

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

NEW WAYS OF EVALUATING CAMPAIGN ADS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WEST: Good afternoon. I'm Darrell West, vice president of Governance Studies and director for the Center for Technology Innovation at the Brookings Institution. And today we are pleased to welcome you to our forum on new ways of evaluating campaign ads.

And this event is being broadcast live on C-SPAN 3 and so those of you who wish to post comments or ask questions, we've set up a Twitter hashtag, Twitter hashtag **#Blads**. That's hashtag **#Blads**, so feel free to post comments or any reactions that you have.

I am writing a sixth edition of my book, *Air Wars*, which looks at television advertising and social media in the presidential campaign. And I think this year we are moving into a new stage of advertising. The 1960s was the broadcasting era where the campaigns focused on the television networks and the candidates aimed for large groups of voters.

In the 1970s and 1980s we moved into narrowcasting, as cable television came into play and it made it possible for the campaigns to target audiences watching shows with known demographics. We then have seen the emergence of microcasting, the development of the Internet in 1991 facilitated web strategies based on reaching small niches of voters.

But this year I think we're seeing the rise of nanocasting, where the campaigns can use social media to reach tiny groups of voters with very specialized, often times almost personalized ad appeal. So, for example, it may be possible for Romney to target black conservative voters in Ohio who are upset with Obama's support of same-sex marriage, and if he can sway those voters in key states that may give him a small edge. And, obviously, President Obama will be doing the same thing, targeting

groups of voters on his side.

I think the strategic changes and the shifts in media coverage pose very interesting questions for campaign analysts and for research into campaign advertising. We've already seen millions of dollars in campaign ads this year and it's only July. We still have a long way to go. There have been questions about how effective various ads are and how fair or misleading they are.

In recent weeks we've seen dueling presidential campaign ads over jobs, the economy, and tax returns. Are those appeals fair and are they effective? Are they actually reaching voters? Are Obama's criticisms of Bain Capital gaining traction or is the economy such a strong factor in voter decision-making that those types of attacks won't matter?

Today we're hosting a discussion about new ways of judging ads. We have researchers at Vanderbilt University, as well as YouGov's Ad Rating Project, that are measuring reactions through a nationally representative sample of voters, two particular ads, and you'll see some of those ads today. Voters are being sent the actual ads and then are asked a series of questions regarding their impressions. So we're not relying on pundits in that project, we're not asking analysts to evaluate, you know, is this ad effective? Is it misleading? That research is actually going out to voters and getting their impressions.

To discuss the Ad Rating Project, we will hear first from John Geer, who's the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt professor of political science at Vanderbilt University. John is the author of five books and over 20 articles on elections and presidential politics. His most recent book is, *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*. That was published by the University of Chicago Press and it won the Goldsmith book prize from Harvard University.

So John will make a short presentation about the Ad Rating Project and then we will hear from some of our other experts. John?

MR. GEER: Okay, thank you, Darrell. Given that this is about political ads, let's start with a political ad, and this ad is one that probably a lot have seen already.

("America the Beautiful" campaign ad shown.)

MR. GEER: Okay, so when an ad like that comes out -- let me just start here, It came out about 10 days ago and what happens is that people start to try to evaluate the ad. Is the ad fair? Is it truthful? Is it memorable? They basically want to figure out: does this ad cross the line? And this particular ad was of interest because of Romney's pretty bad singing, which I can hardly hold him accountable for, given my own abilities or lack thereof. But the point is that this ad got some attention because of that.

And so then the process begins about how to try to judge these ads, whether it's fair or unfair. And in this particular campaign, we are going to be inundated with ads. We already know that the amount of advertising that's being produced and aired is going to be unprecedented. We also know, based on some of Ken Goldstein's data that most of those ads are going to be negative, as well. In fact, I guess, about 90 percent, if recent history is any indication. There's just going to be an outpouring of these ads and we need to have some way to try to adjudicate them.

And one way that people have adjudicated them -- that's just a copy of the ad -- is to talk to academic, for example. To talk to other journalists, to talk to experts in the field. And so that's one way to do it. But another part of this process has been reliance on fact checks. And fact checks are an important part of the process, but fact checks have some problems.

First of all, candidates are often vague in their own stances on issues and so trying to hold them accountable for exactly what they meant and said, and try to

establish some sort of standard -- are they telling the truth? -- is tricky and fraught with difficulty. Candidates and their campaigns, of course, know that FactChecks exist, so they're creating ads to try to get around them to make sure that, in fact, their ads can be defensible and avoid the criticism of FactCheck.

We also know, like this particular ad here that we just saw, it's a pretty vague ad in the sense that it makes claims about outsourcing jobs, but it doesn't say exactly how many. I says that maybe *Vanity Fair* was one source, but there isn't a heck of a lot to fact-check. And I think there's a fundamental problem that goes even further with these fact checks, which is that the campaigns are about exaggeration. Campaigns are about putting the best foot forward of their candidate and the worst foot forward of the opposition.

