatekeeping responsibility (Kimball, 1999).

Outside the Newsroom: Federal Telecommunications Policy

The deregulatory rule-making policies of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) offer a more macro-level explanation for the increase in entertaining news content. In general, the Commission mediates relationships among platforms (broadcast, cable, and satellite), between platforms and content suppliers, and within geographic regions (Nuechterlein & Weiser, 2005). In 1984, the Reagan Administration’s FCC rescinded several station requirements, including programming guidelines, commercial limits, ascertainment, and the programming logging requirement (Waldman, 2011). In its place, Chair Mark Fowler implemented a new deregulatory scheme that relied on “market demand for informational, local and non-entertainment programming” (Waldman, 2011, p. 284). This deregulatory approach ushered in a decline of local public affairs content in the 1980s (Just, Levine & Belt, 2001; McKean & Stone, 1992).
In 1996, Congress passed a major Telecommunications Act that further relaxed ownership rules and allowed for increased consolidation in local broadcast media (Napoli, 2001b; Waldman, 2011). The law enabled vertical integration in media, which produced more customer services at the expense of increasing local news layoffs (Olufs, 1999). Between 1996 and 2010, the number of station owners fell by one-third (FCC, 2010). Proponents argued that corporate mergers allowed firms to retain a competitive advantage (Aufderheide, 1999; Crandall, 2005). Critics responded that deregulation concentrated oligopolistic ownership, which was antithetical to the FCC’s public interest requirements (Bishop & Hakanen, 2002; McKeen & Stone, 1992). Although some scholars contend that these deregulatory reforms have been healthy for broadcast competition (Aufderheide, 1999; Crandall, 2005), many others disagree (Graber, 2010; Hamilton, 2004; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Olufs, 1999; Rohde, 2002).

This competition debate reveals a certain irony in FCC public interest regulation. On the one hand, Reagan-era Chair Mark Fowler claimed that, “[T]he Commission should rely on the broadcasters’ ability to determine the wants of their audiences through the normal mechanisms of the marketplace. *The public’s interests are the public interest*” [emphasis added] (Fowler & Brenner, 1982, pp. 3-4). On the other, the 1934 Telecommunications Act beholds the FCC to regulate the industry based on the principles of localism, diversity and competition. Localism is important because it binds identities and social associations to space (Donner, 1998; Napoli, 2001b). It is unsurprising, then, that these broadcasting regulations underlie newscasters’ connection with their local communities (Mulcahy & Widoff, 1988). Politically, localism promotes democratic participation among citizens and distributes
control of information among many entities (Napoli, 2001a). These deregulatory approaches, however, reduced the quantity of public affairs information by consolidating media entities. This consolidation reduced the number of local voices in the marketplace, and changed the incentives for local broadcasters and newspapers to report local news.

As a result of these measures, the quantity of public affairs stories subsequently declined. The proportion of daily newspaper science sections dropped from 95 percent of newspaper dailies to 34 percent (McChesney & Nichols, 2010, p. 35). In broadcast, the total hours devoted to public affairs programming was cut and replaced with inexpensive syndicated material (Bishop & Hakanen, 2002). McChesney and Nichols (2010) observe that between 1992 and 2002, 6,000 editorial broadcast and newspaper jobs were lost. Station managers would air news when it was profitable and dropped it altogether when was not (Just, Levine & Belt, 2001; McKean & Stone, 1992). And in the years that followed, a surge of newsmen left the business in contempt for the new corporate management of news (McChesney & Nichols, 2010).

Ownership Arrangements

Consolidated ownership structures concentrated control over news content (Bagdikian, 1999, 1997, 1983; McChesney & Nichols, 2010). Questions of who owns the media and how those owners influence news decisions became more common following telecommunication deregulation. Bagdikian (1983) points out that the market forces outside the newsroom gained influence over news coverage because corporate mergers and acquisitions became more common: “The major media carry much that their owners personally disagree with. But this does not prevent
propagandistic use by emphasizing certain issues and de-emphasizing others, by pursuing some subjects relentlessly and quickly abandoning others” (p. 70). This rationale conflicts with the general norm of journalism (McManus, 1995), which according to the Radio-Television News Directors Association’s Code of Broadcasts News Ethics affirms that, “[Broadcasters] will evaluate information solely on its merits as news, rejecting sensationalism or misleading emphasis in any form” (“Code of Broadcast News Ethics,” n.d., paras. 3-4).

One form of these ownership arrangements allows one media firm to own two or more broadcast stations in a single market.⁵ Increasingly, those stations share common resources, so much so that one station effectively produces the other’s programming. These arrangements are sometimes referred to as Joint Sales Agreements” (JSAs) or Shared Services Agreements (SSAs) and “often include the production of news by one station for […] other stations” (Yanich, 2011, p. 2).⁶ Stations profit from these contractual arrangements by selling advertising time in exchange for a flat fee of ad revenue (Yanich, 2011). For the citizen, the result is often duplicative news content, presented on two or more stations, in the same market (Stelter, 2012). Although there is no definitive consensus on the extent of this phenomena, media reform group Free Press identifies operative SSAs in 80 of the 210

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⁵ The FCC specifies the permissibility of these designations according to DMA® size (DMA is a registered service mark of The Nielsen Company. Used under License).

⁶ There are many forms of contractual arrangements that describe some variant of these agreements. Each agreement often has its own legal meaning. To simplify the nomenclature, these broadcast ownership structures are broadly described here as SSAs, unless otherwise specified.
television markets involving more than 200 stations nationwide (Stearns & Wright, 2011).

Research into the effect of ownership arrangements on news content is ongoing. In November of 2006, the FCC commissioned a study to analyze the effect of ownership on political slant and local content (called “Study 6”). Milyo (2007) concluded that SSAs positively affect the quantity and quality of local news—averaging one to two minutes of additional news and featuring one-quarter more coverage of state and local politics. Study 6 was the only content analysis undertaken for the Commission’s investigation into SSAs. Invited peer reviews found it to be rife with methodological deficiencies (Goldstein, Hale & Kaplan, 2007). Yanich (2009) later applied a reliable coding instrument to the same cross-sectional set of broadcasts used in Study 6 and found SSA-ownership and total news content to be, in fact, inversely related.

The FCC will decide whether SSAs violate the localism rule in its upcoming quadrennial review of multiple ownership rules (Oxenford, 2011). Media Council Hawai’i (MCH) filed a complaint in October of 2009 that constituted the only formal challenge to SSAs on behalf of a community organization nationwide (Yanich, 2013, 2011). The dispute arose when Raycom Media, owner of KHNL (NBC) and KFVE (MyNetworkTV), and MCG Capital Corporation, owner of KGMB (CBS), agreed to enter into an SSA (Stearns & Wright, 2011; Yanich, 2013, 2011). In their complaint, MCH asserted: “This agreement will result in Raycom controlling approximately 44% of the market, thereby decreasing competition for both the sale of advertising time and the production of local news” (Campbell, 2009, ii). In 2011, the Commission ruled that SSAs were permissible in the Honolulu market under current rules, but “the
Commission warned that it would consider […] whether similar situations should be permitted in the future, and seemingly implied that even this combination could be subject to further review in future licensing proceedings” (Oxenford, 2011, para. 1). In effect, the FCC made a technical ruling with a more expansive decision anticipated in its delayed review of multiple ownership rules.

**Conclusion**

Within the next decade, local news media may be less diversely owned, less competitive, and ultimately, less “local.” SSAs may contribute to that development. As local television owners seek to increase profit margins, consolidation in news operations increases economies of scale. Contemporaneously, consolidation eliminates local voices and diminishes the number of reporters, investigative journalists, and fact-checkers in local places.

Political ad revenues, in part, fuel the local television-buying bonanza. Local TV station owners see tremendous opportunity in consolidated ownership and view the growth in political ads as a channel to new revenue streams. Nextar President and Chairman Perry Sook predicts that by 2020 there will be “10-12 major station groups, including the four network-owned outfits and a half-dozen other players reaching over 20% or more of the U.S., booking around a billion in annual revenue” (Malone, 2013, p. 12).

An important, yet relatively unexplored, area of analysis is the extent to which local television provides information about political issues under multiple ownership arrangements. Given that the FCC has exclusively permitted these ownership combinations in the Honolulu market, a case study content analysis of the news in
Hawaii may be generalizable to other markets if the Commission issues a more expansive ruling in the future.

We know that journalism in the U.S. is frequently driven by viewer interest. When there are fewer stations in the market, what is the extent to which those stations provide information about political issues? If they do not provide information about political issues, can citizens substitute information provided by local news for that provided by political advertisers? Chapter 2 provides a conceptual basis to examine issue content in political ads and news stories. Chapter 3 then operationalizes those concepts in the form of a content analysis methodology. Findings of this study are provided in Chapter 4, and analyzed in Chapter 5. A discussion of the role of local news and political ads under consolidation follows in Chapter 6. Ultimately, the implications of this work extend to the quality of information in local places, as reflected by social construction of market-driven economic structures.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In his seminal book, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs (1957) blends a classical theory of public choice with an economic model based on the rational and self-interested voter. Downs famously argued that the marginal costs incurred by voting far outweigh the marginal benefits. If all voters had equal access to information then voting would simply be a matter of weighing party differentials. If a citizen can enhance his or her individual utility by voting for one party over the other, than he or she will naturally choose the party that delivers the maximum benefit.

Voters, however, notoriously make democratic choices with unequal information. Downs points out that information sources are “biased” and as a result, individuals select information and information sources that are consistent with their principles (p. 235). Decision-making incurs many costs and if voters are rational and self-interested, than they only acquire information until the marginal cost of acquiring an additional unit of information equals the marginal benefit of obtaining such information (Downs, 1957). Since most of the time the probability of actually influencing an election is extremely small, many individuals choose to ignore policy details and remain rationally ignorant about electoral choices (Hamilton, 2004).

Downsian analysis does not describe how citizens go about making information decisions beyond the nexus of party identification and utility maximization alone. Downs was careful to qualify his theory with the natural variation in political interest and intellectual capacity. Much discursive research since Downs’
time has revealed a wider array of information sources, including elite political preferences (Zaller, 1992), the media (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), histories of credibility (Sobel, 1985), public mood (Rahn, Kroeger, & Kite 1996), and/or issue commentators (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). The central theme of this body of research is that ideas originate and dictate public choices in a dynamic political process through a multitude of information sources, often described as a “marketplace for ideas” (*United States v. Rumely*, 1953).

In his essay, *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill (1859) argued that over time, unpopular opinions and practices yield to facts and reason through open discourse and dialogue. In a robust marketplace, “diverse and antagonistic voices” (*Associated Press v. United States*, 1945, p. 326) compete against one another in the “discovery and spread of political truth” (*Whitney v. California*, 1972, p. 375). The intuitive logic behind the marketplace metaphor is not political—it is economic. In Mill’s theory, minority opinions gain traction based on their individual value to society. Owen (1975) observes: “There is a market in which information and entertainment, intellectual “goods” are bought and sold” (p. 5). Information that is more widely accepted is necessarily more valuable.

An economic theory of information dispenses several issues that plague most other markets for normal goods; the most obvious is unequal access. Baker (1975) criticizes the marketplace metaphor, pointing out that “[it] seems perfectly coherent as long as people have the same opportunities (e.g. equal resources) for participating” (p. 984). In both the economic and democratic ideal traditions the marketplace breaks down once potentially monopolistic or near monopolistic (i.e., oligopolistic) tendencies are introduced (Napoli, 2001a). *Who* has a voice, and *who* has the means to
use it? Numerous barriers to entry, including economies of scale, unequal access to resources, and exclusive property rights “quel[l] voices […] that might have been heard in the time of the town meeting and the pamphleteer” (Ingber, 1984, pp. 38-39).

This economic marketplace for information and ideas is manifest by the agenda-setting function of the mass media: “The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about” (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). Iyengar and Kinder (1987) define agenda-setting theory as the media’s ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. According to agenda-setting theory, information and ideas flow through a dynamic system where the media agenda influences the public agenda, which in turn influences the policy agenda. Agenda items are also affected by media elites, gatekeepers and personal experience (Rogers & Dearing, 1988) (Figure 2). In a sense, these three interconnected agendas concentrate attention on specific issues and shape the media, public and policy dialogues.

Figure 2  Three main components of the agenda-setting process: The media, public and policy agendas (Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 5).
The late attention afforded to HIV/AIDS is one example. Very few Americans knew of the virus four years after the first reported U.S. case in 1981. However, when media attention concentrated attention on Rock Hudson and Ryan White, 95 percent of Americans knew about it by 1985 (Rogers, Dearing & Chang, 1991). Following the ascendancy of the epidemic to the top of the public agenda during the 1980s, the Reagan Administration was criticized for not reacting to public attention to HIV/AIDS in the policy arena (France, Richman & Walk, 2012).

If news were a reflection of society’s most pressing or important issues, HIV/AIDS would have become a more pressing public issue in the early 1980s. News, however, is a social construction that is shaped by the market forces of scarcity (Bennett, 2001). The decision to allocate some attention to some issues necessarily means that attention is not allocated to other issues (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). Dearing and Rogers (1996) point out that advertisers, public relations professionals, and issue advocates compete for time on the news media agenda. Within that competition for time, media owners and managers decide what facts, opinions and information are important for mass consumption (Ingber, 1984). Items on the news media agenda are important because they can exert influence over “public issues, persons, organizations or social movements” (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948, p. 101). Since space and time are scarce, time is a zero sum game (Zhu, 1992).

Agenda-setting research relies on the dual study of content and media effects. These effects are often measured using surveys, but not always. The field of agenda-setting research was inaugurated when McCombs and Shaw (1972) used a content analysis to determine how frequently news items appeared in local media. The authors also disseminated surveys to 100 Chapel Hill, North Carolina residents. The findings
revealed a very high correlation between the ranked appearance of news items and perceptions of issue salience ($r = .900$). Iyengar and Kinder (1987) later found varying levels of issue salience depending on exposure. When shown newscasts depicting zero, three or six news stories relating to the U.S. dependence on foreign oil, participants increasingly ranked foreign oil as a policy concern, ranging from 24 to 65 percent, respectively. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) were careful to point out that those who were more likely to be affected by news items ranked them as more important. In a slightly different agenda-setting effects study, Reinikka and Svensson (2005) examined newspaper coverage of corruption in Uganda and analyzed the government spending on public schools. When the government launched an anticorruption advertising campaign, areas with better newspaper access experienced less corruption (Reinikka and Svensson, 2005). Strömberg and Snyder (2008) argue that the Uganda case exemplifies the need for access, relevant content, and reader interest. Each example shows that regardless of the effects analyzed, there is a connection between the content and the transfer of perceived salience in issue evaluation.

**Political Ad Construction**

Political advertisements explicitly serve an agenda-setting function (Dalton, Beck, Huckfeldt & Koetzle, 1998; Fowler & Ridout, 2009; West, 2005, 1994). The purpose of political ads is to affect the issue dialogues on the public and policy agendas. Johnston and Kaid (2002) note that ads “hel[p] the candidate defend his or her image and provid[e] a forum where campaign issues can be explained or developed” (p. 281). Many scholars of political science contend that candidates use the public and policy agendas to rank issue priorities, afford attention to some issues and not others, and describe policy stances on those topics (Cobb & Elder, 1971;
Kingdon, 1984; Klingemann, Hofferbert, & Budge, 1994). A wide array of literature illustrates the efficacy of political advertisements in doing just that: ads increase candidate recognition (Kaid, 1982; West, 1994); awareness of the candidates issues and priorities (Atkin & Heald, 1976; Freedman, Franz & Goldstein, 2004; Hofstetter & Strand, 1983; Martinelli & Chaffee, 1995; Pfau, Holbert, Szabo & Kaminski, 2002; Ridout, Shaw, Goldstein & Franz, 2004; Valentino, Hutchings & Williams, 2004); facilitate issue learning (Craig, Kane & Gainous, 2005); and increase short and long term information seeking (Cho, 2008; Crigler, Just & Belt, 2006). These behaviors clearly enable the marketplace of ideas to deliver important information to enhance democratic decision-making. Several aspects of political ads affect these processes. Within the contours of this analysis, these include the ads’ construction (including the tone, focus, and attacks implemented), issue content, and whether or not a non-candidate committee group sponsored the ad.

Tone, Focus, and Attacks

The efficacy of negative advertising on democratic participation is a contentious issue in political communication literature. Some scholars argue that negative ads affect democratic participation (Ansolabehere, Behr & Iyengar, 1993; Ansolabehere, Iyengar & Simon, 1999; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Valentino & Simon, 1994; Lemert, Wanta & Lee, 1999) while others argue that negative ads do not (Franz, Freedman, Goldstein, & Ridout, 2007; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Ansolabehere et al. (1994) investigated negative ad exposure and intention to vote in a controlled experiment. They found that exposure to negative advertising decreased intent to vote by five percent and by four percent when aggregated for the 1992 U.S. Senate elections. Lemert, Wanta and Lee (1999) corroborate these findings and add
that candidates who air positive ads increase voter turnout. Watterberg and Brians (1999) refute that Ansolabehere et al.’s claims (1995, 1994) cannot be replicated outside of an experimental setting. More recently, Lau, Sigelman and Rovner’s (2007) meta-analytic research found little support for the voter suppression hypothesis. However, these scholars also uncovered lower feelings of political efficacy, reduced trust in government and lowered attitudes in overall public mood. Several studies validate the success of attack ads in generating negative evaluations of opponents (Jasperson & Fan, 2004, 2002; Kaid & Boydston, 1987; O’Cass, 2002; Tinkham & Weaver-Lariscy, 1993). However, Sigelman and Kugler (2003) caution that the social science concepts are inconsistent across the literature.