And so, in some sense, all messages are at one level misleading. And so trying to adjudicate exactly where that line is and try to check these so-called facts is tricky. What we're doing here at the Vanderbilt YouGov Ad Rating Project is, actually, moving in a different direction.

What we plan to do is, in some sense democratize the process because we now have the technology through YouGov to ask the public what they think about these ads. Rather than guessing about whether they're fair or unfair, let's ask the public. And so, what this project is about is, first of all, we will identify controversial and game-changing ads, ads that are going to shake things up. In fact, when the "America the Beautiful" ad came across the airways, so to speak, a number of people, including John Sides here in the audience from George Washington, said this is an ad you should study. This is a controversial ad and potentially one that will get a lot of attention. And so we're going to look for ads like that, and I'll talk in a second about how we're going to pull that off.

We then show these ads through YouGov's technology to 600 Americans, and this is a representative sample of Americans. The results will be available 36 hours after I give the ad to YouGov, so we have a very quick turnaround time. We will also have a website set up. Vanderbilt actually set up the website, vanderbilt.edu/adrating, where you can actually see the results of these ads. And we will make them available very, very quickly -- probably totally within 40 to 45 hours after we put an ad in

There are going to be questions to the emotional reactions to these ads. Does it make you angry? Does it disgust you? Does it make you happy? Also about specific evaluations. Were the ads unfair or was this ad unfair? Was it untruthful? Was it memorable? And then also some evaluations of Romney and Obama.

Importantly, we have an over-sample of 200 pure Independents, that is people who do not have any partisan lens, so, therefore, they judge those ads slightly differently -- more than slightly -- than partisans because we know that Republicans like Republican ads and Democrats like Democratic ads, and so we have these pure Independents as kind of a check. And, also, of course, you know, this election in some sense is about luring that 5 percent who are pure Independents in those 20 percent of the battleground states, so that it's important to look at this group.

We have already conducted 10 ads. We have looked at 10 different ads to provide our baseline: 4 are positive, 6 are negative. And they are available, the actual ads, available up on the Vandy website that is now ready for your clicking on, so to speak.

What you can do is, each ad can stand on its own and you can look at all these various variables. You could compare it to other specific ads. Let's say you want to see how "America the Beautiful" stands up to another attack ad, you can do that. You

can also compare negative to positive, you can do various demographic slices. You want to see how women look at ads? In fact, we'll look in a little bit about maybe the role of gender. So we have all these things going for us.

One of the things that we pondered for long and hard is how exactly to change -- not to change, but to identify the game-changing ads. Well, fortunately, Fred Davis is here to help us. Fred Davis is a Republican consultant of some note. He did the McCain ads and he has agreed to help us identify the game-changers, the controversial ads.

And so one of the things we're going to be doing is identifying those, and if any of you who happen to think a particular ad should be studied, you should e-mail us. You should contact us because we're going to try to look at as many ads as we possibly can. Obviously there are limitations to both resources and basically the ability to put that many ads in the hopper, but we will do our level best. And so, fortunately, Fred has agreed to be part of this and has already been a useful contributor to the process.

So let's take a look at some data. First of all, it's actually useful to compare negative to positive ads. Why? Because there's an assumption that everybody likes positive ads and people dislike negative ads. Well, this table should quickly disabuse you -- basically tell you that that's not true.

If you take a look at "disliked," 46 percent on average -- that's almost 3,600 different people looking at 6 different ads -- they didn't like those ads. But look at the positive ads, it's about 35 percent. Yes, negative ads are viewed with more disgust by the American public than positive ads, that's no surprise. But look at "untruthful," it's about the same, or "unbelievable." That is that there's not this huge outpouring of support for positive ads and so this is one thing that's important is you want to have baselines. You want to be able to put these data into context and certainly this provides

one look. And this kind of data's up on the Vandy website.

To continue, just to go through -- and I also wanted to be able to turn over to my partner in crime, Doug Rivers, to discuss some of the specifics of the methodology -- let me just give you some other quick looks at what these data can provide.

Here is the public's emotional reaction to the Obama ads -- to two Obama ads. One is the "America the Beautiful," which is in the green, and the "Number One," which was a series of attacks about the lack of accomplishments Romney had in the state of Massachusetts. And, as you can see, there are some things that are similar, but there's also some differences. The "America the Beautiful" ad made people a little bit more disgusted, a little bit more angry. Again, that's useful to know, and remember we have a baseline to compare this. That is, we had those 10 ads in the bank that we can use as a standard to judge whether this ad is really kind of crossing the line and moving the discussion in ways that the public does not like.

Here's specific evaluations of the ad. "Unfair," "untruthful," "negative" -- we actually ask people if they think an ad is negative and a lot of times, again, reflecting the problem with the term. You know, many people think positive ads are negative, especially if they're partisans from the other side. But notice the "memorable" line, that is that the "America the Beautiful" ad is memorable. And one of the things that we see from these data is that as ads generate more disgust, they also become more memorable, which is not necessarily a surprise, but, again, it underscores why negative ads may be so powerful.

Here is a graph looking at Romney's "Doing Fine" ad which attacked Obama for making that statement at a press conference that the private sector is doing just fine, and there were a lot of different version of this particular ad, but we ran with one

ad. And here's simply a comparison of the Democrats and the Republicans and the pure Independents, and it works roughly as you think. But there are big partisan gaps -- again, no surprise -- but look at how the Independents are right in between, underscoring the value of going after 200 pure Independents. It's costly, it's harder because there aren't all that many left in this polarized world that we now live in, but it's important because these are the ones who are probably going to end up deciding the election, so we see those breakdowns.

And here's, finally, some amazing differences. Obama ran an ad talking about the Ledbetter Act and other things that were important to women. And I decided to compare Republican males versus Democratic females in all of these various measures. Look at the "disgust" level, "unfair." Nearly 60 percent of Republican males thought the ad was unfair, about 5 percent of Democratic women.

Look at the negative measure. Again, nearly 40 percent of Republican males labeled this positive ad as negative. And look at the "memorable" scale, really stark, dramatic differences. So the real advantage of this is we're going to have systematic, reliable data to be able to judge these ads to provide not only description about the particular ad, but be able to put in a context that you can then do some evaluation. You can do some judgment. It is not that this is the end-all and be-all of rating ads or evaluating ads, but it's an important piece of the puzzle that we now have available because of changes in technology and development in Internet polling.

And so, to deal with some of those issues, I'm going to turn it over to my partner in crime, Doug Rivers, who is a professor of political science at Stanford and the chief scientist at YouGov.

MR. RIVERS: So John wanted me to say a few words about the methodology used on this project. This is not a project that could be done using

conventional telephone polling. It's kind of hard to show people ads over the phone. So it's a case where the newer technology of Internet surveying is essential.

Most of the campaigns themselves have moved their online ad testing from focus groups, where they used to be conducted, to online surveys. And Internet polls make a lot of people nervous. Some newspapers won't report them because they're under the misimpression that the samples are composed of a bunch of 23-year-old computer geeks.

Here's how we do it at YouGov. Since 2004, we've recruited about 2 million panelists, primarily via Internet advertising. For a particular study, the 600 people who are chosen each week to view these ads are selected to be representative of the U.S. citizen population in terms of age, gender, race, education, geography, voter registration, and about seven other variables. The sample does not have non-Internet users because of all of the people on the panel take the surveys via the Internet, but what we do is we substitute low-technology users with similar demographics to represent the non-Internet population that's missed in our panel.

Does it work? Well, in 2006, 2008, and 2010, we hit the national election vote outcome within 1 percent. So this is the 2010 midterm, the picture looks similar for the other years. So the performance in terms of the aggregate national results has been quite good. According to the National Council on Public Polls, the average error for the YouGov polls for the 2010 midterms at the state level was 1.7 percent versus 2.4 percent for live interview or telephone polls, and 2.6 for IVR or robo-polls.

So we think this methodology provides an accurate way of getting a picture of how people actually assess these ads.

MR. WEST: Okay, so we've heard the presentation. They're going to be doing these surveys periodically through the general election, so I think over a period of

time we're going to have very interesting evaluation and data that you can use to compare the different ads on the various dimensions that they talk about.

So I want to introduce the other three members of our panel and get their reactions and then we'll have a conversation. I'd like to welcome Lynn Vavreck to Brookings. Lynn is a professor of political science at UCLA. She's the co-author of a forthcoming Princeton University e-book entitled, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Election*. And the first three chapters of that book actually are going to be out by mid-August, so you'll have a chance to look at them online and then the rest of the book will come out after that. She's also the author of a different Princeton University book entitled, *The Message Matters: The Economy and Campaign Effects in Presidential Elections*. I think everybody's going to be watching to see how 2012 stacks up on that dimension.

Ken Goldstein is the president of Kantar Media, which is the leading company for tracking campaign ad buys. You see many of his data on *Ad Trends* in leading newspapers and television stories. Previously he was a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin. He's the author of *Campaign Advertising and American Democracy* and, also, *Interest Groups, Lobbying and Participation in America*.

Jeremy Peters is a political reporter with *The New York Times*. He covers the presidential campaign with a focus on media and advertising and I'm sure many of you have read his stories about the candidates and various groups are using ads to convey their messages to voters. Previously he spent several years in *The Times* Albany office, where he chronicled the ups and downs of Elliot Spitzer and David Patterson, among others. And he was also part of *The Times* team that won a Pulitzer Prize in 2009 for breaking news.

So Lynn, why don't I start with you? You've written extensively on the

factors that effect presidential campaigns. You've written about the economy, you've written on ads and the media, and so on, so when we're thinking about 2012, what is it that sways elections?

MS. VAVRECK: Well, I think that's a great place to start. Why are we interested in studying political advertising? And the obvious answer might be because it matters to election outcomes. And the problem with that is that that answer's not so obvious. If we just looked at what consultants and candidates and journalists and ad buyers and ad makers wanted us to believe, we would come away thinking that the advertising was really the driving force behind any campaign at any level. But the academic research is a little more mixed than that and as a way of introduction to that set of findings; I thought I would offer you two vignettes.