Content analyses illustrate how political advertisement construction affects voting decisions (Johnston & Kaid, 2002). Elucidating a Functional Theory of Campaign Discourse, Benoit (2001, 2000) argues that ads acclaim (make positive claims about the ad sponsor), attack (make negative claims of the opposing candidate), or defend (offer a defense of an attack). Tinkham and Weaver-Lariscy (1995) found that challengers are more likely to go negative than incumbents. This is particularly true in state and local races (Hale, Fox & Farmer, 1996; Tinkham & Weaver-Lariscy, 1990). Content analyses show that winners are more likely to acclaim in ad messages than attack (Benoit, Pier & Blaney, 1997).

Issue and Image Emphasis

The manner in which ads facilitate issue learning is complex. “[N]o topic has been more dominant across the five decades of research on political advertising than the discussion of whether or not campaign commercials are dominated by image information or issue information” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 16). Johnston and Kaid
(2002) note that issue ads buttress the democratic ideal by informing citizens of campaign issue dialogues. The authors also note that political ads have been criticized for focusing on the non-issue construction of political advertisements, such as candidate image content. Issue ads typically invoke appeals to the policy concerns of citizens, such as candidate or issue preferences that address public affairs (Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Patterson & McClure, 1976), while image ads typically appeal to candidate qualities or characteristics (Kaid & Johnston, 1991). These ads may be positive, negative or neutral in tone.

Many content analyses have found that most political ads do contain some issue content. Joslyn’s (1980) early study found that 60 to 80 percent of ads focused on issues rather than images, but this study relied on a convenience sample. Freedman, Franz and Goldstein (2004) more vigorously investigated political advertising in the lead up to the 2000 General Election and found that 95 percent of presidential ad spots and 90 percent of general election ad spots contained at least some issue-related content in the top 75 U.S. markets. The authors also found that 73 percent of presidential ads and 70 percent of general election ads included at least one claim that was backed by a cited source (Freedman, Franz & Goldstein, 2004). Spiliotes and Vavreck (2002) looked at 153 races in 37 states during the 1998 Midterm Elections. They found that the types of issues emphasized by candidates varied according to party affiliation. Even when controlling for constituency characteristics, candidates drew attention to different policies (Spiliotes and Vavreck, 2002). Voters are able to distinguish between parties by the issue information presented in advertisements (Pomper, 1988). However, the extent to which candidates offer specific policy proposals is limited (Spiliotes & Vavreck, 2002).
Image ads provide less substantive details about issues (Patterson & McClure, 1976), and instead emphasize positive messages about sponsoring candidates (Johnston & Kaid, 2002). Some scholars note that the *image*-related nature of advertising evokes some controversy because the term is shrouded in ambiguity (Shyles, 1984; Thorson, Christ & Caywood, 1991). Does *image* refer the candidate’s likeness alone, or does it include broader appeals to the candidate’s character and ethos? In political communication, the later definition is generally accepted (Shyles, 1984). Communication researchers scrutinize image appeals to dissect how presentation mode affects and directs messaging strategy (Kaid, 2006; Kaid & Davidson, 1986).

A candidate’s *videostyle* refers to the verbal, non-verbal and video production elements that underlie the candidate’s self-portrayal (Kaid & Davison, 1986). Videostyle uncovers many differences in candidates’ image presentation, including: the structure of ads, such as scripts, music and video content (Thorson, Christ & Caywood, 1991; Brader, 2005); verbal communication styles, such as optimism, realism, certainty, or activity (Ballotti & Kaid, 2000; Hart, 1977); overtly emotional content, such as appeals to pride, reassurance, trust and hope (Kern, 1989); and differences among male and female videostyles (Bystrom, 1996; Johnston & White, 1994; Trent & Sobourin, 1993; Wadsworth et al., 1987). It is important to highlight image-related characteristics because of the conceptual and methodological challenges of parsing out image and issue-related content. Johnston and Kaid (2002), in fact, describe *issue style* and *image style* constructs. They found that one fourth of image messaging featured some issue content. In fact, images frequently *strengthen* issues.
Agenda-setting research in the political science discipline enthusiastically reveals how candidate image appeals affect constituent evaluations of issues (Fenno, 1978; Kingdon, 1984). Candidates incorporate policy preferences into presentation styles, or home styles, to win reelection (Fenno, 1978). This often involves the use of character traits to underscore commitment to policy proposals (Joslyn, 1980; Johnston & Kaid, 2002). Political ads associate candidate images with issue concepts, and often evoke code words (West, 2005). Ninety percent of candidate ads mentioned traits in the Spiliotes and Vavreck (2002) study, yet only 30 percent of ads were predominately trait-based. Payne, Marlier and Baukus’ (1989) content analysis found that candidates used political advertising to introduce themselves and “define their ethos or credibility in terms of a particular issue” (p. 380).

Effect studies reveal the strategic function of issue and image ads. Issue ads generate more positive candidate evaluations (Kaid, Chanslor & Hovind, 1992; Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Thorson, Christ & Caywood, 1991), but image ads increase information recall (Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Thorson, Christ & Caywood, 1991). From a content-standpoint, there is an incentive for campaigns to create political advertisements that link issue content to the candidate’s image or appeal.

Non-candidate Committee Sponsors

In response to the increasing number of negative attack ads (Geer, 2006) Congress attempted to mitigate the effects of negative campaign advertising with the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002. The “Stand by Your Ad” (SBYA) provision of the BCRA mandated that candidates and groups identify themselves as ad sponsors (e.g., “I’m Jane Doe and I approve this message”). The provision was intended to hold campaigns and political action groups accountable for civility and
truth in ad content (Franz et al., 2007). In a press release regarding the SBYA provision, Senator Maria Cantwell (2002) affirmed, “This bill is about slowing the ad war. It is about calling sham issue ads what they really are. It is about slowing political advertising and making sure the flow of negative ads by outside interest groups does not continue to permeate the airwaves’’ (para. 3). From a good governance perspective, there was much concern that unknown interest groups were suppressing voter turnout by using negative ads.

Studies evaluating the content of advertising before and after the BCRA found no difference in the construction of ads or propensity to attack (Gale et al., 2005; Magleby, Monson & Patterson, 2007) and even found a decrease in the number of positive ads in the 2004 General Election cycle (Franz, Rivlin & Goldstein, 2006). Fowler and Ridout (2011) later found that the number of negative ads increased after the BCRA, in part due to the proliferation of non-candidate committee groups. Twenty percent of ads sponsored by candidates were negative in 2004, compared to 38 percent in 2010. Not coincidentally, 73 percent of ads sponsored by independent groups were negative in 2004, compared to 87 percent by 2010 (Fowler & Ridout, 2011). When compared with party and campaign advertisement sponsorship, the proportion of non-candidate committee ad sponsors has increased over the last decade—largely reflecting changes in campaign finance laws. Between 2002 and 2010 alone, this proportion grew from ten percent in 2002, to 25 percent in 2006 to 50 percent in 2010 (Goldstein, Schweidel & Wittenwyler, 2012).

This may mean that independent groups act as “attack dogs” for the campaigns to avoid the negative backlash effects of decreased sponsor evaluation. Garramone and Smith’s (1984) early study found that one-third of party sponsors were trustworthy,
and Shen and Wu (2002) later revealed that soft money political organizations might assuage backlash effects on the favored candidate. Roddy and Garramone’s (1988) content analysis found that candidates exhibited a heightened proclivity to use *issue* ads instead of image ads when attacking an opponent. This is because issue attacks are more socially acceptable than image attacks. It could be hypothesized that the rapid increase in Super PACs following *Citizens United* caused the proportion of negative advertisements to increase; there may be more issue-based attacks as a result. In the first post-*Citizens United* study, Brooks and Murov (2012) found attack ads, sponsored by independent expenditure groups to be more effective than ads sponsored by candidate committees. Fowler and Ridout (2011) further found that 87 percent of independent group ads were attack ads in the 2010 Midterm Elections.

**News Framing**

The agenda-setting function of the news media has been studied extensively in political communication literature (Ghorpade, 1986; Kaid, 1976; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Williams, Shapiro & Cutbirth, 1983). McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) early study showed how news media coverage could affect issue salience. Doris Graber (2010) writes, “The media *set* the public agenda when news stories rivet attention on a problem and make it seem important to many people. The media *build* the public agenda when they create the political context that shapes public opinions” [emphasis added] (p. 143).

Within the past two decades, agenda-setting research has moved toward a second level of analysis, describing how object *attributes* are studied in the news media. First level agenda-setting research reveals how issue salience is transferred from an item presented in the news media (an “object”) to the citizen. Second level
agenda-setting research reveals how aspects of objects ("attributes") (i.e., political candidates, issues) vary according to salience (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004). Ghanem (1997) presents two major hypotheses: (i.) Issue and object attributes affect the way the public thinks about that object; and (ii.) Issue and object attributes affect the salience of the object on the public agenda (p. 4).

Crime provides a practical illustration. Ghanem (1996) notes that between 1992 and 1994 only two percent of Texans ranked crime as the most important issue facing the nation. During this two-year period, public concern for crime increased while crime statistics actually fell. In an analysis of Texas newspapers, Ghanem (1996) uncovered a + .70 correlation between crime coverage and public concern (first level agenda-setting). Findings at the second level were more intriguing: “Stories of distant gang fights and murder in New York City were not especially worrisome to Texans [but] stories about local crime, robberies of ordinary persons in broad daylight, and random shootings were of high concern” (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004, p. 262). Ghanem (1997) points out that objects in the news media affect objects on the public agenda at the first level of agenda-setting, while attributes in the news media affect objects and attributes on the public agenda on both the first and second levels of agenda-setting (p. 4) (Figure 3). Analysis at the second level of agenda-setting suggests that when the news media presents campaign issues, messages heighten the salience of object attributes. The same logic can be extended to the communication content of political advertisements. Golan, Kiousis and McDaniel (2007) find a second-level agenda-setting effect of political advertisements.
Figure 3 The two levels of agenda-setting and hypothesized effects (Ghanem, 1997, p. 4)

The second-level of agenda-setting closely relates to the concept of framing (Ghanem, 1997). Framing is “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss & Ghanem, 1991, p. 3). The propensity of reporters to frame narratives around issue attributes illustrates one aspect of structural bias (Iyengar, 1999; Bennett, 2001; Hamilton, 2004). Framing studies evaluate how issues are presented in the news media. Iyengar (1991) points out that issue frames may be episodic or thematic. Episodic frames describe issues as discrete incidents, while thematic frames consider issues in a broader context. Economic issues may be framed around the proverbial *bottom line* (Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992). The *consequentiality* of news stories is a frame in and of itself (McManus, 1994). On any one issue, a reporter may choose to frame any number of important attributes. For an issue such as stem cell research, this may include political strategy, ethics, science, patenting, or public opinion polling, to name only a few (Graber, 2010, p. 141). The decisions to select, emphasize, exclude and elaborate on story attributes implicitly affects how stories are presented. At the
second-level of agenda-setting scrutiny, it also demonstrates how salience is transferred to the citizen consumer.

The strategy frame is of consequence here—or, the campaign as a “horse race.” Cappella and Jamieson (1997, 33) operationalizes the features of this coverage: “(1) [W]inning and losing as the central concern; (2) the language of wars, games, and competition; (3) mention of performers, critics, and audience (voters); (4) emphasis on performance, style, and perception of the candidate; and (5) great weight being given to polls and position in evaluating campaigns and candidates.” In the strategy frame, or game frame (Patterson, 1986), process matters (Graber, 2010). Several structural biases embedded within modern journalism propagate the horse race frame. Public opinion polls are central to the horse race frame (Mann & Orren, 1992) because they provide insight into who is up and who is down. They are also ubiquitous, and further reinforce the strategic narratives. Reporting is easily dramatic and personal (Bennett, 2001). Reporters also find it safer to frame campaign stories as a horse race because issue stories often entail additional research (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004).

The horse race frame may extend into coverage of substantive issues. De Vreese, Peter and Semetko (2001) conducted a cross-sectional content analysis of framing following Europe’s adoption of a single currency, the Euro. They found that European news outlets were more likely to frame an issue in the context of conflict. In the U.S., issue coverage in political campaigns follows a similar trajectory. Conflict is essential in issue reporting (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992). Conflicts over issues, therefore, are desirable because they fit the horse race narrative. Who is up and who is down in the policy fight? Simmons (1987) links issue coverage with electoral competitiveness. He finds that issue-related newspaper content increased as issue-
oriented advertising increased in competitive races. A regression analysis reveals that several factors influence issue coverage of campaigns, including race competitiveness, newspaper efficiency, and issue emphasis in political advertising. These independent variables accounted for 52 percent of the variation in newspaper issue coverage (Simmons, 1987, p. 65). This finding suggests that candidates who run issue-oriented campaigns in competitive elections are more likely to garner issue-oriented campaign coverage. Noncompetitive campaigns rarely earn news media attention (Kaniss, 1991; McManus, 1994).

The social and economic realities of journalism often dictate political coverage. When reporters do cover candidate issues, they often rely on a “just on the facts” approach (Hale, 1987, p. 105). Kaniss (1991) reaches a couple of important conclusions about issue framing in local television news. First, she points out that reporters frequently select “sexy” issue stories, instead of “snoozer” stories. In McManus’ (1995) parlance, the very selection of material is structurally biased in the way that Bennett (2001) classifies as personal and dramatic. Second, Kaniss (1991) notes that when issues are reported, coverage tends to adopt a “sexy” or “humanistic” angle that displaces otherwise important information. Within the horse race frame, the more time spent covering public opinion polling and campaign strategy, the less time spent covering substance. In her content analysis, 12 percent of local television news stories covered election campaigns, and almost all of them focused exclusively on the horse race (Kaniss, 1991). This preference is not unique. As a function of limited broadcast time, issues that require more investigation fall by the wayside when compared with sexier, more personalized and dramatized strategic topics.
What emerges as political campaign coverage is often a synthesized version of events, either from the reporter, the campaign, or some other source. Callaghan and Schnell (2001) describe reporter frames as media-constructed versions of reality. Candidates and political elites jockey for control of messages that emerge: “(a) [as] dominated by one side’s message spin, (b) an amalgamation of all the players’ views with the media acting as the final arbitrator for inclusion, or (c) a communiqué that abandons other players’ message inputs and creates a purely media generated version of the debate” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001, p. 184). Callaghan and Schnell (2001) investigated the structural aspects of coverage and compared how groups lobbied for media framing in the 1990s gun control debate. They assert that the National Rifle Association was virtually locked out of framing coverage, as many stories emerged mentioning the “Culture of Violence” narrative (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001, p. 201). Other analyses offer similar results. Gamson (1992) evaluates issue framing for the affirmative action debate. He points out that reporters’ preference for describing affirmative action policies as such reflects the success of proponents in capturing the narrative frame. Per Callaghan and Schnell’s first element, groups actively seek to define the frame. This is because the frame is often seen as a means to influence object salience on the public agenda. Reporters often allow campaigns to define the frame because candidates and the surrogates are readily available to talk about issues. In a more perfunctory approach, reporters may also construct stories out of press releases (e.g., Dalton et al., 1998). Either way, control over the frame relinquishes some journalistic control over the agenda.
Salience

Salience is integral to the framing of communication content. In the news media, the power to select, emphasize, and interpret the facts determines how narratives are composed (frames). Citizens consume those attributes of stories. When stories are written to emphasize certain facts, or describe certain events in narrative prose, the salience of the story’s issue may be greater or less than its salience before the citizen watched or read the story. This is why framing and second-level agenda setting are closely linked. In point of fact, the very presentation of stories by the media and the attributes of the story’s composition expose the public to an issue. Bernard Cohen (1963) remarks: “The world will look different to different people […] depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors, and publishers of the paper they read” [emphasis added] (p. 13).

Political ads are tactically framed to draw that map for citizen consumers. Entman (1993) points out that a frame is that which “Select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Political ads usually run 30 seconds, and are often constructed around simple messages that employ various tone, focus, attacks, and issue or image emphasis styles (all political ad variables used by this study). Accordingly, they present various issues—all of which are constructed to transfer salience onto citizen consumers. Any combination of tone, focus, attack style, and issue or image emphasis represents an appeal to make something more salient on the public agenda—be it a specific issue, the candidate’s image, or some combination of both.
Competition Among Issue Agendas

Political ads and local television news programs use framing to affect the public’s identification of issues as policy problems. The first direction of this effect—the media’s issue agenda on the public—is well explored in political communication research. In fact, it even occupies its own space in agenda-setting research (Figure 2) (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, researchers revealed that local news attention to homicide cases reduced prosecutors’ likelihood to plea bargain (Pritchard, 1986). Yanovitzky (2002) found that heightened media attention to drunk driving during the early 1980s facilitated short-term issue salience, but waning public attention during the late 1980s shifted policy solutions into the long-term. Greater attention to the federal budget deficit during the 1980s increased issue knowledge about the policy problem and gave citizens a sense of possible solutions (Weaver, 1991).

There is less literature that critically documents whether political ads affect the public agenda. Campaigns spend enormous sums of money vying to increase the salience of their candidates’ issues (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992; Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 2004; West, 1994). Several studies correlate political ad expenditures with voting outcomes (Jacobson, 1975; McClenehan, 1987; Reid & Soley, 1983; Soley, Craig & Cherif, 1988; Wattenberg, 1982; Weaver-Lariscy & Tinkham, 1996, 1987), but few reveal whether or not the public responds to issue presentations. West (2005) points out that political ads increased attention to honest government in 1974, taxes and spending in 1988, the economy and budget in 1990, unemployment in 1992, Social Security in 2000, and moral issues in 2004.

The efficacies of political ads in affecting the news media agenda is more researched, but still not clear. Roberts and McCombs (1994) analyzed intermediate
agenda-setting during the 1990 Texas gubernatorial campaign. They found a +.524 correlation between televised political advertising at time 1 and the local television news agenda at time 2. The correlation was stronger for newspapers under a similar methodological conditions (r = +.734). Roberts and McCombs revealed that local news stations focused on the negative aspects of the ads as the most salient attribute, followed by candidate personal backgrounds, and then various issue mentions. Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs and Lennon (1998) replicated these findings for the 1995 Spanish General Election. In a later study, Dalton et al.’s (1998, 475) found that the media’s role in setting the public agenda was overstated. Of the newspaper stories that mentioned economic issues, they found that one-third of stories were public-initiated, 35 percent were campaign-initiated, and 31 percent were media-initiated. Stories about the budget/finance and social programs followed a similar pattern. Dalton et al. (1998) concluded that agenda-setting is really a process where elites, the media, and campaigns converge on the issues that are most salient in a campaign. West (1994) adds that the impact of campaign-initiated ads varies depending on race competitiveness, the stage of the race, candidate interactions, and news media coverage.

**Conclusion**

In a sea of frequently negative advertising, candidates are engaged in policy dialogues that try to shift the issue agenda in their favor (West, 2005). The news media play an important role in mediating between candidate issue agendas and issues on the public agenda (Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Fowler & Ridout, 2009). Citizens trust their local television news programs to provide them with political information, and distill truth in advertising (Allen et al., 2007). Even when political advertisements are
covered on local television news, however, Fowler and Ridout (2009) found that only 13 percent evaluate the factual claims of ads and eight percent describe a policy issues. A full 35 percent illustrate a point about strategy or tactics. Remaining stories are mostly related to the campaign as a game—describing the tone of the race (nine percent), the success of the ad (five percent), or describing the ad itself (five percent).

Citizens are not passive consumers of information. In fact, an influx in political advertising in local markets increases information-seeking behaviors (Cho, 2008). More recent research even suggests that the major delineator between whether or not citizens perceive campaign ads to be negative is exposure to the news media’s strategic frames (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Ridout & Fowler, 2010). It could be argued that the strategic frame—the reporting on who is up and who is down—makes people more cynical about politics and less likely to participate (Owen, 2013).

Citizens want to know information about the campaign. According to a survey conducted by Crigler, Just and Belt (2006), 70 percent of respondents demanded more coverage of issues in political reporting. The same poll asked respondents what stories they wanted to see covered less: 40 percent wanted to see fewer stories about the candidate’s personality; 50 percent wanted fewer stories about campaign tactics; 55 percent wanted fewer stories about polls; and 55 percent wanted fewer stories about candidate families. All of these stories are characteristic of the strategic frame.

The following chapter establishes a methodology to critically evaluate the issue substance and framing construction of political advertisements and local television news political stories. Provided a media environment that is not conducive to providing citizens with issue reporting, it may be hypothesized that local television news broadcasts will not present the issues in political advertisements. Subsequent
chapters describing the findings and analysis precede a discussion of what these results mean for the literature.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This study analyzes the structure and presentation of political advertisements and local television news broadcasts. A dual content analysis methodology is employed to investigate these elements (Krippendorff, 1980; Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). “[C]ontent analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). Most studies of political advertising rely on content analyses to quantify and describe political advertising content (e.g., Benoit, 2001, 2000; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991; Kaid & Johnston, 1991; Roberts & McCombs, 1994) and studies of television news programs use the same method (e.g., de Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001; Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Kaplan & Hale, 2010, 2002, 2001; Yanich, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2009, 2004, 2001). This project was developed and funded under the direction of the Local Television News Media Project at the University of Delaware’s Center for Community Research and Service in Newark, Delaware.

Research Questions

RQ 1: Did the political coverage of local television news broadcasts present the issues shown in political advertisements in the two months before the 2012 General Election?

RQ 2: Was political advertising positive or negative in tone and were the ads constructed to focus on the candidate-positive, opponent-negative, or contrasting
aspects of the candidates in the two months before the 2012 General Election? How were tone and focus distributed by campaign and ad sponsor?

**RQ 3:** Did political advertising emphasize candidate issues or images in the two months before the 2012 General Election? What issues did ad sponsors present in the ads over the same period? Did ads attack candidate issues or images? What was the distribution of candidate issue and image emphasis by campaign and ad sponsor?

**RQ 4:** How did non-candidate committee ad sponsors differ from campaign committee ad sponsors in tone, focus, issue emphasis, and attacks in the two months before the 2012 General Election?

**RQ 5:** What frames were present in local television news political stories in the two months before the 2012 General Election?

**Sample**

The sample for this study was collected from digitally recorded local television news broadcasts in the Honolulu, Hawai‘i market. Nielsen Media Research (2011) designates this media market as the 71st largest in the U.S. with 437,790 homes. The sampling frame consisted of the nine-week period prior to Election Day 2012 from Monday, September 3 through Friday, November 2. Ninety-five news broadcasts were randomly selected, which included two broadcasts per week and five broadcasts on the day of Monday, November 5, 2012. Each half-hour program aired at six o’clock, nine o’clock, or ten o’clock p.m. HST on Honolulu’s five network affiliated stations, KITV (ABC), KGMB (CBS), KHON (FOX), KHNL (NBC), and KFVE (MyNetworkTV). Dateline Media, Inc. provided broadcast content in digital videodisc format.
Units of Analysis

The units of analysis are the individual political news stories and political advertising spots that were shown during the television newscasts. The sample yielded 1,301 news stories, excluding network promos, weather, sports, and commercial segments. The topics of stories were coded along a mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive categorization scheme that included: crime; health issues; business/economy/stocks; environment; education; public issues; soft news/human interest; city/county/state government; federal government; political campaigns/politics; consumer news; fires/accidents/disasters; international; entertainment; Afghanistan/Iraq hard news; Afghanistan/Iraq soft news; and War on Terrorism. In total, the sample included 139 political news stories and 584 political advertisements that serve as the foundational units of analysis in this study.

Research Design

Studies of local television news and political advertisements often use purposive samples to gather content (Brazeal & Benoit, 2001; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Vavreck, 2001; West, 1994). As such, a case study research design was used to analyze television content in one election during one election year. Yin (1994, 13) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” Case studies enable researchers to evaluate contextual variables in one particularized instance. Unlike survey research,

7 All political advertisements that were presented in our sample are included as units of analysis. These included mayoral, Senatorial, Congressional, and local political ads.
however, the case study design does not randomly select cases to make statistical inferences. Rather, it generalizes cases to *theoretical* propositions (Yin, 1994). The notion that individual cases are not generalizable, and thus do not contribute to scientific knowledge, is a common misunderstanding of the case study research method (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Yin (1993) points out that the selection of the case is thus critical to avoid issues with external validity.

It is thus important to delineate the selection of this case in time and space. The nine-week period prior to Election Day 2012 permits the study of local news content during the most expensive U.S. presidential campaign in history (Baum, 2012; Toner & Trainer, 2013; Washington Post/Kantar Media, 2012). The Honolulu, Hawai‘i media market was selected because of the active SSA complaint before the FCC. Presently, Media Council Hawai‘i’s challenge to ownership arrangements is the only such challenge on behalf of a community organization nationwide (Yanich, 2013, 2011). If the FCC’s quadrennial review of the multiple ownership rules finds SSAs to be permissible, media conglomerates may achieve greater economies of scale in medium-sized markets. This action may have serious implications on news content. A case study design describes what relationships exist between political advertising and news content. Since generalizability is applied to theoretical propositions alone, it also may assist in generalizing relationships to other markets if the Commission does rule in favor of these multiple ownership arrangements.

The internal validity of case studies is another important methodological consideration. In this study, RQ 1 asks whether or not the issues that are covered on local television news programs are the same as those raised in political advertisements. If this were an *explanatory* case study, an inference would be made that local
television news issue coverage changes as a result of political advertisements. This approach would require justifying that variable x causes a change in variable y, and that the change in y was not, in fact, caused by some other spurious variable z (Yin, 1994). There is no way to make such an inference under this design. Instead, another methodological approach, like a survey that asked news directors how they select stories, might explain such a relationship. This study’s research questions describe and explain relationships within communication content. Note again that the units of analysis are political news stories and political ads. The coding schemes employed by this study were modified from instruments found in the literature and were informed by the antecedent cultural environment of political communication content (Riffle, Lacy & Fico, 2005). These instruments have high internal validity in conceptualizing and operationalizing research categories. Under an agenda-setting framework, content analysis can compare the media and political advertising agendas (e.g., Fowler & Ridout, 2009; Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998; Roberts & McCombs, 1994), but future explanatory or media effects research would be needed to determine how or why news content is selected, or what effects content has on viewers (Riffle, Lacy & Fico, 2005).

**Local TV News Coding Instrument**

A team of four research assistants applied a coding instrument to our sample of local television news broadcasts. News story categories were constructed to include: in and out of market story designation; the chronological position of the story within the full broadcast; the block in which the story appeared; and the story’s presentation mode (Yanich, 2011) (Appendix A). Following coder training, a test of inter-coder reliability revealed an average Cohen’s Kappa coefficient of 0.71 for these variables.
This coding instrument was used to initially identify political advertisements and political news stories for later recoding.

**Political Advertising Coding Instrument**

A supplemental coding instrument was developed to further analyze the sample’s 584 political advertisements and answer more in-depth research questions regarding specific ad content. This instrument was modified from Kaid and Johnston (2001) to include categories that evaluate the issue-emphasis, tone, focus, and attack types employed in political ads (Appendix B, Codebook 1). Kaid and Johnston’s instrument has been replicated in the literature and assures measures of better reliability, internal validity, and construct validity than an instrument designed uniquely for this study. These instrument items will be used to answer RQs 2, 3, and 4. In order to answer RQ 1, the supplemental recording instrument also included a matrix of possible political issues that were presented in the political ads and political news stories. Some adjustments were made to the matrix of issue categories from Kaid and Johnston’s original coding scheme to fit the unique circumstances of this particular case. For instance, categories for “energy,” “local issue,” and “not applicable” were added.

The coding instrument was applied to the political ads by one trained coder. Subsequently, 100 ads were randomly selected for blind recoding by a second experienced coder. A test of inter-coder reliability then examined agreement across pairs. Table 1 reveals the findings of this investigation. Results indicate agreement on major content variables ranging from a Cohen’s Kappa coefficient of .72 to perfect agreement between coders (1.0). The average Cohen’s Kappa score for all variables was .93. Full inter-coder reliability results can be found in Appendix C.
Table 1  Selected inter-coder reliability results for key variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Attack 1</th>
<th>Attack 2</th>
<th>Attack 3</th>
<th>Attack 4</th>
<th>Attack 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohen’s Kappa</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>.823</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Agree</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, a second supplemental coding instrument was employed to examine the content of 139 political news stories (Appendix B, Codebook 2). This instrument evaluates whether or not political coverage focuses on issues, investigates the strategic and conflict frames of stories, and categorizes issues mentions in political stories. The supplemental coding instrument answers RQs 1 and 5. Items to identify frames present were developed specifically for this study.

**Operational Definitions**

Data was conceptualized and operationalized using several standard definitions found in the literature and discussed here at length in Chapter 2’s review of the literature. As applied, there are several definitions that may require further elaboration or delineation.

**Issues and Images**

Issue ads contain content that appeal to policy concerns (Kaid & Sanders, 1978; Patterson & McClure, 1976). Kaid and Johnston (2001) further operationalize these policy appeals as being vague or specific in nature. Image ads relate to candidate qualities or characteristics (Kaid & Johnston, 1991). These include appeals to personal

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8 See Appendix B, Codebook 1 for the supplemental coding instrument and Appendix C for all inter-coder reliability results.
characteristics such as honestly or integrity, toughness or strength, or competency, to name only a few (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 130).

Issue Emphasis

A simple dichotomous variable was constructed from Kaid and Johnston’s (1991) instrument that assessed whether the ads emphasized issue content or image content. In order to ensure exclusivity and exhaustiveness in the coding instrument, fields for “both” and “neither” were added to Kaid and Johnston’s coding scheme. The variable “emphasis” considers the simple preponderance of the ad content that features issue or image content in more than 50 percent of the ad, issue or image content that is exactly equal, or featuring no issue or image content at all.

Tone, Focus, and Attack Categories

RQ3 asks if political ads were negative, and if so, whether or not they attacked opposing candidates’ issues or images. Three metrics were constructed to answer this question. First, the coding instrument investigated whether or not the holistic tone of the ad was positive or negative. Second, the focus of the ad was determined to account for the direction of the positive, negative, or combined (contrast) association. This item required coders to identify whether or not the ad was candidate-positive-focused, opponent-negative focused, or a contrast ad featuring both.

Finally, several variables examined the types of attacks used in negative ads. Attack ads generally present information that is designed to undermine an opponent’s character or issue perception (Pinkleton, 1997). As such, attack categories included issue-related attacks, such as attacks on the opposing candidates’ issue stands or consistency, and past performance in office, or more image-related attacks, such as
personal characteristics, group affiliations, and/or the opposing candidates’ background and qualifications. These helped determine the substance of negative attacks as attacking opponent issues, images, both, or none.

There are important qualitative distinctions between the variables for ad tone and focus. Since contrast ads feature both positive and negative content, they were almost universally coded as “negative” when required by a simple dichotomous variable. However, some ads may be coded “opponent-negative focused,” but not coded as “negative” in tone. This is because the opponent-negative classification meets the necessary, but not sufficient condition of ad negativity. Although an ad may be critical of an opponent, or an opponent’s campaign, criticism alone does not necessarily make the ad negative in tone. For an opponent-focused negative ad to be coded “negative,” it must be so critical of some attribute of an opponent, or opponent’s campaign to be sufficiently negative.

Ad Sponsor Types

RQ 4 investigates how non-candidate committee ads are distinguished by tone, focus, and attacks when compared with candidate committees. “Independent expenditure committees” (often referred to as “Super PACs”) are groups that do not coordinate with an official candidate committee and expressly advocate for the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate. These groups are distinct from “candidate committees,” which officially represent the candidate (Federal Elections Commission, 2013). Independent expenditure committees and candidate committees are narrow and specific legal classifications in campaign finance law. Where applicable, “non-candidate committee” is used to more generally refer to any entity that is not an official candidate committee ad sponsor. This definition encompasses
independent expenditure committees, party organizations, and other entities, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that engaged in electioneering communications, most broadly (State of Hawai‘i, 2013).

Early and Late Campaign Periods

The “early campaign period” is defined as the five weeks between Monday, September 3 and Thursday, October 4, 2012. The “late campaign period” is defined as the four weeks (one month) between Friday, October 5 and Tuesday, November 5, 2012.

Issue-focus

The focus of political news stories were coded along a simple dichotomous variable to indicate whether or not the preponderance of the story described an issue (1), or not (0).

Strategic Frame

The strategic frame refers to campaign as competition. These qualities are operationalized to include: winning and losing; the language of wars, games, and competitions; mentions of voters; the emphasis on candidate presentation or style; and/or public opinion polling (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 33).

Conflict Frame

The conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups [or] institutions (Patterson & McClure, 1976; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).
Political Advertisements

Political ads were evenly distributed across Hawai’i’s five local television news stations. Overall, 19 percent of ads appeared on KFVE (MyNetworkTV), 22 percent on KGMB (CBS), 23 percent on KHNL (NBC), 17 percent on KHON (FOX), and 20 percent on KITV (ABC). Sixty-three percent of ads appeared at nine o’clock p.m. or ten o’clock p.m. while 37 percent appeared at six o’clock p.m. As expected, there were twice as many ads in the late election period than the early election period. Ads varied significantly by campaign and ad sponsor. The Senate campaign between Democrat Mazie Hirono and Republican Linda Lingle attracted more than half of all political ads (51 percent). Honolulu mayoral candidates Kirk Caldwell and Ben Cayetano (32 percent), Congressional candidates Charles Djou and Colleen Hanabusa (16 percent) and other local candidates (one percent) presented the remaining ads.