The first is a story about the 2000 presidential election. The last weeks of the 2000 campaign saw George Bush behind in critical battleground states that he needed to win. The media was talking non-stop about a decades-old drunk driving arrest, not helping his chances. And in states where there was no political advertising, where neither candidate was on the air with an ad, Al Gore surged in the polls.

In the battleground states where Bush outspent Gore by five to four, he showed more ads, he gained in the polls. This research is in a book about the 2000 election that came out of the University of Pennsylvania by Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson, and their claim is that that advertising in the last weeks of the 2000 campaign in the battleground by George Bush, his ability to outspend Al Gore helped him win that 2000 election. Okay, ads matter. They're critical. They determine a presidential election.

Okay, another vignette from Texas in the same year, 2000, Governor Rick Perry running for re-election. In a standard move he ran a series of get-to-know-you

ads. And in an un-standard move, he allowed a team of academics to help him assign the ads. So they randomly decided which ads to air when and how often to air them. And the idea was to run a true experiment and then find out if these ads actually mattered.

And in Rick Perry's case, the ads did matter when they were on the air. His favorabilities went up by 5 percentage points while the ads were on television, but the minute that the ad came off the air his favorability ratings fell back to their original level, okay. So that research was published in the *American Political Science Review* by Gerber, Gimpel, Green, and Shaw.

Okay, so those two projects tell very different stories about the effectiveness of advertising. In the latter case, the ads didn't matter very much at all. The decay was rapid, so the effect was there, but then it rapidly went away. In the first case the ads were determinative.

So we have these two possibilities: ads matter a lot or they matter very little. And in 2006, I set out with some colleagues from UCLA to try to figure out how rapidly the effects of ads decayed. And our takeaway after looking at the 2000, 2004 presidential elections, and governor, House, and Senate races in 2006, was that the effects of advertising decayed very rapidly. In the presidential elections most of the effect of the ad is gone within three or four days of its airing. A small effect will persist up to four to five weeks, but in the down ballot elections those effects are gone within a day of the ad being on the air.

Okay, so this brings us to this question of why are we so interested in advertising and why is there so much of it? And I think the answer to that is it goes along with this story that Darrell is talking about in terms of the change in advertising. So, in the book that I'm working on on the 2012 election, with John Sides at George Washington,

we've spent a lot of time looking at media coverage and we see some similar patterns.

The coverage of the campaign drives public opinion and as the coverage changes, public opinion changes. So there's a nice fidelity and responsiveness there. Now, unlike the ads, the media coverage changes during the primaries pretty rapidly. So we can see these fluctuations, but advertising typically we see the decay and then it may be a week or two before another memorable ad comes out and so you can't track it the way you can media coverage, day by day by day. But there is this nexus between advertising and media and, you know, there are people who specialize in this. And the fact now that an advertisement isn't just meant to persuade, I think, is very important and it makes John and Doug's project, I think, very timely and very important.

So advertisements are now reflections of the campaign. They are seen, I think, as a way of branding the candidates and their campaigns and they are produced to get media coverage. They want people like Jeremy to write about these ads. And so they reflect the values of the candidate and his or her campaign. They reflect the character of the candidate and his or her campaign. And the fact that the persuasive effects of ads are fleeting and decay rapidly, I think, is becoming less important even, as scientists, we are more and more able to demonstrate it because of data, because of technology and going to people and having them rate these advertisements is a way to keep the information from the ads in the media, which we have demonstrated does effect people.

And so I think that the effects of ads may in themselves be fleeting and decay rapidly, but their enduring effect through the media is important and is happening more and more as the news hole gets larger to fill. And this kind of material gives reporters something new to talk about instead of just is this ad truthful? What does it say? How does that play into the horse race and the strategy? And so I think there will

be lots of interesting stories to come about how the public reacts to both positive and negative ads and, hopefully, we will get some stories about these positive promotional ads that, as John mentioned, often contain massive exaggeration pm behalf of the candidates promoting themselves.

MR. WEST: Okay, thank you, Lynn. You're asking the question, why are there so many ads? And, of course, there's the old line from campaign consultants saying, you know, 80 percent of the money we spend on advertising is wasted. The problem is we don't know which part it is.

Ken, you have all the data on ad buys, so what are you seeing this year in terms of new and interesting developments?

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Thank you and thanks everyone for having me here. Let me speak about that and also sort of more generally give you my take on how this all matters, why we still, even in this age of -- I think you called it, nanotargeting -- why we still see tremendous amounts of money spent on local spot television, why it's so negative, and then maybe take a couple secs and agree with Lynn about why this is a particularly exciting project for geeks like us.

You're not included in that, Jeremy. (Laughter) Jeremy's like the cool reporter person, the rest of us are just the political scientist nerds up here.

MR. WEST: Actually, at Brookings we consider "geek" a positive word.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Oh, okay. (Laughter) Then you'd be a geek.

MS. VAVRECK: Geeks are trending.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: You know, Lynn was sort of talking about Florida. Listen, the fact of the matter is this is a -- it's phenomenally difficult to measure with precision what the effect of advertising is. And the person who bought George W. Bush's ads in 2000 always used to say with a big smile on his face that it was most efficient ad

buy in history in Florida, that he didn't waste a single dollar on Florida.

Now, obviously, with a big smile on his face and joking, what he meant was, you know, a little too close for comfort for the Bush people, but if you're looking at it as a complete economic efficiency, they didn't waste any money in Florida because they won by 530 votes or whatever it was. Anything they would have spent more than that would be a waste. But they obviously don't think like that. They're obviously not trying to get efficiency in that particular way.

But advertising very, very much matters at the margin. I mean, we look at the 2000 election, phenomenally close; the 2004 election, also phenomenally close: 70,000 votes go the other way in Ohio and we're talking about President John Kerry; 2002, big Republican victory taking back the U.S. Senate; the very narrow victories in Minnesota and Missouri; 2006, 2008, 2010 swing elections, and advertising clearly wasn't decisive in those.

So, can I tell you whether it's 1.2 percent or 1.4 percent or 1.6 percent? No. But what I can say is, in elections where the margin is likely to matter -- in 2012, it's looking like an election where the margin can matter -- those ads can be decisive.

Now, what are they trying to do? I think have sort of have to understand the fundamentals of an election, which help you understand what effect the ads are going to have and why they're going to be so negative. Presidential elections are clearly a referendum on the incumbent. All right, we all have our geek political science cards and we have to say that and we actually believe it and believe in that brilliant political science -- I'm always a little embarrassed to say this, Tom. Tom has, you know, the University of Michigan roots that -- as does Jeremy.

A big finding in political science, right? Democrats vote for Democrats, Republicans vote for Republicans. That's our major huge, huge finding, but that's reality.

So you take party ID, you take the nature of the times, that doesn't leave much room for advertising to have an effect.

Even if this election, like previous presidential elections, is going to be a referendum on the incumbent, the challenger still needs to reach that threshold level of credibility. It's nice now teaching freshmen. I actually see some people out here who might remember the 1980 election, unlike most people who I usually talk to.

All the fundamental factors were in Ronald Reagan's direction, but that race didn't pop until very late when he reached that threshold level of credibility. So the reason why we're seeing such intense negative advertising right now for Obama is Obama knows there's not much he can do to change his own numbers and he's trying to define Mitt Romney.

Why do we see so much on local television? Yeah, campaigns can nanotarget and talk about that left-handed cat owner who might be cross-pressured on a particular issue in Columbus, Ohio. But those people who they are able to target tend to have already made up their minds. So if you think about why the Internet is such a great thing for commercial advertisers -- why does it work for Google? -- because Google -- if you search on television or "washing machine," it will then serve you lots of ads for cars or washing machines.

Normal Independent swing voters don't go search on Obama and Romney. You know who does that? You, us, partisans, mostly people who have already made up their mind. Mostly people who have already made up their minds are watching Fox News or watching MSNBC or listening to Rush Limbaugh or listening to Rachel Maddow or going to the niche Internet sites are identifiable on voter lists.

So those campaigns, ultimately, are looking for people who are going to be exposed to a message and not have any predispositions. So that's why you see

intense amounts of money. I estimate that there's going to be over \$3 billion just spent on local spot television this year. Someone's watching *Jeopardy*, someone's watching *Wheel of Fortune*, someone's watching the local news to get a school closing or see the high school sports score, not because they have any predispositions. Whereas someone who's watching Fox or MSNBC or listening to Rush Limbaugh or is on these voter lists is on those lists precisely because they do have that predisposition.

So I think we're going to see -- like John Geer over here, I spent much of my career going, oh, no, it's not the most negative ever. (Laughter) I actually checked it this last weekend. There are two positive spots on the air that have aired a total of 42 times. And there's been something like 14,000 spots that aired this last weekend. They're both Spanish-language spots. (Laughter) Those are only two positive spots in rotation now. One spot by Obama that I think has aired 21 times and another spot by Romney which has also aired a handful of times are the only positive spots that are on the air now. So it's not 100 percent, but it's pretty darn close.

I think you're going to continue to see an intense negative focus by the Obama campaign on Romney. It's going to be interesting to see if the Romney campaign changes that up a little bit because they're also going to need to introduce their person.

Last point why I'm very excited about this and I guess I can say this now because I have tenure, right? The big mistake in all of my work on political advertising and the big mistake of many people who cover it is we were just counting bombs. This many ads, this many ads, where, of course, different ads we might think have different qualities and different effects, one ad could be worth more than another ad. And so in all the geeky models I used to do, an ad was an ad was an ad was an ad. And I see someone out there who used to code those ads for me. (Laughter)

And this gives us the potential to make that a little bit more nuanced, and

we certainly have the tonnage. And as someone who's spent their whole academic career counting the tonnage and as someone who's now running a company that does the tonnage, we also have the creative.