Official candidate committees sponsored most of the ads (59 percent), however, independent expenditure-sponsored ads also accounted for a significant proportion of overall ad share (37 percent). Candidate committees presented two-thirds of ads in the Senate race while independent groups sponsored three-quarters of ads in the mayor’s race. In addition, five percent of ads were sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which filed its activities under “electioneering communications” with the Federal Elections Commission. The Democratic Party of Hawai’i sponsored four ads in our sample. Candidate committees presented 36 unique
ads, while non-candidate committees presented 21 ads. Friends of Mazie Hirono was the largest single ad sponsor that broadcast one-fifth of all political ads on television. The Linda Lingle Senate Committee was the second largest and it broadcast 14 percent of all ads. The largest non-candidate committee sponsors were pro-Caldwell Workers for a Better Hawaii (12 percent of all ads) and anti-Cayetano/pro-Caldwell Pacific Resource Partnership PAC (ten percent of all ads).

Table 2 reveals a full list of candidate committee ad sponsors and ad share. In our sample, Friends of Mazie Hirono presented seven unique ad spots that appeared a total of 114 times. Lingle’s candidate committee, the Linda Lingle Senate Committee, presented four unique ad spots that appeared 82 times. Table 2 also reveals the distribution of non-candidate committee ads and ad share. In the Honolulu mayor’s race, independent expenditure ad sponsors were integral to the promotion of Kirk Caldwell’s candidacy. Pro-Caldwell non-candidate committee Workers for a Better Hawaii and pro-Caldwell/anti-Cayetano Pacific Resource Partnership PAC presented a total of ten unique ads 123 times. Those groups disseminated more than one-fifth of the ads on television (21 percent). Caldwell’s official groups, Caldwell for Mayor and Friends of Kirk Caldwell, presented five unique ads 25 times that accounted for five percent of all ads. For the purpose of further analyses, these groups have been consolidated into the “Caldwell for Mayor” ad sponsor group. In the Senate race, this trend was not observed; the number of non-candidate committee groups advertising on television was much higher than the mayor’s race, but they did not broadcast nearly as many ads. There were eight non-candidate committee Senate groups that broadcast 13 percent of all ads. In comparison, the mayor’s race featured three non-candidate committee advertisers that presented a quarter of the advertisements on television.
Table 2  Ad Share by Sponsor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Sponsor</th>
<th>Unique Ads</th>
<th>Overall %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Committees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Mazie Hirono</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Lingle Senate Committee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djou for Hawaii</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caldwell for Mayor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayetano for Mayor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaneshiro for Prosecutor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Kirk Caldwell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apoliona for OHA 2012</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Candidate Committees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers for a Better Hawaii</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Resource Partnership PAC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 50 International Union of Painters and Allied Trades</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaveOurHonolulu.com</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Families for Hawaii</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund for Freedom Committee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Vote!</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFSCME People</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Hawaii</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority PAC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tone (RQ 2)

RQ 2 asks whether or not the tone of political ads was positive or negative by ad sponsor. In the main, ads were more negative (56 percent) than positive (44 percent). Congressional and local ads were entirely positive. Ads in the Senate race were 77 percent negative ($X^2 (1, N = 584) = 114.421, p < .000$). Ads in the mayor’s race were 51 percent negative, although this proportion was not statistically significant.
Figure 4 reveals the distribution of ad tone by ad sponsor type. In the Senate campaign, Hirono’s candidate committee, Friends of Mazie Hirono, presented a disproportionately large number of negative ads compared to positive ads. Pro-Hirono political action groups and the Democratic Party of Hawai’i also presented a large number of negative ads and zero positive ads. Lingle’s Senate committee presented a more even distribution of negative and positive ads with 42 negative ads and 40 positive ads. Hirono and pro-Hirono ads were 44 percent more numerous than Lingle or pro-Lingle group ads on television.

Figure 4 also shows the distribution of ad tone by ad sponsor in the mayor’s race. Candidate committees for Caldwell and Cayetano each presented a roughly even distribution of positive and negative ads. Pro-Caldwell and anti-Cayetano political action committees, however, presented a significantly larger number of ads over Cayetano’s candidate committee or the pro-Cayetano PAC, SaveOurHonolulu.com. Caldwell and pro-Caldwell groups were 75 percent more numerous than Cayetano’s candidate committee or SaveOurHonolulu.com’s ads. In the mayor’s race, pro-Caldwell or anti-Cayetano groups presented a disproportionately large number of ads that far eclipsed Caldwell and Cayetano candidate committee ads.
Focus (RQ 2)

Forty-three percent of the ads were candidate-positive focused, more than one-third were opponent-negative focused (35 percent), and over one-fifth (21 percent) were contrast ads that featured positive and negative content. The overall focus of ads in the Senate race was 23 percent candidate-positive, 45 percent opponent-negative, and nearly one-third contrast (32 percent) \( (X^2 \ (6, \ N = 584) = 185.845, \ p < .000) \). The overall focus of ads in the mayor’s race was 44 percent candidate-positive, 35 percent opponent-negative, and a quarter was contrast ads. The entrance of non-candidate
committees late into the General Election campaign propelled an increase in opponent-negative ads closer to Election Day.

Table 3 presents the summary of findings by ad negativity and focus. It also omits Congressional and local campaigns that did not feature negative ad content since these contests featured exclusively positive ad content. Following this omission, the proportion of candidate-positive focused ads and opponent-negative focused ads decreases to 31 percent and 26 percent, respectively, while the proportion of contrast ads increases to 43 percent. The overall proportion of negative ads increases to 67 percent ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 161.203, p < .000$). There were no significant differences in the proportions of negative campaign ads in either the Senate or mayoral campaigns by campaign period.
Table 3  Ad Tone and Focus by Sponsor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Sponsor</th>
<th>Negative (%)</th>
<th>Candidate-positive (%)</th>
<th>Contrast (%)</th>
<th>Opponent-negative (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hirono</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Mazie Hirono</td>
<td>89*</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>32*</td>
<td>57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 50 International Union of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters and Allied Trades</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Families for Hawaii</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund for Freedom Committee</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Vote!</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFSCME People</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Hawaii Majority</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Lingle Senate Committee</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49*</td>
<td>51*</td>
<td>0.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senate Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>77*</td>
<td>23*</td>
<td>32*</td>
<td>45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers for a Better Hawaii PAC</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>85*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Resource Partnership PAC</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell for Mayor</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Kirk Caldwell</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayetano</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayetano for Mayor</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58*</td>
<td>37*</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaveOurHonolulu.com</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mayor Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>67*</td>
<td>31*</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>43*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p ≤ .05

Emphasis (RQ 3)

RQ 3 asks whether or not ads emphasized issues or images. Fifty-nine percent of ads emphasized issues, 29 percent emphasized images, and 12 percent emphasized both issues and images equally ($\chi^2 (38, N = 584) = 285.897, p < .000$). Seventy-two percent of all ads emphasized issues greater than or equal to image emphasis. Issue emphasis increased in the month before Election Day by 16 percent while the
proportion of image ads dropped seven percent ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 15.585, p < .000$).

Table 4 presents the issue emphasis by campaign and ad sponsor.

Table 4  Ad Sponsors by Issue Emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Sponsor</th>
<th>Campaign Share (%)</th>
<th>Issues (%)</th>
<th>Images (%)</th>
<th>Both (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Mazie Hirono</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td>53*</td>
<td>17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Lingle Senate Committee</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>66*</td>
<td>34*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 50 International Union of Painters and Allied Trades</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Families for Hawaii</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund for Freedom Committee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Vote!</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFSCME People</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Hawaii</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority PAC</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senate Ad Sponsors’ Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54*</td>
<td>35*</td>
<td>11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers for a Better Hawaii</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>61*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Resource Partnership PAC</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell for Mayor</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayetano for Mayor</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>84*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaveOurHonolulu.com</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Kirk Caldwell</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mayoral Ad Sponsors’ Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djou for Hawaii</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50*</td>
<td>50*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanabusa for Hawaii</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71*</td>
<td>29*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Congressional Ad Sponsors’ Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59*</td>
<td>41*</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaneshiro for Prosecutor</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apoliona for OHA 2012</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Ad Sponsors’ Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Ad Sponsors’ Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59*</td>
<td>29*</td>
<td>12*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = $p \leq .05$
Issue emphasized ads were more negative than positive. Fifty-eight percent of ads that emphasize candidate issues were negative in tone compared to 46 percent of ads that emphasized candidate images, and 64 percent of ads that emphasized both issues and images ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 9.560, p = .008$). This means that when issues were mentioned, they were often presented negatively. Although 39 percent of issue emphasized ads were candidate-positive focused, 37 percent were opponent-negative, and 24 percent were contrast ads, which means that issues were emphasized with negative ad content 61 percent of ads (opponent-focused and contrast ad combined). In point of comparison, image emphasized ads were 54 percent candidate-positive focused, 27 percent opponent-negative focused, and 18 percent contrast ads ($X^2 (4, N = 584) = 16.047, p = .003$).

**Senate Race Issue Emphasis**

More than half of Senate ads emphasized issues (54 percent), more than one-third (35 percent) emphasized images, and 11 percent emphasized both ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 11.647, p < .003$). The proportion of issue-emphasized ads did not increase as the election approached. Fifty-four percent of all ads in the Senate race emphasized issues early and late. The proportion of image emphasized ads, meanwhile, fell from 40 percent to 31 percent. In its place, the proportion of ads emphasizing both issues and images increased nine percent.

**Mayor’s Race Issue Emphasis**

More than two-thirds of Honolulu mayor ads emphasized issues (67 percent) compared with lower proportions of ads that emphasized images (13 percent) or both issues and images equally (20 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 39.002, p < .000$).
was significant variance in issue emphasis between the early and the late campaign periods. Early in the campaign, 15 percent of mayoral ads emphasized issues while 77 percent of ads emphasized both issues and images ($X^2 (4, N = 584) = 95.693, p < .000$). Late in the mayoral campaign, ad emphasis shifted from both issues and images to strictly issue ad emphasis. The proportion of issue ads soared to 79 percent while the proportion of issue and image ads fell precipitously to seven percent, $X^2 (6, N = 584) = 43.294, p < .000$.

**Congressional Race Issue Emphasis**

The race for Hawai’i’s 1st Congressional District did not feature non-candidate committee ad sponsors. Congressional candidate committees collectively emphasized more issues (59 percent) than images (41 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 20.354, p < .000$). Djou for Hawaii emphasized issues and images equally, accounting for 50 percent of ads emphasizing each ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 17.939, p < .000$). Early in the campaign, Djou emphasized issues (60 percent) more than images (40 percent), but shifted emphasis late from issues (33 percent) to images (56 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 17.939, p < .000$). Hanabusa for Hawaii emphasized more issues (70 percent) than images (30 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 6.429, p = .040$). Early in the campaign, her candidate committee presented ads that only emphasized issues, but late in the campaign traded some issue ads for image ads (32 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 20.354, p < .000$).
Issues Presented (RQ 3)

Table 5 reveals the distribution of issues presented by campaign. Economic concerns were the most frequently presented issue in the Senate race ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 86.283, p < .000$) and the second most frequently presented issue in the Congressional race. Alternatively, elderly issues were the most frequently shown issue in the Congressional race (shown in 47 percent of ads) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 118.290, p < .000$), but appeared in fewer Senate ads (nine percent), $X^2 (2, N = 584) = 8.215, p = .004$. Between both the Senate and Congressional races, concerns over the economy and education were commonly among the top three most presented issues in the ads. Note that the mayoral ads presented different issues. Local topics, such as the Honolulu rail project, were present in almost seven out of ten ads (69 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 276.911, p < .000$), but in only five percent of Senate ads ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 135.927, p < .000$) and none of the Congressional ads ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 38.513, p < .000$).
### Table 5  Issues Presented by Campaign Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Presentation</th>
<th>Senatorial</th>
<th>Congressional</th>
<th>Mayoral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic concerns</td>
<td>48*</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>34*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military or defense spending</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>47*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for children’s issues</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local issues</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>69*</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International or foreign affairs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25*</td>
<td>21*</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p ≤ .05

Excludes local elections, which accounted for less than one percent of all ads.
Issue presentation total is greater than 100 because multiple issues could be present in each ad.

Table 6 shows the issue priorities of individual ad sponsors. In the Senate race, non-candidate committee ad sponsors presented between one and four issues in 100 percent of ads. All of the District 50 International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, Fund for Freedom, Majority PAC, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce ads presented economic concerns, while all of the Working Families for Hawaii, Women Vote!, AFSCME People, and Democratic Party of Hawaii ads presented education. Senate candidate committee sponsors were more diffuse in issue presentation. Friends of Mazie Hirono did not present any issue in over half of her ads (53 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 104.035, p < .000$) and presented economic concerns and taxes in one-third of ads, respectively. The Linda Lingle Senate Committee presented economic concerns in about half of her ads (49 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 29.322, p < .000$) and education in 42 percent of ads ($X^2 (2, N = 584) = 11.947, p = .001$).
In the Congressional race, Djou for Hawaii presented economic issues in exactly one-half of ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 23.281, p < .000)\) and elderly issues and childrens’ issues in 44 percent of ads, respectively, (elderly issues: \(X^2(2, N = 584) = 51.926, p < .000\)) (childrens’ issues: \(X^2(2, N = 584) = 100.627, p < .000\)). Hanabusa for Hawaii presented elderly issues in 51 percent of ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 56.860, p < .000)\) and education in 49 percent of ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 26.345, p < .000)\). Hanbusa’s campaign also presented other issues in about 49 percent of ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 64.643, p < .000)\).

At varying degrees, all of the mayoral race ad sponsors presented local issues most frequently. Caldwell for Mayor presented local issues in almost three-quarters of ads (74 percent) \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 27.736, p < .000)\) compared with Cayetano for Mayor that presented local issues in 58 percent of ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 7.886, p = .005)\). These candidate committees also presented budgetary issues (coded as “deficit”) in 48 and 42 percent of ads, respectively, (Caldwell: \(X^2(2, N = 584) = 22.824, p < .000\)) (Cayetano: \(X^2(2, N = 584) = 10.503, p = .001\)). The non-candidate committees also emphasized local issues ranging from 100 percent of SaveOurHonolulu.com ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 54.713, p < .000)\) to 45 percent of Pacific Resource Partnership ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 12.195, p < .000)\). Crime was also an important issue, present in 46 percent of Pacific Resource Partnership ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 104.732, p < .000)\), 30 percent of Workers for a Better Hawaii ads \((X^2(2, N = 584) = 38.587, p < .000)\), and 11 percent of Caldwell for Mayor ads.
### Table 6  Issues Presented by Ad Sponsor Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economic concerns</th>
<th>Local issues</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Deficit</th>
<th>Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)</th>
<th>Taxes</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Concern for children’s issues</th>
<th>International or foreign affairs</th>
<th>Military or defense spending</th>
<th>Energy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENATE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Mazie Hirono</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>19*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 50 Int’l Union</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
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* = p ≤ .05
Attacks (RQ 3)

RQ 3 also investigates whether issues or images were attacked in campaign ads. Half of all ads (51 percent) featured at least one attack, including more than two-thirds of all Senate ads (68 percent) and half of all mayoral ads (51 percent). Table 7 displays the distribution of attacks employed by Senate and mayoral campaign ads. Issue-related attacks were more frequent than image-related attacks. Forty-four percent of all Senate and mayoral ads attacked an opposing candidate’s issue stands or issue consistency ($X^2 (1, N = 584) = 68.256, p < .000$) and 37 percent attacked an opposing candidates’ past performance ($X^2 (1, N = 584) = 54.193, p < .000$). Conversely, only 15 percent of attacks targeted group associations ($X^2 (1, N = 584) = 17.237, p < .000$), eight percent targeted personal characteristics ($X^2 (1, N = 584) = 8.398, p = .004$), and four percent targeted background or qualifications, $X^2 (1, N = 584) = 4.501, p = .034$. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Sponsor</th>
<th>Issue Stands/Consistency (%)</th>
<th>Past Performance (%)</th>
<th>Group Associations (%)</th>
<th>Background/Qualifications (%)</th>
<th>Personal Characteristics (%)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mayor Subtotal</strong></td>
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<td><strong>42</strong>*</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong>*</td>
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</table>

* = p ≤ .05
**Senate Race Attacks**

Over half of ads in the Senate campaign attacked opponents’ issue stands or consistency (54 percent) \( \chi^2 (1, N = 584) = 79.338, p < .000 \). Several ads also attacked past performance (35 percent) \( \chi^2 (1, N = 584) = 3.841, p = .050 \), group associations (25 percent) \( \chi^2 (1, N = 584) = 80.620, p < .000 \), and background or qualifications (six percent) \( \chi^2 (1, N = 584) = 7.895, p = .005 \). Table 8 documents the overall rise in issue attacks late in the Senate campaign. The proportion of issue stand and consistency attacks increased 12 percent from 47 percent early in the campaign \( \chi^2 (1, N = 584) = 67.840, p < .000 \) to 59 percent late in the campaign \( \chi^2 (1, N = 584) = 57.595, p < .000 \). Over the same period, attacks on past performance fell ten percent from 41 percent early in the campaign \( \chi^2 (1, N = 186) = 13.150, p < .000 \) to 30 percent late in the campaign. Attacks on group associations also fell nine percent from 30 percent early in the campaign \( \chi^2 (1, N = 186) = 21.640, p < .000 \) to 21 percent late in the campaign \( \chi^2 (1, N = 398) = 51.999, p < .000 \).