So the ability to say this particular ad aired this many times, but is rated on these various different ways, like John was showing, is very interesting. And is not only going to be very interesting for political scientists trying to figure out the impact of advertising, but I would check your website. I'll bet you'll get some hits from Boston and Chicago. (Laughter)

MR. WEST: So it's interesting that you say the only two positive spots are being run in Spanish. And I just wondered what that tells us about what the candidates are thinking about: Latino voters. You don't have to answer that now.

Jeremy, you report on the media and advertising. And this is an interesting election because we have an incumbent president who, on the one hand, is likeable, but the economy is bad, and then a challenger who comes from the business community, but is really rich and hasn't released his tax returns yet. So I was wondering if you could talk to us about a couple things, the messaging wars and what you're seeing.

And then when we were watching this "America the Beautiful" ad, you were distinguishing to me memorable versus effective in saying the ad might be memorable, but does that mean it will be effective? Jeremy.

MR. PETERS: Right; and I think that that is the key question when looking at that ad. I'm guessing by, you know, the murmurs that I heard in the room when that ad was shown on the screen here, a lot of you knew what it was, a lot of you probably thought it was pretty funny. But one of the things that I thought immediately when I saw that ad was that ad is not for the people in this room. That ad is supposed to be for the people who are persuadable voters, and in that sense I think John's research

showed that that ad seemed to be very polarizing. And in that sense, I wonder if it was very effective at doing what it was supposed to do, and that being persuading voters.

I think voters tend to recoil when they see a candidate being mocked. And those ads, while being very humorous and entertaining to partisans, are not particularly effective to swing voters. And that brings me to a point that I think is very different about this election.

When you're talking about marketing or selling any commercial product what you're not doing is trying to convince people that they hate the product they already have, so, therefore, they want to go out and buy a new product. You know, when Ford is trying to sell you a car, they're not trying to convince you that you hate your Chevy. But with political advertising so much of it is meant to, at least it seems this way, is meant to make you hate the other candidate. And that, I think, in this election is a very different thing.

When you talk to Republican pollsters, one of the things that they'll tell you is that for all the hatred of Barack Obama on the far right, swing voters don't hate him. In fact, they find him still to be kind of a very magnetic, alluring figure. And those who voted for him in 2008 still feel very much wrapped up in what he represented as a candidate, that he was this transformative political figure that they feel more of an emotional attachment to than they would for an ordinary candidate. That's very different from what we've seen in recent elections. You know, John Kerry was easily mocked. Michael Dukakis was easily mocked. George W. Bush was easily mocked. Barack Obama is not as easy to caricature. And when ad makers do try to caricature him, they run the risk of offending swing voters, but not just offending them, but they also just kind of run the risk of wasting their money on the message because the ad is going to fall flat.

So what you're seeing in this election is what I've started calling the "soft

kill”: going after Barack Obama in a much more subtle way. And the way that a lot of Republican ad makers have devised their message there is by trying to figure out what it is that makes Barack Obama a less appealing figure than he was in 2008. And when you ask people that, what they’ll say is, well, he hasn’t delivered on his promises. He wasn’t what he advertised. I feel disappointed.

So it’s that playing on a sense of disappointment that is the most common sentiment in a lot of the Super PAC ads and in many of the ads on the Romney side, reminding people that, okay, this guy isn’t somebody who’s loathsome, isn’t somebody who’s an evil, horrible politician who’s ruined your lives. He’s somebody who let you down. And I think that going forward that’s the narrative that we’re going to see play out more and more in Republican ads.

MR. WEST: Okay. I have a follow-up question for John and Doug. When I was looking down the different dimensions you’re measuring from voters, you had words like, “hopeful,” “happy,” “disgusted,” “angry,” and “worried.” And I’m just wondering if the reason you chose those words, are you assuming that this is going to be an ad where emotion really is important, is really going to dictate things, and might even outweigh kind of the reason aspect of voter decision-making. Either one of you.

MR. GEER: Well, I mean, our purpose in asking, we did ask these five emotions, and there’s a vast literature in psychology and political science that actually has a five-point scale that you ask about each of these particular emotions. So how does this ad make you feel? You know, extremely disgusted, quite a bit, somewhat, and it goes down to not at all. We just wanted to have these five emotions. They’ve been pretty battle-tested, so to speak, in the academic literature and we wanted to have these as standards to go forward. So we wanted to get emotional reactions.

We also wanted to get evaluations, like fair or unfair. We thought that

was important. So we put together a series of variables that would allow people to sort out these ads.

We also have measures of effectiveness. So, for example, the "America the Beautiful" ad actually does move swing voters. Romney has a 16 point lead in his positive ad, "Ready to Lead." That shrinks to 3 points among the pure Independents when he faces this attack. It's not a pure experiment, but, again, we can get some leverage on that the polls have been pretty steady. And so this is showing these things matter.

In fact, of all the ads, it's not a big surprise; Obama, you can't move his numbers very much with positive or negative ads. And that's not a surprise. In fact, we were just talking about that. But you can move Romney's numbers through attacks, and that's, again, speaking to what other people said.