Table 8  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Period</th>
<th>Issue Stands/Consistency</th>
<th>Past Performance</th>
<th>Group Associations</th>
<th>Background/Qualifications</th>
<th>Personal Characteristics</th>
<th>Negative (%)</th>
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<td>78*</td>
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<td>Late campaign period</td>
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<td>76*</td>
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<td>-10</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate Average (%)</td>
<td>54*</td>
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<td>25*</td>
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<td>77*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* = p ≤ .05

Sixty-two percent of Hirono’s ads were laden with attacks on Lingle’s group associations, namely her status as a Republican and affiliation with Mitt Romney’s
presidential campaign \( (X^2 (1, N = 584) = 309.729, p < .000) \). Over half of Lingle’s ads (51 percent) attacked Hirono’s issue stands and consistency \( (X^2 (1, N = 584) = 9.412, p = .002) \). Many Lingle ads also attacked Hirono’s past performance as a Congresswoman (33 percent), although this difference was not statistically significant.

**Mayor’s Race Attacks**

The mayor’s race featured more of an eclectic mix of issue and image-based attacks. Forty-two percent of the ads attacked an opponent’s group associations \( (X^2 (1, N = 584) = 39.298, p < .000) \), 28 percent attacked an opponent’s issue stands/consistency \( (X^2 (1, N = 584) = 8.257, p = .004) \), and one-fifth of ads attacked an opponent’s personal characteristics \( (X^2 (1, N = 584) = 86.288, p < .000) \). In contrast to the Senate campaign, the number of negative ads increased dramatically (+ 33 percent) in the four weeks prior to Election Day. Attacks on candidate past performance increased by 44 percent over this period \( (X^2 (1, N = 398) = 27.676, p < .000) \) (Table 9). Attacks on candidate issue stands or consistency also increased, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Many anti-Cayetano ads tied the former Hawai’i Governor’s image to issue-based appeals, such as his alleged corruption as Governor (past performance) and lack of trustworthiness. Friends of Kirk Caldwell attacked on Cayetano’s issue stands and consistency, but these were not statistically significant. Cayetano, alternatively, attacked Caldwell’s background and qualifications in just over one-fifth of ads (21 percent) \( (X^2 (1, N = 584) = 17.264, p < .000) \). Several of Cayetano’s attacks were also not statistically significant. These included attacks on Caldwell’s proposed Honolulu rail project (issue stands and consistency in 26 percent of ads), past performance (21 percent of ads), and personal characteristics (16 percent of ads).
Table 9  Mayoral Attacks by Campaign Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Period</th>
<th>Issue Stands/Consistency</th>
<th>Past Performance</th>
<th>Group Associations</th>
<th>Background/Qualifications</th>
<th>Personal Characteristics</th>
<th>Negative (%)</th>
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<td>--</td>
<td>24*</td>
<td>24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late campaign period</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (%) (±)</td>
<td>+34</td>
<td>+45</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor Average (%)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p ≤ .05

Non-candidate Committee Ad Sponsors (RQ 4)

RQ 4 asks how the tone, focus, issue emphasis, attacks, and issues presented in non-candidate committee ads are different from candidate committee ads. The crux of this research question, therefore, depends on whether there are statistical differences between non-candidate committee ads and candidate committee by these variables. Candidate committees that represented 59 percent of our sample sponsored 342 political ads. The remaining 242 ads (41 percent) were sponsored by independent expenditure groups (37 percent), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (four percent), and the Democratic Party of Hawaii (one percent). In this analysis, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is included in the non-candidate committee category because the organization operated as a political action committee called the “U.S. Chamber PAC” (Center for Responsive Politics, 2013b).

Figure 5 graphically reveals how the frequency of non-candidate committee ads and candidate committee ads gradually increased over time. The number of non-candidate committee ad sponsors surpassed candidate committee ads in late September and early October, but candidate committee ads were more numerous on most days.
As the election approached, the total number of candidate committee ads increased precipitously while the number of non-candidate committee ads increased more gradually.

![Frequency of Candidate Committee Ads by Sponsor Type](chart)

**Figure 5**  Frequency of Candidate Committee Ads by Sponsor Type

**Tone**

Non-candidate committee ads were more negative (66 percent) than candidate committee ads (48 percent) and this difference exacerbated with time ($X^2$ (1, N = 580) = 17.563, $p < .000$). The proportion of negative candidate committee ads fell from 64 percent to 41 percent negative in the final month of the campaign. Meanwhile, the proportion of negative non-candidate committee ads increased from 50 percent to 73 percent (+ 23 percent). These differences were statistically different from candidate committees in the Senate race, but not in the mayoral race.

Non-candidate committee ad sponsors in the Senate race were more negative (85 percent) than candidate committees (73 percent) ($X^2$ (1, N = 293) = 4.880, $p =...
As Election Day approached, the proportion of negative ads grew from 67 percent ($X^2 (1, N = 128) = 5.331, p = .021$) to 100 percent ($X^2 (1, N = 165) = 24.297, p < .000$). Senate candidate committee ads were disproportionately negative early, but became slightly less negative late in the campaign. Hirono’s candidate committee averaged 89 percent ad negativity overall, but fell to 80 percent ad negativity in the month before Election Day ($X^2 (1, N = 398) = 21.604, p < .000$). In comparison, all six pro-Hirono non-candidate committees, accounting for 12 percent of all political ads, were totally and unequivocally negative. The Linda Lingle Senate Committee was more negative (51 percent) than positive, but was still more negative than the pro-Lingle U.S. Chamber of Commerce (40 percent ad negativity).

The ad negativity of non-candidate committee and candidate committee ad sponsors in the mayor’s race was not statistically different. Fifty-three percent of non-candidate committee ads were negative compared with 46 percent of candidate committee ads. There was also no statistical difference in the proportion of negative ads by non-candidate committees over time. All of pro-Caldwell Pacific Resource Partnership PAC’s ads were negative and all anti-Caldwell SaveOurHonolulu.com ads were also negative.

**Focus**

Candidate committees presented more positive ads (52 percent) and contrast ads (25 percent) and fewer opponent-negative ads (23 percent) than non-candidate committees. Non-candidate committees presented fewer contrast ads (18 percent) and candidate-positive focused ads (30 percent), and more opponent-focused ads (52 percent) ($X^2 (1, N = 580) = 52.519, p < .000$). Figure 6 graphically displays the focus of candidate committee sponsorship over time. Except for early in the campaign,
candidate committees proportionally presented more candidate-positive focused ads and fewer opponent-negative focused ads. The proportion of contrast ads peaked in early September and again in mid-October. Candidate committee sponsored contrast ads steadily decreased to zero by Election Day while the proportion of positive-focused ads sharply increased.

Figure 6  Focus by Candidate Committee Sponsor

Figure 7 graphically shows the focus of non-candidate committee ad sponsorship over time. The proportion of opponent-negative focused ads generally increased through mid-October, but then fell sharply in late-October. Non-candidate committee-sponsored positive ads were predominately used in early September, gradually fell through late October, and then increased slightly through Election Day. In place of negative ads, non-candidate committee sponsors presented contrast ads at the end of the campaign. Note that the first non-candidate committee-sponsored ad does not appear until mid-September. Non-candidate committee contrast ads were
largely absent from the campaign except for a slight peak in late September and early October, and a significant increase in late October. In the weeks leading up to Election Day, non-candidate committee sponsored contrast ads were used more frequently than opponent-negative or candidate-positive ads.

![Graph showing focus by non-candidate committee sponsor]

Figure 7  Focus by Non-Candidate Committee Sponsor

More than two-thirds of the non-candidate committee sponsored ads in the Senate race were opponent-negative focused (67 percent) compared with 17 percent that were contrast ads and 16 percent that were candidate-positive focused. Lingle and Hirono’s candidate committees presented a more equal distribution of ads by focus. Forty percent of ads were contrast ads, one-third were opponent-negative focused, and more than a quarter were candidate-positive focused (27 percent) ($X^2 (2, N = 293) = 30.427, p < .000$). The proportion of non-candidate committee sponsored opponent-negative focused ads remained nearly unchanged between election periods, accounting
for more than two-thirds (67 percent) of non-candidate committee sponsored ads during each time frame. In the mayor’s race, there was no statistical difference between non-candidate committee ad sponsors and candidate committees by focus. There was also no statistical difference between non-candidate committee sponsors and candidate committees over election period.

**Issue Emphasis**

Non-candidate committee ad sponsors were more likely to emphasize issues than candidate committees. Sixty-eight percent of all non-candidate committee sponsored ads emphasized issues compared to 54 percent of all candidate committee-sponsored ads. Non-candidate committee ad sponsors presented less image emphasized ads (13 percent) and slightly more ads presenting images with issues (19 percent). Candidate committees emphasized images in 39 percent of ads, and both issues and images in just seven percent of ads ($X^2 (2, N = 580) = 53.012, p < .000$).

Figures 8 and 9 reveal the issue emphasis of non-candidate committee ad sponsors and candidate committees over time. Since RQ 4 asks whether or not non-candidate committee sponsors present *issues*, ads that emphasize *both* issues and images have been included with issue ads. This means that the preponderance of the issue emphasis in these ads is greater than or equal to the emphasis on images ($x \geq 50$ percent issue emphasis). The emphasis on images oscillates with some variation from images in early September to two peaks of slightly proportionate image emphasis in early and late October. Besides these periods, ads primarily emphasize issues throughout the campaign and increase closer to Election Day.
Figure 8  Issue Emphasis by Candidate Committee Sponsored ads

Figure 9 presents the issue emphasis of non-candidate committee sponsors the General Election period. Non-candidate committee ad sponsors disproportionately emphasized issues in 70 to 100 percent of ads. The proportion of issue emphasized ads is consistently strong throughout the campaign, but slightly decreases just prior to Election Day. Note how the increase in non-candidate committee sponsored image ads at the end of the campaign is contemporaneous with a decline in candidate committee image ads over the same period.
Figure 9  
Issue Emphasis by Non-Candidate Committee Sponsored Ads

Senate Non-candidate Issue Emphasis

In the Senate race, non-candidate committee ad sponsors emphasized issues in a disproportionate number of ads. Less than three-quarters of independent-sponsored ads (74 percent) emphasized issues compared with 16 percent that emphasized images, and ten percent that emphasized both issues and images. Comparatively, 45 percent of Senate candidate committee ads emphasized issues, 45 percent emphasized images, and ten percent emphasized both issues and images ($X^2(2, N = 293) = 26.213, p < .000$).

Hirono’s candidate committee bucked the overall trend in issue emphasis. Her group emphasized images in the largest proportion of ads (53 percent) instead of issues (30 percent). As Election Day approached, however, the proportion of Hirono ads emphasizing issues jumped from 21 percent to 36 percent. The proportion of Hirono ads emphasizing images dropped from 63 percent to 46 percent while the
proportion of issue and image emphasized ads remained roughly unchanged over the same period (17 and 18 percent, respectively) ($X^2$ (32, $N = 584$) = 285.897, $p < .000$). There were six pro-Hirono or anti-Lingle non-candidate committee groups. All of them broadcast ads that emphasized issues. The Democratic Party of Hawaii, which presented four anti-Lingle ads in our sample, was the only non-candidate committee group to emphasize Hirono’s image.

Lingle’s campaign used a different approach. Overall, the Linda Lingle Senate Committee emphasized issues in less than two-thirds of ads and images in slightly more than one-third (34 percent) ($X^2$ (2, $N = 584$) = 13.563, $p < .001$). However, Lingle’s emphasis on issues and images varied by campaign period. Early in the General Election campaign, 83 percent of her ads emphasized issues compared with 17 percent that emphasized images. Late in the campaign, Lingle’s issue emphasis fell to 53 percent. The loss of issue emphasis was picked up by emphasis on Lingle’s image. These ads increased from 17 percent early to 47 percent late ($X^2$ (36, $N = 584$) = 40.123, $p < .002$). During the last two weeks, the Linda Lingle Senate Committee drastically pivoted ad emphasis from 100 percent issues to images in 75 to 100 percent of ads.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce was the only pro-Lingle non-candidate political action committee ad sponsor present in our sample. It aired 14 percent of all ads. The group emphasized Lingle issues in 60 percent of ads and both issues and images in 40 percent of ads ($X^2$ (2, $N = 584$) = 40.856, $p < .000$). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce emphasized only Lingle images early in the campaign, but shifted to exclusive issue and image emphasis late in the campaign.
Mayoral Race Non-candidate Issue Emphasis

Candidate committees were more likely than non-candidate committee sponsors to emphasize issues in the race for Honolulu mayor. More than three-quarters of candidate committee ads (78 percent) emphasized issues compared to 15 percent of ads that emphasized images and seven percent of ads that emphasized both issues and images. Non-candidate committee sponsors emphasized issues in 63 percent of ads, images in 12 percent of ads, and both issues and images in 24 percent of ads.

The mayor’s race featured three non-candidate committee ad sponsors in our sample. More than one-fifth of all political ads (22 percent) were purchased by non-candidate committee groups friendly to Caldwell. Pro-Caldwell Workers for a Better Hawaii broadcast 12 percent of all ads and pro-Caldwell/anti-Cayetano Pacific Resource Partnership PAC (PRP) put on ten percent of ads. Workers for a Better Hawaii broadcast ads throughout the General Election period, while PRP did not advertise until early October. Anti-Caldwell SaveOurHonolulu.com, which presented five percent of ads in the late election period, waited until mid-October to show its first advertisement. The delayed participation of these entities precipitated an increase in mayoral issue emphasis from 15 percent early in the campaign to 79 percent late.

The race for Honolulu mayor became a referendum on the city’s proposed rail project. Anti-Caldwell SaveOurHonolulu.com bombarded the airwaves with two issue ads related to rail. PRP responded by diverting attention from issue and image ads early (100 percent) to a six-fold increase in the number of strictly issue ads late in the campaign. Each pro-Caldwell non-candidate committee groups implemented a different issue emphasis response tactic: while PRP presented some ads that emphasized images (27 percent), Workers for a Better Hawaii showed virtually none (two percent). Inversely, SaveOurHonolulu.com presented exclusively issue ads that...
supplemented Cayetano’s candidate committee issue messages. In the month before Election Day, 64 percent of anti-Cayetano/pro-Caldwell PRP ads were focused on issues.

Cayetano’s official candidate committee did not present a single political ad until the final weeks of the General Election campaign. Once Cayetano’s ads were broadcast, 84 percent emphasized issues—mostly related to rail, while the remaining ads emphasized both issues and images. The late entrance of non-candidate committee ad sponsors coupled with the late entrance of Cayetano’s own candidate committee elevated the overall number of ads on the air and amplified the Honolulu rail issue.

Attacks

Table 10 presents the distribution of attacks by ad sponsor type. Non-candidate committee ad sponsors attacked both issues and images in every attack category except for candidate group associations. Issue-based attacks were more frequent than image-based attacks. Sixty percent of non-candidate committee sponsored ads attacked a candidate’s past performance in office compared with just ten percent of candidate committee ads ($X^2 (1, N = 580) = 166.404, p < .000$). Non-candidate committee sponsors also attacked candidate issue stands and consistency more frequently (49 percent) than candidate committee ads (27 percent) ($X^2 (1, N = 580) = 29.948, p < .000$). Only seven percent of all ads attacked personal characteristics, however, non-candidate committee sponsors launched seven percent more personal attacks, $X^2 (1, N = 580) = 43.834, p < .000$. Interestingly, 21 percent of the attacks on group associations came from candidate committees when only one percent of non-candidate committee sponsors made similar attacks ($X^2 (1, N = 580) = 47.058, p < .000$.
Table 10  
Attack Categories by Sponsor Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor Type</th>
<th>Issue Stands/Consistency</th>
<th>Past Performance</th>
<th>Group Associations</th>
<th>Background/Qualifications</th>
<th>Personal Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Candidate Committee Sponsors (%)</td>
<td>49*</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Committees (%)</td>
<td>27*</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>21*</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (%) (±)</td>
<td>+ 22</td>
<td>+ 50</td>
<td>- 19</td>
<td>+ 6</td>
<td>+ 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (%)</td>
<td>36*</td>
<td>31*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>7*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Political News Stories**

Political news stories were about evenly distributed across Hawai’i’s five local television news stations. Twenty-two percent of the 139 political news stories appeared on KFVE (MyNetworkTV), 22 percent on KGMB (CBS), 22 percent on KHNL (NBC), 15 percent on KHON (FOX), and 19 percent on KITV (ABC). Thirty-five percent of the stories were shown at six o’clock p.m., 22 percent at nine o’clock p.m., and 43 percent at ten o’clock p.m. Sixty-four percent of the stories were shown one month before Election Day of which more than one-third (37 percent) appeared in the final two weeks of the campaign.

**Issues Presented (RQ 1)**

Many issues that appeared in the political ads also appeared in the news stories, but these issues appeared at varying degrees compared to the ads. Overall, topics included international or foreign affairs (eight percent); military or defense spending (one percent); economic concerns (13 percent); the deficit (four percent); crime (one percent); elderly issues such as Medicare and Social Security (seven
percent); taxes (four percent); education (one percent); energy (five percent); local issues (12 percent); and other issues (seven percent). There were no stories that expressed concern for children or children’s issues except for those with an education focus. Abortion (one percent), the environment (three percent), and health care (one percent) appeared in the stories, but not in the political ads. Just over a quarter (26 percent) of all stories presented one issue and 12 percent presented more than one issue.