So we have this ability and basically, you know, we're going to develop a store of information that allows us to make a judgment. So let's say there's a "Swift Boat" ad, the equivalent of a "Swift Boat" ad that comes out. We want to know how -- does it really disgust the American public? Because we don't know what the public's real reaction to those ads were. We do know that it aired in 1 percent of the markets in 2004, and by September, according to a Gallup poll, 80 percent knew the term. That's through media commentary. And what you want to do is make sure this media commentary is as informed as possible, and so here's a chance to democratize the process, get reliable valid indicators, as Doug demonstrated, about what the public thinks, and we have these various measures. And we've decided to go with a bunch of them so people can kind of pick and choose.

And we, you know, have time constraints; we couldn't go on for a long period of time for the survey. And so we were interested in getting these. And, again, it's

the baseline. We can compare positive to negative. We can compare swing voters to partisans. We can also compare particular ads. It just gives us a lot of leverage to go beyond kind of seat-of-the-pants assessments to actually have real data to be able to make these judgments.

And some of these judgments will be surprising. I mean, people are surprised that positive ads are viewed as untruthful as negative ads. That's what the data say.

MR. RIVERS: One point. You know, we attempt to get into the field and get reactions to these things as quickly as we can before the ads have actually been exposed to very many people out in the real world. And that's the big problem with trying to figure out the impact of ads, you know, because in the real world, except when you're up by 25 points, you don't allow some political scientists to randomly allocate your ads. So, you know, what we normally see in the world is the ads are put in the places where they're thought to be effective, so you can't tell whether they're actually moving anything.

The design of this project is such that the groups that see different ads are comparable. And so if we measure their attitudes after they see the ads, we are getting at least a reasonable indicator of what the effect is.

MR. WEST: Okay. For our other three panelists I have a question about unfair and/or misleading ads. Because it seems to me like in the past there were times where the media were strong and if they came out in FactCheck and otherwise saying, you know, this ad really crosses the line, candidates would feel timid, would pull the ad, and so on. This year it seems like candidates are not being ashamed and certainly the Super PACs are not being ashamed. And so my fear is this year we're going to see a lot more misleading and unfair ads, probably from both sides.

So I'm just curious for each of you, your view in terms of what risks are

voters facing this year from unfair and/or misleading ads? And what can voters do and what role can this project play in kind of helping to highlight ads that cross the line?

MR. PETERS: One of the most interesting statistics that I've heard this entire election was during the Florida primary. And the Romney campaign ran this ad that was just basically a clip of the *NBC Nightly News* taken from the night that Newt Gingrich was found guilty of ethics violations by the House of Representatives. And it was just Tom Brokaw saying that Newt Gingrich has been found guilty. And that ad, Ken's statistics showed us, ran more than any other ad the entire Florida primary.

But when you talk to Google, what they said was that the most commonly searched term in all of the political terms that were searched that week was "Newt Gingrich ethics violation." So I think people are now much more sophisticated about what they see in political ads than they have been in the past. And now that they are often sitting down on a couch watching television with their computer, they can very easily Google something that they see in an ad.

I think one of the things that is different this time around, or at least seems to be more prevalent to me, is this use of news reports that seem to be generated by campaign opposition research, using the findings of those news reports in ads almost immediately. And you saw this most recently with a *Washington Post* report on outsourcing. They called -- it's that Mitt Romney and Bain Capital were "pioneers in outsourcing." As soon as that report hit, the Obama campaign was ready with an ad. Immediately it went up on the air citing the *Washington Post* report, saying that Romney was a pioneer in outsourcing, and that drove a lot of the conversation for the week. So I think it's not just using attack ads. It's using the media to create fodder for your attack ads.

MS. VAVRECK: And I want to echo something that Ken said because I

don't think that we can say this enough times or loud enough, that most people are not interested in politics the way we are, and they're not paying attention right now.

And you asked the question what should we be worried about in terms of all of these attack ads and voters, and what Ken said about the local news is it's an astonishing pattern. If I could show you the graphic you would gasp just at seeing where political ads are run, and they are run around the sort of late fringe, that early evening news, the local news. And what's great about that is that you're hitting a part of the population that typically isn't interested in politics, so a lot of people -- the people who see political ads -- how do I want to say this? The person who is exposed to the most political advertisements is a person who is not that interested in politics and may not even be thinking about voting just because they have the television on from 4:00 to 7:30 in the afternoon while they're doing something and they're seeing all these ads.

So for people who are really interested in politics, who are searching out information, it's a completely different experience than this mildly engaged voter who's watching the early and late evening news. So I think it is interesting that the content and styles of these advertisements now differ and the web-only ads look and sound and feel and contain different information than the broadcast ads. And I'm not really sure that we have -- we don't have a lot of research on things like that.

And Doug was asking me earlier about what do we know about political creatives and how different creatives affect people differently. And the answer is we don't know a lot about that. But I think that, you know, that is going to be a really interesting thing to watch is the broadcast versus these more, what do you call it, nano- or narrowcasting or whatever kinds of ads that are put out there for people who are searching.