Table 11 reveals the distribution of the issues found in political news stories and advertisements when stories and ads presented at least one issue. Thirty-eight percent of local television news stories presented at least one issue while 62 percent showed none. While coding issue mentions, qualitative distinctions were not made between in-depth and passing mentions of issue topics. Since each ad and story may present multiple issues, the total proportion in each column does not equate to 100 percent. News stories showed international or foreign affairs, energy, and environmental concerns as issue topics while political ads did not. Ads highlighted issues related to education, concern for children, and the budget deficit more than local television news stories. When issues were present, roughly an equal proportion of ads and stories presented Medicare and Social Security.
Table 11  Distribution of Issues Presented on Political Advertisements and News Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Presentation</th>
<th>Stories (%)</th>
<th>Ads (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic concerns</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local issues</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International or foreign affairs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military or defense spending</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for children’s issues</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 underscores the perception of issue importance by political advertisers and news producers in Hawai’i’s 2012 General Election. Economic and local issue concerns topped issue presentation in ads and local news coverage. Medicare and Social Security spending were roughly proportionate. International affairs stories, however, were not presented in campaign advertisements, but dominated news coverage. Stories about abortion, health care, and environmental issues were entirely absent from campaign advertisements. Ads promoting crime and education, comparatively, were not met with news coverage. Education was an issue in 23 percent of ads that mention issues, but only four percent of stories. Crime was shown in 11 percent of stories that presented issues, but only two percent of stories.

---

9 Proportion of all ads or stories that present at least one issue (n/473 ads) (n/53 stories).
Frames (RQ 5)

Although it is clear that political news stories present issues less frequently than political advertisements, quantifiability alone does not describe the presentation of issues in local television news stories. Framing analyses further elucidate the 38 percent of stories that show campaign issues. Three qualities were particularly important to this study: the use of a conflict frame; the use of a strategic frame; and the overt issue focus of the news story. Table 12 presents the distribution of these findings.

Table 12  Issue Presentation and News Story Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Presentation</th>
<th>Conflict Frame (%)</th>
<th>Strategic Frame (%)</th>
<th>Issue Focus (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military or defense spending</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>80*</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td>60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>80*</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International or foreign affairs</td>
<td>64*</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>57*</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)</td>
<td>56*</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56*</td>
<td>22*</td>
<td>33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic concerns</td>
<td>44*</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local issues</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>24*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p ≤ .05

Many of the stories that were issue-focused were, in fact, prompted by some campaign event. A Congressional forum where the military spending was discussed brought about the two issue-focused stories that referenced military or defense spending issues. Three-out-of-five stories (60 percent) about the budget deficit focused
on issues, but this was because four stories covered a debate or candidate forum that highlighted the issue ($X^2 (1, N = 139) = 17.350, p < .000$). Fifty-six percent of the stories about Medicare and Social Security were issue-focused, but these stories were prompted by campaign events ($X^2 (1, N = 139) = 26.861, p < .000$). Two of those stories involved Hirono’s promise to protect Social Security, four stories covered debates where Social Security and Medicare were discussed, and one covered President Obama’s brief discussion of the issue in a presidential debate. Although one-third of stories focused on some “other” issue, candidate forums covered five of the nine “other” stories, and four reported on a ceremony honoring a former Congresswoman ($X^2 (1, N = 139) = 7.443, p = .006$). In fact, the issue-focused category is quite illusory because although the stories focus on issues, they often do so when prompted by the candidates or campaigns themselves.

Fifty-seven percent of all stories that featured no issue content framed the strategic narrative of the campaign, but this difference was not statistically significant. These topics included Romney’s campaign finances, mayoral debate negotiations, Hawai’i’s representatives at the Democratic National Convention, Democratic rallies, Election Day tips, and a candidate death threat. Only 14 percent of these stories covered conflict. Essentially, these stories were so lacking of issue substance that there were few conflict narratives to be construed ($X^2 (1, N = 139) = 16.771, p < .000$). Just over a quarter of stories (26 percent) described conflicts between candidates. Such stories included former Hawai’i Senator Daniel Inouye calling on Lingle to stop airing a misleading ad, and coverage of the Hawai’i Republican Party Chair’s reaction to President Obama’s Democratic National Convention (DNC) speech.
Table 12 reveals the ubiquity of strategic frames within stories that did not have an issue focus. Coverage of health care was only presented in the context of the Hawai‘i Republican Party chair reacting to President Obama’s DNC speech. Coverage of abortion was engendered by Indiana Senate candidate Richard Mourdock’s comments regarding rape. One crime story was covered, but it was only shown as part of a segment describing the negative tenor of Hawai‘i’s political ads. Four-out-of-the-five stories about taxes were about the presidential debates; only one of those stories covered taxes in a local context, and that story, too, was prompted by debate coverage.

Some political news stories reported on events that were extraneous to Hawai‘i’s market. These included presidential debate performances, the impact of the falling national unemployment rate on the presidential contest, and the party conventions, to name a few. Presidential candidates also appeared more frequently in political news stories (Figure 10). Although Hawai‘i was on track to solidly vote Democratic, President Obama, Governor Romney, Vice President Joe Biden and Republican vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan appeared a total of 69 times that encompassed one-third (33 percent) of all candidate appearances on local television news political stories. Senate candidates Hirono and Lingle appeared 62 times or in 30 percent of all stories. In contrast, local candidates appeared 21 times, or in just ten percent of all stories.
### Candidate Appearances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Candidate Appearances</th>
<th>Frequency (N)</th>
<th>Proportion (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Barack Obama (40); Mitt Romney (27); Joe Biden (1); Paul Ryan (1)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Mazie Hirono (33); Linda Lingle (29)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Colleen Hanabusa (12); Tulsi Gabbard (9); Charles Djou (9)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Kirk Caldwell (14); Ben Cayetano (14)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Other local (7); Harry Kim (6); Billy Kenoi (6); S. Haunani Apoliona (1); Rose Duey (1)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10  Appearance of Candidates in Political News Stories by Campaign Type

Although it appears that issue coverage of political news stories was approximately proportionate to the political ads when issues were covered, in reality issue coverage was nearly non-existent on local television news. Stories were often prompted by campaign events, frequently presented candidates and campaigns for office that were less local (presidential and senatorial races), and mostly were framed using strategic or conflict narratives that increased the entertaining qualities of the campaign. Absent from political coverage were informed digests of candidate issues, critical evaluations of past performance, or substantive commentary on the issues presented in political advertisements.
Five findings were evident in this study. First, issues were critical to campaign communication. Second, political advertisements were often negative. Third, candidates often used images to reinforce issues and vice-versa. Fourth, candidates attacked opponents’ issues, and generally not images. Finally, local television news did not critically examine the issue dialogues that were apparent in the political advertisements. This chapter elaborates on each of these important findings.

**Issues were Critical to Political Communication**

This study confirms that (i.) issue-related content was present in political ads and (ii.) ad sponsors emphasized that content. Political advertisements reflected the issues that ad sponsors wanted to pursue. Intuitively, the more often ads were presented, the more often advertisers wanted to reach voters with a particular message. The content analytic method employed by this study found areas of convergence and divergence in candidates’ issue agendas. Kirk Caldwell and Ben Cayetano sparred over Honolulu rail in the mayoral campaign. Caldwell became the pro-rail candidate while Cayetano ran against it. Caldwell also presented crime while Cayetano did not. Ad sponsors in the Senate race predominantly presented economic concerns, but did not agree on other issue priorities such as education, the budget deficit, international affairs, and taxes. In the Congressional race, candidates converged on the importance
of elderly issues, but diverged on the budget deficit, economic concerns, and education.

There mere quantification of issue mentions alone does not describe if political ads emphasized the issues that were mentioned. Every advertisement in our sample presented at least one issue, but seven out of ten ads emphasized issues greater than or equal to the emphasis on candidate images. Fourteen out of 20 ad sponsors presented issue messages in more than two-thirds of ads. Combined with the findings regarding issue presentation, these data reveal that campaigns used political ads to emphasize issue messages and that those messages mentioned issues that candidates or candidate committees wanted to talk about. A significant outlier in this study was Mazie Hirono’s campaign committee. Friends of Mazie Hiroono presented image-emphasized messages in over half of its ads. Pro-Hirono groups, alternatively, showed mostly issue ads: six out of the seven pro-Hirono or anti-Lingle non-candidate committees displayed issue emphasized ads 100 percent of the time. These accounted for one-third of all ads shown in the Senate race. The existence of divergent ad sponsor issue or image emphasis and issue presentations are consistent with previous findings. Indeed, scholars have uncovered issue-related content in up to 90 percent of ads in the top 75 U.S. markets (Freedman, Franz & Goldstein, 2004).

**Political Advertisements were Frequently Negative**

Voters watched a campaign that was negative in tone and highly opponent-focused. More than three-quarters of Senate ads, and one-half of mayoral race ads were negative. Of those, 45 percent of Senate and 39 percent of mayoral ads were entirely opponent-negative focused. Further, over one-half of all ads featured at least one attack, and most attacks were levied against opposing candidates’ issues and not
images. When present, negative attacks targeted opposing candidates’ issue stands or consistency, or past performance in office. Similar to issue presentation and issue emphasis, issue-based attacks serve an important agenda-setting function. In the mayoral campaign, attacks on Cayetano’s supposed corruption in office heightened the salience of ethics in the race for Honolulu mayor. In the Senate race, opponent-focused ads frequently attacked Lingle’s association with Mitt Romney’s campaign and status as a Republican. The decision to go negative is a strategic one. Negative ads and ads that launch an attack do so to affect the agenda of what is perceived to be relevant in a campaign (West, 2005).

**Candidates Issues and Images Reinforced Each Other**

The proportion of issue and image-related content varied by campaign and ad sponsor. Forty-one percent of ads in the Congressional race emphasized images compared to only 13 percent of mayoral ads. When images were emphasized, they tended to reinforce positive issue messages about a sponsoring candidate, or negative messages about an opposing candidate.

Although the Honolulu rail project was an important issue in the mayoral campaign, rail was not the only issue. Pro-Caldwell ad sponsors used image-related messages to attack Cayetano’s record (issues). These sponsors presented images that described Caldwell as “honest” and “hardworking” that were often juxtaposed against negative ads indicting Cayetano with pay-to-play schemes and ethical misconduct. As the issue salience of ethics increased late in the mayoral campaign, Cayetano’s ethical image became an issue, even while he defended attacks against his record as governor. In mid-to-late October, Cayetano fired back, calling into question Caldwell’s accounting for how much the rail project would cost the City of Honolulu. Cayetano
defended issue and image attacks with testimonials from his wife, Vicki Cayetano, and Hawai‘i’s Campaign Spending Commission Executive Director Bob Watada (Hawaii Reporter, 2012). Watada criticized attacks against Cayetano’s image, and affirmed his honesty and integrity in office. Although issue attacks grew by over a third late in the mayoral campaign, pro-Caldwell groups were on the air emphasizing positive messages about Caldwell’s image early, and attacking Cayetano’s issues and images late. In this sense, Caldwell advertising strategy was successful, because it impugned Cayetano’s issues with a negative, issue-based narrative of Cayetano’s image.

In the Senate race, approximately one-third and half of the ads for Lingle and Hirono, respectively, featured image-emphasized content. Strong image emphasis, however, did not translate into positive candidate portrayals. Nearly three-out-of-five Hirono ads (57 percent) were opponent-negative focused and just over one-half of Lingle ads (51 percent) contrasted between positive and negative content. Lingle’s image ads were mostly positive. They focused on Washington gridlock and Lingle’s commitment to be a bipartisan leader who would work across party lines in the U.S. Senate. Hirono’s image ads were generally opponent-negative focused. They claimed that Lingle was running a “negative campaign” that was “misleading” voters. Late in the campaign, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce ad characterized Hirono’s vote against a free trade bill as “crazy.” The essence of the U.S. Chamber’s attack was that Hirono voted against a bill that Senators Inouye and Akaka voted for—suggesting that Hirono was not voting with the interests of Hawai‘i. In response, the Hirono campaign attacked Lingle for acquiescing to outside negative and “misleading” ads: “What they’ve brought to our islands is shameful” (mazieforhawaii, 2012). Friends of Mazie Hirono attacked Lingle for relying on mainland contributions. On Hirono’s campaign
website, an in-depth account of Hirono’s work on South Korean visa waivers was provided in response to the U.S. Chamber’s ad claims (Mazie for Hawaii, 2012). This attack tied Hirono’s vote in Congress (an issue) to the implication that she was not working for Hawaiians (image). The response provoked Hirono’s campaign to call out Lingle’s reliance on outside “misleading” negative advertising.

Lingle launched an issue ad attacking Hirono’s Congressional voting record with image-related undertones. According to her candidate committee’s ad: “Mazie Hirono sponsored 49 bills. Zero became law: zero for working families, zero for seniors, zero for small businesses” (Lingle2012, 2012). The ad then claimed that “Linda Lingle worked with both parties” to create jobs, balance the budget, and create quality education. The issue-related suggestion that Hirono is an ineffectual Congresswoman was contrasted with a positive image-related appeal to Lingle’s record of bipartisanship. In response, Hirono’s campaign attacked Lingle’s image and provided a defense for Hirono’s work in Congress: “Republican Linda Lingle, misleading us again. Mazie Hirono has cast 4,794 votes, and Linda Lingle knows it” (mazieforhawaii, 2012). The problem with this ad was that it refuted Hirono’s sponsorship of legislation. There was no defense of Hirono’s ability to pass legislation—only a veiled defense of Hirono’s voting record that paradoxically describes Lingle’s ad as “misleading.” The response defends Hirono’s past performance in office (issue), and characterizes Lingle’s ads as misleading while attacking her association with the national Republicans (images).

Unlike the mayoral and Senatorial campaigns, the Congressional race featured exclusively candidate-positive messages that were never presented by non-candidate committee sponsors. Although Charles Djou’s ads were exactly 50 percent issue-
emphasized and 50 percent image-emphasized, the appeals made in each often reflected some combined reference to both issues and images together. Djou is an Army veteran, and frequently linked the honor, dignity, and valor of his military service to bipartisanship as a U.S. Congressman: “In Afghanistan, there weren’t any Democrat or Republican soldiers: only American soldiers” (advertisinghi, 2012). In Djou issue-ads, independent and bipartisan qualities are stressed in reference to Medicare, Social Security, and job creation: “I see my kids’ faces in every decision I make” (advertisinghi, 2012). His opponent, Colleen Hanabusa, emphasized issues in seven out of ten ads. In the three out of ten ads that emphasized images, however, she indirectly defended her record on veterans’ issues. Hanabusa spokesman Arturo Caleda, the president of the World War II Filipino-American Veterans (Hawai’i Chapter), affirms on screen: “We recognize Congresswoman Hanabusa for her leadership. She never failed the veterans” (Colleen Hanabusa, 2012). Another of Hanabusa’s issue-emphasized ads offered a similar defense. In short, Djou’s appeal to military service and implication of bipartisanship was mirrored by Hanabusa’s claims to leadership on veterans’ issues. Djou’s veterans “image” and Hanabusa’s image of leadership underscored the significance of military and veterans issues in the Congressional campaign. These may have powerfully resonated in Hawai’i where military installations are not only large population centers, but also drive the local economy.

The common theme that was consistent across each campaign’s advertising strategy was that issues were, at least minimally, somewhat linked to candidate images. This was observed in both negative (mayoral and Senatorial) and positive (Congressional) ads. To be sure, there were qualitative differences between issue ads
and image ads (Johnston and Kaid, 2002). Whether voters identify those differences is another question (Hacker, Zakahi, Giles & McQuitty, 2000). From a content analytic perspective, this study uncovered some of the methodological difficulties of parsing out candidate issues from candidate images and vice versa. Ads suggested that Charles Djou was an Afghanistan war veteran, so his leadership on the battlefield would necessarily affect his bipartisan judgment in Congress. Attack ads relied on issues to critique opponent images, as well. “Linda Lingle is a co-chair of Mitt Romney’s presidential campaign, and Mitt Romney’s tax plan is unfair to the middle class—so how can Linda Lingle be trusted to vote with the middle class?”—suggested a Hirono ad.

Ultimately, issues and images may not be as dichotomous as the literature suggests. Candidates used images to reinforce issues and issues to reinforce images. West (2005) points out that candidates attack opponent issues to avoid the backlash effects of negative ads. This may be true, but because the line between issues and images is often elusive: what counts as an image attack? Ben Cayetano’s pay-to-play schemes as governor and record on criminal pardons brought in to question his judgment and trustworthiness—“how can voters trust him with Honolulu rail?”—anti-Cayetano ads implied. In truth, campaigns frequently marry issues with images, and this occurred irrespective of ad tone.

**Non-candidate Committee Sponsors Used Different Tactics than Candidate Committee Sponsors**

One emergent question in the post-*Citizens United* era is what statistical differences, if any, exist between non-candidate committee and candidate committee ad content. This study found that non-candidate committees presented different issues
than candidate committee sponsors, and emphasized those issues more frequently. Mazie Hirono rarely presented education as an issue in her candidate committee’s political advertisements, but four pro-Hirono non-candidate committee ad sponsors presented education as an issue in 100 percent of ads. In the mayor’s race, 30 and 46 percent of non-candidate committee ads for Workers for a Better Hawaii and Pacific Resource Partnership, respectively, showed “other” issues compared to 11 percent of Caldwell ads. As a group, non-candidate committees emphasized issues in greater proportion than candidate committees with varying synchronicity on specific issue mentions from the candidate committee sponsors. This means that there were more voices contributing to campaign issue dialogues, but those voices sometimes emphasized different issues than the candidate committees.

Non-candidate committee ad sponsors were more negative and more opponent-focused throughout the course of the campaign. As Election Day approached, non-candidate committee ad negativity increased while the proportion of negative candidate committee ads fell. This may be because candidate committee ad sponsors wanted to avoid potential backlash effects of negative ads at a time when voters make democratic decisions. In place of entirely opponent-focused negative ads, candidate committees strategically aired more contrast ads.

Early in the Senate race, there were three unique non-candidate committee ads that were entirely opponent-negative focused (all of them against Lingle). District 50 International Union of Painters and Allied Trades aired an ad that featured a Southern man thanking Lingle for exporting jobs to the mainland. Women Vote! and AFSCME People presented ads criticizing Lingle for “slash[ing] classroom funding instead of finding real solutions” (WomenVOTEProject, 2012). Late in the campaign, however,
the tenor of advertising changed. Each campaign was bolstered by mainland Super PAC attention that contrasted the two candidates’ positions. Fund for Freedom Committee purchased 1,000 contrast ad spots (Wong, 2012) to criticize Hirono for not passing one sponsored bill in the U.S. Congress. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also repositioned its strategy from entirely-Lingle positive ads to contrast ads. Pro-Hirono Majority PAC presented an ad that led with “Special interests from the mainland are spending over $1 million dollars to help Linda Lingle.” However, no one pointed out that Majority PAC was itself a special interest from the mainland. The only non-candidate committee that did not air a contrast ad was the Democratic Party of Hawaii, which hit Lingle with an entirely opponent-focused attack ad late in the campaign.

Early in the mayor’s race, only one-quarter of non-candidate committee ads were negative, but late in the campaign, negative ads increased to 60 percent. Candidate committee mayoral ad sponsors were not activated until late in the campaign, so comparisons between candidate and non-candidate committee ad sponsors are difficult to make. Workers for a Better Hawaii and Pacific Resource Partnership aired three spots early that presented mostly biographical and image-related information about Caldwell. These ads established Caldwell as a trustworthy and honest politician. Late in the campaign, pro-Cayetano SaveOurHonolulu.com entered the fray, presenting two ads that were critical of Caldwell’s leadership of the Honolulu rail project. All of these ads were strictly opponent-negative focused.

Late in the campaign, Pacific Resource Partnership and Workers for a Better Hawaii diverged from entirely positive-focused pro-Caldwell messages, and pivoted toward a sort of a good cop/bad cop routine. Pacific Resource Partnership blasted Cayetano with over the number of gubernatorial pardons he signed as governor, and
attacked him over alleged pay-to-play schemes. The group also presented some contrast ads that affirmed Caldwell’s trust and honesty, and attacked Cayetano’s supposed no-bid contracts. Workers for a Better Hawaii, alternatively, presented completely positive ads late in the election that underscored Caldwell’s public safety commitments, integrity, commitment to ethical reform, and presented more image-related biographical information that was positive in tone.

Once candidate committees entered the mayoral race late in the campaign, Cayetano’s group hit back with mostly positive messages. Testimonials reaffirmed Cayetano’s character. Cayetano for Mayor also aired ads attacking Pacific Resource Partnership for spending over $1.5 million in ads, and attacked Caldwell on the Honolulu rail project. Fifty-four percent of Caldwell’s candidate committee ads late in the campaign were negative, and mostly attacked Cayetano’s proposal to defund the Honolulu rail project. The other 45 percent presented positive messages about Caldwell. None of the candidate committee ads were proportionate to non-candidate committee ads in the Honolulu mayor’s race. Overwhelmingly, voters in Hawai’i were inundated with non-candidate committee ads, a significant proportion of which were anti-Cayetano or pro-Caldwell.

Non-candidate committee ad sponsors were nearly twice as likely to attack opposing candidates’ issue stands and consistency, and they were five times more likely to attack an opposing candidates’ past performance in office. Non-candidate committees were also more likely to attack image-related characteristics, such as background/qualifications or personal characteristics; but they did so only six and seven percent more than candidate committees, respectively. Perhaps because candidates are required to endorse ads—“I am Jane Doe and I approve this message,”
campaign committees were more likely to emphasize images and were less likely to attack compared to non-candidate committees.

Issue-related attacks were much more frequent among nameless non-candidate committee ad sponsors. These sponsors often made claims about Lingle and Cayetano’s record as governor, Hirono’s record in Congress, and Cayetano’s proposals on rail. The only exception was in the area of group associations, where candidate committees attacked opposing candidates’ affiliations in one-quarter more ads. This was partly because Hirono’s negative ads often linked Linda Lingle’s name with the national Republicans and to Mitt Romney’s campaign. Nearly every reference to Lingle in Hirono’s ads was prefaced with “Republican Linda Lingle,” which is a powerful indictment in a state that votes consistently Democratic.

Just over a week before the 2012 General Election, Honolulu Civil Beat commented, quite seriously, that Hirono’s ads claimed Lingle was, “[N]ot really bipartisan. She doesn't tell the truth. She's had an extreme makeover. She's pals with Sarah Palin. She and Mitt Romney share the same platform — in fact, she's co-chair of his presidential campaign. She thinks George W. Bush was our greatest president. Furlough Fridays were all her fault” (Blair, 2012, para 2). On Hirono, Lingle’s ads claimed, “She's not a leader. She doesn't tell the truth. She has no record and no ideas. She's pals [sic] with Barney Frank. She skips a lot of votes in the U.S. Congress — except for the ones where she voted for military cuts and against free trade with South Korea. She doesn't understand things like the Compact of Free Association” (Blair, 2012, para 4). These were the messages consumed by the citizen consumer in the days leading up to Election Day 2012.
Local Television News Did Not Critically Examine the Issue Dialogues Present in the Political Advertisements

Sixty-two percent of all stories did not mention one issue in the campaign. These stories included a ceremony that honored a former congresswoman, mayoral and senatorial debate forums, and coverage of the U.S. Senate candidates casting their ballots. Of the 38 percent that did mention an issue, such as the economy, political coverage included a Congressional forum, Barack Obama’s acceptance of the Democratic nomination, an Office of Hawaiian Affairs Candidate Forum, and the start of early voting. Three stories that pertained to unemployment were aired across three stations; however, the focus of two out of those three stories was the candidates’ discussion of the falling unemployment rate themselves.

In a state where a significant proportion of the population is enlisted, employed, or dependent upon the U.S. military, dialogues about international or foreign affairs, and military or defense spending were also not substantive. A foreign policy speech delivered by Mitt Romney, three stories covering a presidential debate (that also mentioned several other issues), and a Congressional forum between Hanabusa and Djou encompassed international or foreign affairs political news coverage. In the entire sample, only two stories were directly related to military or defense spending—and each of those were simulcast bits from a Congressional forum.

Local television news in Hawai’i missed opportunities to critically examine the political ads. In the Senate exchange where Lingle accused Hirono of being an ineffectual Congresswoman, there were no ad sponsors to provide political context. Only Civil Beat conducted an analysis of GovTrack.us’s Congressional voting data to reveal that, in fact, it is difficult “for any representatives in Hirono’s class to get legislation through a very divided and unproductive Congress” (Levine, 2012, para.
Local television news reporters have access to the same information—and these issue dialogues are occurring on their networks in front of their audiences. Civil Beat fact checked the issue, but did not reach the same audience that consumed the misinformation in the first place.

Similarly, in the mayor’s race, Ben Cayetano filed a defamation suit against Pacific Resource Partnership to oppose the group’s political ads alleging Cayetano’s corruption in office. Attorney Jim Bickerton contended: “It’s bigger than Ben vs. Kirk, and it’s bigger than rail vs. bus. It’s about whether we’re going to let secret, shadowy groups with unlimited funds pump lies into the public discourse” (Star Advertiser, 2012, para. 5). In a news media environment that critically evaluates issue information, lies that are spread in the public sphere are appropriately repudiated by facts. If Pacific Resource Partnership put out a press release—or something less visible—charging Cayetano with corruption, a libel suit may have been less necessary. It may be because the political ads reach such a large audience that Cayetano felt that he was never going to correct the misinformation disseminated by PRP. Newscasts reach the same audience as the PRP ads, but news stories did not examine whether or not Cayetano was actually invested in pay-to-play schemes as governor. A news story could have rectified the defamation charge, but instead the libel suit became part of the horse race narrative of the campaign.

To their credit, local television news did provide citizens with some important election-related information. Newscasts informed citizens about absentee ballots, voter registration deadlines, and upcoming televised debates (on their networks). But maybe news shares a larger responsibility—to the public at large. If news operates on public transmission signals, are not citizens entitled to more than a just the facts recounting of
televised debates, or play-by-play narratives of campaign events? The following discussion chapter concludes with implications for a democratic society, the limitations of this research, and avenues in future studies.
Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

The lack of issue substance on local television news is consistent with previous research in the literature. As Chapter 1 revealed, in the U.S., a market-driven business model determines and informs news content (Bagdikian, 1983; McManus, 1995, 1994). This model trades informative content for that which entertains. Case in point: in the two weeks before the 2012 Wisconsin gubernatorial recall election, one local station in Milwaukee aired 53 news segments that mentioned pop singer Justin Bieber, but not one story on political advertisements. In that recall election, ad buys from outside groups soared to $80 million—more than double the record set two years earlier (Karr, 2012a). Local stations want to present content that will attract largest audiences (e.g., “Justin Bieber walks into a glass wall.”), and rarely want to bite the hand that feeds them (McManus, 1995, 1994).

There is little evidence that local news programs fact check any of their political ad sponsors. A study by media reform group Free Press found that local stations in Denver devoted a total of ten minutes and 45 seconds to local reporting of Super PAC ads. Local stations there accepted $25 million in ad revenues. This means that for every one minute of local television news coverage of political ads, stations devoted 162 minutes to political ads (Karr, 2012b). In Honolulu, four political news stories devoted eight minutes and 18 seconds of coverage to political advertisements. All four of these stories were framed around a competitive narrative. Two stories that were simulcast on KHNL and KGMB described Hawai’i U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye’s
call for Lingle to stop airing misleading ads. One story on KITV described the negative tone of the campaign. KFVE put together a story describing how Hirono countered Lingle’s negative ads with negative ads of her own.

When local newscasts do cover political advertisements, they often present them as entertaining narratives. Fowler and Ridout (2009) point out that the presence of advertising coverage increases in larger markets. This is because “[…] the competitive pressures faced by news outlets in larger markets drive them to the type of sensational stories typified by ad coverage” (Fowler & Ridout, 2009, p. 131). Looking at a medium-sized market, such as Honolulu, there was neither substantive political commentary nor fact checking coverage in general. This dearth of issue substance enabled political advertisers to present issue information to citizens with near impunity for their claims made on television.

Nichols and McChesney (2013) describe a system that abdicates its public interest responsibilities to third party political ad sponsors as a “dollarocracy.” Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010), a few wealthy donors can shield private contributions from the public eye by donating to an independent expenditure group. These independent groups then blitz the airwaves with political ads—many of which are negative—at the close of the campaign. In the current state of dollarocracy, toxic political advertisements are met with little credible journalism to rebut the claims made by political ads. In Hawai’i, this was exemplified by negative U.S. Chamber of Commerce ads that provoked a Hirono response. This closing segment will identify the major limitations of this study and then describe directions for future research and implications. A brief conclusion follows.
**Research Limitations**

There were two important research limitations. First, content analyses frequently employ tests of inter-coder reliability to determine the precision of coding instruments. Although inter-coder reliability was assured for political advertisements (Appendix B, Codebook I) there was no such test of the supplemental local television news instrument (Appendix B, Codebook II). One coder applied this instrument to local news political stories, and identified the issues that were presented in these stories. That coder also documented the presence of frames in coverage (i.e., strategic, conflict). There was not enough time to train a coder and run an additional test of inter-coder reliability for this instrument. Future research should test the precision of Kaid and Johnston’s (2001) modified political advertising coding instrument in identifying issues and frames in local news political stories. Second, this study followed a case study research design. Although the selection of the case was integral to the development of the method, the study cannot make generalizable conclusions beyond what is found in the Honolulu market.

**Future Directions and Implications for Broadcasting**

Forces that are internal and external to the media landscape will shape U.S. broadcast policy. For one, policy changes at the FCC could compel broadcasters to provide programming that meets local stations’ public interest requirements. Thus far, the Commission has been reluctant to make these policy changes. There is even less evidence that a divisive U.S. Congress will draft new legislation. Outside of formal institutions, social and demographic movements, such as the consumption behaviors of Millennials, may impose new demands on broadcasters to provide new content across many platforms. The Internet may also revolutionize how citizens go about
finding political information. This section closely evaluates each of these policy, social, and technological movements.

Public Policy

Local broadcast media are beholden to the public interest obligations that accompany the use of public transmission signals. In Hawai‘i, three-out-of-five stations provide similar, if not entirely duplicative content that deprives citizens of three voices in the marketplace of ideas. The interests of Raycom Media, and the information that it “sells” are fundamentally different than the information needs of citizens (Hamilton, 2004; Yanich, 2013).

The current ownership debate served as the impetus for this investigation. Proponents of multiple ownership arrangements contend that stations would not exist independently if not for an SSA (Campbell, 2009). Critics respond that the market may not support some stations, but would produce better quality journalism without SSAs. In theory, stations should compete with one another to attract large audiences and generate advertising revenues. Competitive journalism increases the quality of available content. More voices in the marketplace offer more opportunities to critically evaluate candidates for office. This notion is consistent with the democratic ideal, which affirms that a private and competitive media will enrich democracy.

A uniquely American broadcast structure is one that blends our democratic traditions with a reliance on private media. The problem is not that capitalism and democracy are incompatible; the problem is that the current U.S. market structure benefits shareholders and corporate owners and not citizens. Nichols and McChesney (2013) suggest free airtime for candidates and subsidies for public media as policy alternatives. Subsidized media have proven highly successful in the United Kingdom
where British citizens pay a flat annual fee of £146 to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC Press Office, 2010). Britons are also highly satisfied with the quality of British broadcast journalism (BBC Trust, 2008).

On Capitol Hill, media reform advocates face an uphill battle against powerful interests in an already gridlocked climate. In 2012, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) spent $14 million in lobbying expenditures. According to the Center for Responsive Politics (2013c), the NAB is considered a “heavy hitter” in Congress. This group of station owners controls the very news programs and TV channels that provide political information to Congressional constituents. It is no coincidence that last year the NAB reported more lobbying activity in advertising than any other lobby in Washington (Center for Responsive Politics, 2013c). With significant political advertising revenues to come, broadcasters want to prohibit anything that comes close to “interfere[ing] with the golden spigot of TV political advertising” (Nichols & McChesney, 2013, p. 190).

For unspecified reasons, the NAB opposes even more modest reforms that call for more open disclosure requirements (Steiner, 2012). This option was favored by a majority of the U.S. Supreme Court in Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission. Justice Kennedy argued, “Prompt disclosures of expenditures can provide shareholders and citizens with the information needed to hold corporations and elected officials accountable […] This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages” (p. 55). Accordingly, in April of 2012, the FCC ordered that stations in the 50 most populous U.S. media markets post political advertising records online. Commenting on the open hostility of the broadcast industry to more transparency, Waldman (2012,
para 2) asks, “Do broadcasters believe that they even have “public interest obligations” anymore?” Media reform and government transparency groups, such as Free Press, the Sunlight Foundation, and the New America Foundation point out that the FCC’s limitation to the most populous U.S. markets excludes the less populated and more politically competitive media markets in swing states (Karr, 2012a). While true, at least this is a start.

Short of a more expansive ruling, access to these public records remains prohibitive in medium-sized markets that are unaffected by the April 2012 ruling. Digitized access often depends on the noble efforts of a few dedicated civic volunteers who scan and upload local station documents online. Gaps in the record make it difficult to analyze political advertising buys in these markets. Such was the challenge in this study. Last year, Honolulu Civil Beat launched a concerted effort to upload political files to an online document cloud. Incomplete records rendered it prohibitive to analyze these data. Other efforts have come up against similar challenges nationwide. In their study of Milwaukee stations, Free Press volunteers encountered difficulties accessing files from resistant station staff (Karr, 2012a). Continued cooperation between local good government groups and academics is necessary for information to be studied and disseminated. Access is instrumental for critical scholarly inquiry.

Tighter disclosure requirements are one of many policy options available to the FCC. Other options range from enhanced programming requirements to more free market principles (Waldman, 2012, 2011). The FCC could impel stations to air a set minimum of public affairs programming. Waldman (2012) argues that this alternative would require the FCC to determine what programs count as public affairs. In point of
fact, the Commission has a poor track record when it comes to enforcing this type of regulation. Over its 75-year history, more than 100,000 station licenses have been renewed. In only four cases has a license renewal been rejected because it failed to meet its public interest programming obligation (Waldman, 2011).

Another option involves the FCC invoking a spectrum fee. Under this plan, broadcasters would endow public affairs programs by directly paying taxpayers for the right not to air public affairs content. Waldman (2012) fears that the money appropriated by Congress to fund this endeavor would be absorbed into the general treasury fund. The Commission could also allow station licenses to expire after every eight-year term and pay taxpayers for long-term use of the broadcast spectrum. This option requires a significant up-front cost and broadcasters are opposed. In comparison to all of the other alternatives, disclosure and transparency appear to be the most politically tenable, yet still not agreeable. In an age when political ads flood markets in election years, FCC rulemaking should be citizen-centered. Enhanced political advertising disclosure requirements open up new frontiers in academic scholarly inquiry into this topic, but disclosure requirements are not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Future academic studies should afford attention to local television news programs, and specifically the content of local news broadcasts, to reveal what citizens actually consume when they watch television. Content analyses should investigate the relationships between political ads and local news programs. These studies should be conducted over many years and over several markets to make generalizable conclusions about the content that citizens consume. In light of that content, the policy solutions delineated above should be carefully vetted against what optimally delivers
the maximum information benefit to the citizen consumer. Short of acting on that research, American broadcast policy will rely on a divided legislature and a slow-moving regulatory body.

Social

Perhaps the Millennial Generation, and its reliance on the Internet, will fundamentally transform demand for political communication in local television news. In the last six years, local television news viewership fell 14 percent among 18-29 year olds, and dropped six percent overall (Potter et al., 2013). In its place, the Internet became an important source of political information. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2012) found that 15 percent of 18-29 year olds “regularly” learn about candidates and campaigns on local television news, compared with 29 percent who said the same about the Internet. Indeed, more research is needed to examine the information consumption behaviors of young people, and specifically, their interest in local news.

It is nevertheless telling that in an age where the Internet is so readily accessible, local television news is on par with the Internet as a source for political communication. Pew’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (2012b) finds local news to be a source of campaign information for 38 percent of adults. Following a period of rapid growth over the past ten years, 36 percent say the same for the Internet. One-in-four adults have a local news application downloaded to their smartphone. Forty-seven percent of adults say they watch broadcasts as a primary source for local news, 17 percent look for news on the smartphone application, and 12 percent go to a local television news website (eMarketer, 2013). There may always be a demand for
information about local communities, and so far, Americans prefer to get that information from television.

Technological

Citizens are increasingly going online for information about the campaign (Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2012b). Sixty-four percent of swing state voters rely on the Internet to fact check candidates (Hootkin, 2012). With greater consolidation among content providers, however, fewer sources provide serious journalistic information. Many online stories are written by untrained bloggers, citizen journalists and “iReporters” who are frequently not professionally vetted. These individuals sometimes lack access to credible information. Some do not have the training to ask those in power critical questions. Those that do are infrequently responsible to editors and managers for the claims they make (Nichols & McChesney, 2013). In a future media landscape, vibrant citizen journalism should complement—not replace—a robu$t media. Such a substitution would weaken the potency of information on the Internet. Quality content is the most critical.

Uncontrolled, the power of data also presents many challenges to reliable and quality information online. Internet reform activist Eli Pariser (2011) argues that covert Internet personalization practices create online “filter bubbles” from histories of Web surfing. These bubbles reveal content that is desirable to the user. In the filter bubble, two distinct individuals could Google the same search terms, but derive entirely different results. Unlike television, the Internet creates the perception of a “nice world,” where two citizens can be shown different content that they each want to see, but altogether avoid content that is difficult, challenging or unpleasant.
Nichols and McChesney (2013) elaborate on a more recent consequence of Pariser’s (2011) argument. If the Internet experience is shaped by histories of web surfing—naturally campaigns can use metadata to transform the digital advertising experience. The Obama campaign in 2012 masterfully micro-targeted digital political appeals in the same way which commercial advertisers market products. Similar to Pepsi or Coke, political advertisers study online behaviors to determine users’ interests from search patterns. These behaviors then predict voting outcomes. There may come a time when the digital experience becomes so elaborate that our interaction with campaigns becomes a perpetual and highly individualized experience. Absent a professional media to provide original and incisive content, there may come a day when there will only be campaigns and political advertisers to discuss public issues.

Conclusion

Local television news is a prominent source of information. Presumably, this is because citizens want to know about the news that directly affects their local communities. Quality content frequently depends on journalistic competition that attracts and builds local audiences. In theory, news should enliven civic life by holding leaders accountable and repudiating misinformation. In practice, local news is often shaped by a market-driven structure that is supported by broadcasting regulations. At the present time, there may not be a local broadcast infrastructure that will meet the critical information demands of citizens in the 21st Century.

In the first place, multiple ownership arrangements reduce the number of independent voices serving local communities. In recent years, local station reporters have been cut and replaced with outsourced content that is often duplicated across stations and sometimes across markets. In a not-too-distant future, major metropolitan
communities may be serviced by one local station that will present news on many channels under different logos and brand names.

Given the current pace of media consolidation, it is less likely that such news content will even be “local.” Station super groups achieve enormous economies of scale through covert consolidation practices. It only makes economic sense for the major media conglomerates to widen profit margins and continue to cut duplication costs. From the citizen’s perspective, the result is a decline in both the amount of coverage (the number of stations serving local communities) and the quality of that information (content that is local and diverse in viewpoints).

Changes in American campaign finance law have also affected the broadcast landscape. Campaigns are inherently issue dialogues—and candidates call attention to certain issues and attempt to deflect others. Much research reveals how elections communicate a significant amount of information to citizen consumers. Following *Citizens United*, there are more independent groups that disseminate more issue information than at any point in American history. Much of that information is presented in a way that is often negative in tone, frequently assails opposing candidates’ issues, and likely diminishes support for campaigns or causes within the electorate.

Tremendous issue saturation requires that citizens have accurate and credible journalism to rebut false characterizations and misleading negative attack ads. The news media have such capacity to advocate for the public interest. Most of these ads appear during the very local news programs that citizens rely on for information about the campaign. But why should local news provide citizens with the coverage that verifies claims and holds campaigns accountable? Stations welcome political
advertising revenues and the major media conglomerates depend on them to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities to shareholders. Economically, it makes no sense for local television news programs to now provide citizens with the kind of fact checking they need to make informed choices in a democratic society. That is, unless impelled by law, regulation, or court order.

Enhanced disclosure requirements are only part of the solution. In *Citizens United*, Justice Kennedy argued that political ad buy disclosures would provide citizens with the information that they need to make informed choices. This argument, of course, presupposes that there is a civil society to disseminate this information in the first place. Even in the current climate, the most politically acceptable solution is controversial. Local television news stations sometimes resist disclosing political ad buys, and in Washington, the NAB actively lobbies against it. Failing some policy intervention, the status quo will be sustained.

*Citizens United* protects the rights of independent groups to express political opinions unbound by moneyed influence or regulation; naturally, there must be a local news media to match. Citizens must have access to local journalists that distill truth from fiction and reality from unreality. More than just having one broadcast station, there should be many stations within markets, which in totality form a truly diverse, competitive, and local U.S. media landscape.

Ultimately, when the number of local media reporters is diminished, so too is the capacity of the local news media to check campaign claims and facts in the public sphere. If there will be fewer local broadcast news media, intuitively there will be fewer reporters and platforms to repudiate campaign misinformation. Political advertisers will be able to present ads with near impunity for the claims made in them,
and station super groups will profit regardless. The information that citizens regard as true may come from political advertisements themselves, often a function of the ads’ frequency on the air.

The FCC’s upcoming quadrennial review of multiple ownership rules presents a real opportunity in the current broadcast age. If the Commission issues a broad ruling upholding the permissibility of multiple station ownership arrangements, the present trend of local news media consolidation may go unabated. The enshrinement of multiple ownership arrangements into current broadcasting regulations will allow further consolidation in local media. This is not to say that a ruling against multiple ownership arrangements is a panacea to all local consolidation issues; but it would be significant.

More generally, the Commission has the opportunity to affect the structure of local news media in the U.S. A ruling against multiple ownership rules would support an environment where civic institutions and news media are capable of holding leaders accountable for statements made in political ads, as envisioned by Justice Kennedy in *Citizens United*. It would protect the jobs of reporters and journalists within markets, and foster competition in content creation. Short of such a ruling, an ever-decreasing group of station owners will garner ever-increasing influence over the public issue dialogues in local communities. These few corporations and political elites will control the very information that citizens need to make informed democratic choices, but few citizens will notice a difference.
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http://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/2012/10/24/2012-shatters-2004-and-2008-records-for-total-ads-aired/


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### Appendix A

**LOCAL TV NEWS CODING INSTRUMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Operationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID#</td>
<td>Each coded story must have its own unique continuous number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast ID#</td>
<td>Each news broadcast must have its own unique continuous number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station</td>
<td>Station call letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Network affiliation of station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast Time</td>
<td>6 = 6:00 PM; 9 = 9:00 PM; 10 = 10:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast Date</td>
<td>Date of broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast Duration</td>
<td>1 = 30 minutes; 2 = 60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin Minute</td>
<td>Minute in the time counter in which the story begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin Second</td>
<td>Second of the minute in the time counter in which the story begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Verbatim narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story type</td>
<td>1=crime; 2=health issues; 3=business/economy/stocks; 4=environment; 5=education; 6=public issues (all public issues such as housing, etc. other than crime, health, education or environment); 7=soft news/human interest; 8=city/county/state government; 9=Federal government; 10=political campaigns/politics; 11=consumer news; 12=fires/accidents/disaster; 13=international stories; 14=entertainment; 15=Afghanistan/Iraq hard news; 16=Afghanistan/Iraq soft news; 17=war on terror; 18=traffic; 19=other; 20=promos for network/station/network; 21=weather segment; 22=sports segment; 23=commercial; 24=Political Ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In/Out DMA</td>
<td>Location of story: 0=outside DMA; 1=inside DMA, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Chronological position of story within broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>Chronological block in which story appears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1 = anchor read; 2 = voice over/anchor read; 3 = package; 4 = live location; 5 = panel/speech/editorial; 6 = reporter live in newsroom; 7 = other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appear KGMB</td>
<td>0=No; 1=Yes, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appear KHNL</td>
<td>0=No; 1=Yes, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appear KFVE</td>
<td>0=No; 1=Yes, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appear KHON</td>
<td>0=No; 1=Yes, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appear KITV</td>
<td>0=No; 1=Yes, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad</td>
<td>1 = candidate; 2 = issue; otherwise “9” = n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Ad name</td>
<td>If a candidate pol ad, name of candidate, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad speaker (candidate)</td>
<td>0=candidate does NOT speak; 1=Candidate speaks; otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad speaker</td>
<td>0=candidate does NOT speak; 1=Candidate speaks; otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(spokesperson)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad speaker (narrator)</td>
<td>0=candidate does NOT speak; 1=Candidate speaks; otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad speaker (citizen)</td>
<td>0=candidate does NOT speak; 1=Candidate speaks; otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad speaker (other)</td>
<td>0=candidate does NOT speak; 1=Candidate speaks; otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political ad theme</td>
<td>1=positive (support of candidate); 2=negative (opposition to candidate); 3=neutral, otherwise &quot;9&quot; for n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue topic</td>
<td>Verbatim narrative, or when it is not an issue ad enter “9”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue theme</td>
<td>1=positive (support of position); 2=negative (opposition to position); 3=neutral,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End minute</td>
<td>Minute in the time counter in which the story ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End second</td>
<td>Second of the minute in the time counter in which the story ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
SUPPLEMENTAL CODING INSTRUMENTS

POLITICAL AD CODEBOOK (1)

1. The emphasis of this ad is on: (EMPHASIS)
   (0) = Neither/Not Applicable
   (1) = Issues
   (2) = Images
   (3) = Both

2. Is the ad candidate or opponent-focused? (Only applied to candidate-sponsored ads) (FOCUS)
   (0) = None/Not Applicable
   (1) = Candidate-positive focused
   (2) = Opponent-negative focused
   (3) = Both (contrast ad)

3. Is there a negative attack made in the ad? (TONE)
   (0) = No
   (1) = Yes

4. If an attack is made, who makes the attack? (ATTACKER)
   (0) = None/Not Applicable
   (1) = Candidate attacks opponent
   (2) = Surrogate attacks opponent
   (3) = Anonymous announcer attacks opponent

5. If a negative attack is made, what is the purpose or nature of the attack? (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present) (ATTACK PURPOSE)
   (0) = None/Not Applicable
   (1) = Attack on personal characteristics of opponent
   (2) = Attack on issue stands/consistency of opponent
   (3) = Attack on opponent’s group affiliations or associations
   (4) = Attack on opponent’s background/qualifications
   (5) = Attack on opponent’s performance in past offices/positions
6. **Content of appeal of ad:** (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present) (APPEAL)
   (0) = None/Not Applicable
   (1) = Emphasis on partisanship of candidate
   (2) = Issue-related appeal: candidate’s issue concern
   (3) = Issue-related appeal: vague policy preference
   (4) = Issue-related appeal: specific policy proposals
   (5) = Personal characteristics of candidate
   (6) = Linking of candidate with certain groups

7. **Is there a particular issue emphasized in the ad:** (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present) (POL_ISSUE)
   (1) = International or foreign affairs
   (2) = Military or defense spending
   (3) = Economic concerns (unemployment, jobs)
   (4) = Deficit/need to balance the budget
   (5) = Crime/prisons/penalties/gun control
   (6) = Drugs
   (7) = Concern for children or children’s issues
   (8) = Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)
   (9) = Abortion
   (10) = Environmental concerns
   (11) = Health care
   (12) = Immigration
   (13) = Taxes
   (14) = Welfare
   (15) = Education
   (16) = Other
   (17) = None
   (18) = Not Applicable
   (19) = Local issue*
   (20) = Energy

**LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS CODEBOOK (2)**

1. **Is the emphasis of this political story on the candidates:**
   (0) = Neither/Not Applicable
   (1) = Issues
   (2) = Images
   (3) = Both

2. **Is there a particular issue emphasized in the political news coverage:**
   (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present)
   (1) = International or foreign affairs
(2) = Military or defense spending  
(3) = Economic concerns (unemployment, jobs)  
(4) = Deficit/need to balance the budget  
(5) = Crime/prisons/penalties/gun control  
(6) = Drugs  
(7) = Concern for children or children’s issues  
(8) = Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)  
(9) = Abortion  
(10) = Environmental concerns  
(11) = Health care  
(12) = Immigration  
(13) = Taxes  
(14) = Welfare  
(15) = Education  
(16) = Other  
(17) = None (“strategic elements of campaign coverage exclusively”)  
(18) = Not Applicable  
(19) = Local issue*  
(20) = Energy

3. **Is the story framed:** (Code 1 if present, 0 if not present)  
   (1) = Horserace  
   (2) = Conflict  
   (3) = Episodic  
   (4) = Thematic  
   (5) = No Frame

4. **Public opinion polling mention:**  
   (0) = No  
   (1) = Yes

5. **Political ad mention:**  
   (0) = No  
   (1) = Yes

Source: Adapted from Kaid and Johnston (2001) in *Videostyle in Presidential Campaigns: Style and Content of Televised Political Advertising*
## Appendix C

### INTER-CODER RELIABILITY RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Variables: Questions 1-3</th>
<th>Codebook</th>
<th>Cohen’s Kappa</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Emphasis: Issue, image or both</td>
<td>0.965</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Focus: Positive candidate focused; Opponent negative focused; Contrast ad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Tone: Positive or negative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attacks: Questions 4-5</th>
<th>Codebook</th>
<th>Cohen’s Kappa</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) Attacker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(5 – 0) No attack</td>
<td>0.979</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5–1) Attack on personal characteristics of opponent</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5–2) Attack on issue stands/consistency of opponent</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5–3) Attack on opponent’s group affiliations or associations</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5–4) Attack on opponent’s background/qualifications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5–5) Attack on opponent’s performance in past offices/positions</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>99</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeals: Question 6</th>
<th>Codebook</th>
<th>Cohen’s Kappa</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(6–0) Emphasis on partisanship of candidate</td>
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<td>98</td>
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<td>(6–1) Issue-related appeal: candidate’s issue concern</td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td>94</td>
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<td>(6–2) Issue-related appeal: vague policy preference</td>
<td>0.879</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6–3) Issue-related appeal: specific policy proposals</td>
<td>0.939</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6–4) Personal characteristics of candidate</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6–5) Linking of candidate with certain groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues presented: Question 7</th>
<th>Codebook</th>
<th>Cohen’s Kappa</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(7–1) International or foreign affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7–2) Military or defense spending</td>
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<td>(7–3) Economic concerns (unemployment, jobs)</td>
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<td>(7–5) Crime/prisons/penalties/gun control</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(7–7) Concern for children or children’s issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7–8) Elderly issues (Medicare/Social Security)</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7–13) Taxes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7–15) Education</td>
<td>0.871</td>
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<td>(7–16) Other</td>
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<td>(7–17) None</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7–19) Local issue</td>
<td>0.908</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7–20) Energy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| Average | 0.930 | 97.9 |