MR. WEST: But, Ken, if it is the inadvertent audience that's going to

decide this election and if there are a lot of unfair or misleading ads, isn't that a recipe for disaster just from the standpoint of democracy, regardless of who wins?

MR. GOLDSTEIN: You've got a little bit of a stacked deck up here because many of us on this stage are ones who are in the non-whining about negative ads camp. (Laughter)

SPEAKER: Here, here.

MS. VAVRECK: As long as it mentioned democracy.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: That's right. And I can cite a bunch of research that folks up here have done and that others have done showing that, yeah, we can all point to that outrageous ad or the ad that we think is unfair, but that on average people who are exposed to advertising in general, and negative advertising in particular, are more likely to be engaged, more likely to have factual information, and more likely to turn out. Not the case every time. It doesn't always have positive effects, negative ads having positive effects. But in the research of folks on this stage we've really never been able to find a negative effect.

Now, there's other political scientists who are in another camp and there's certainly lots of punditry that is always saying this is the most negative campaign ever. Don't do this because I once started a book going back and searching the *New York Times* for like the last 25 years, and having every election having whoever the *New York Times* reporter was saying this was the most negative year ever. (Laughter)

SPEAKER: Well, you're going to say (inaudible).

MR. RIVERS: Well, this one may be the most negative year ever.

MS. VAVRECK: Jeremy, it may be the first time you're right.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: You could actually be right this year, so maybe you should say it. But going back, you know, starting with Adam Clymer in 1980 and, you

know, Rick Berke and then every two years was saying the most negative ever.

MR. PETERS: But I'll be right.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Listen, if ads were the only source of information that people have and if one side had complete control of the megaphone, I would be more concerned. You know, you can look at what happened in the Wisconsin recall election. You can look at what's happening in the election now. Incredible amounts of money. Mitt Romney or Barack Obama is not going to win or not going to lose because they didn't have a chance to get their message out. John Kerry didn't lose because he didn't have a chance to get his message out.

One interesting thing, I want to sort of talk about what -- combine two things that Jeremy and Lynn talked about, this new strategy or new content, it will be very interesting to see what John and Doug find in the data about this, of using news reporters to deliver the negative hit. And that, I mean, many of you saw, I'm sure all of you saw, that it was just Tom Brokaw, 27 seconds straight to camera, and then Mitt Romney dragging a hand through the bushes there, which is their, you know, I take credit for this message. But 27 seconds straight out, Tom Brokaw. And then we saw it with John Harwood on another negative ad.

What's interesting about that is, and I always speak like a geek, but maybe to even speak more like a geek, ads have to be both credible, have people who are delivering a credible message, and they have to be delivered at people who can actually be influenced. So if you think about someone like Tom Brokaw, you know, incredibly credible person. He could say these things, but swing voters aren't watching him on the *NBC Nightly News*; people who are junkies, people who are fans.

Who goes and reads the Green Bay Packers blog all day? A Green Bay Packers fan, not someone who's not a football fan. The person who pays attention to a

lot of political news has a favorite team. And so if you have a favorite team and you're seeing these news sources on it, yeah, that might be a credible hit, but you're not going to be influenced because you already have your mind made up. But it's that combination of taking a reporter or a newscast which has that air of credibility -- we're going to be coding for Jeremy; we'll see if you end up in an ad -- having a news reporter who has that credibility, but able to target them at that person who's watching *Jeopardy* or *Wheel of Fortune* or the college football game, who's not watching that because they have those predispositions.

And I think that has potential to be powerful because you can measure lots of ads that are credible among your general sample of Independents, but if Independents aren't actually seeing them, it's not going to have an impact in the real world. But they can target some of these Independents with the paid media.

MS. VAVRECK: It's an interesting --

MR. WEST: But, I mean, I think Jeremy should be insulted if he doesn't end up in an ad this year.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Exactly.

MR. WEST: But I think your point is well taken that, you know, we need to pay attention both to the message and the messenger because in an era of massive public cynicism, using third-party validators that have more cache with voters is very important.

Why don't we open the floor to questions and comments from our audience if you can raise your hand? We have a question right here. I'm choosing you because you have the word "vote" on your T-shirt and we encourage people to vote here. If you can give us your name and organization, and if you can keep your question brief so we can get to as many people as possible.

MR. PROCTOR: Bob Proctor (phonetic), Johns Hopkins University, student. I was wondering what effect do you think advertisements have on the base and in turnout in elections. There was a lot of discussion about how much the base turns out in an election. Does advertising have any effect on that for either party?

MS. VAVRECK: I think ads drive interest in elections and I think they do that for the base as well as people who are not committed. And I think positive and negative ads do that, and particularly negative ads generate a lot of interest and I think that translates into participation.

MR. WEST: Right here on the aisle.

MS. OSHULL: I had a question about your project.

MR. WEST: Actually can you speak right into the microphone?

MS. OSHULL: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Kay Oshull (phonetic). I'm a retired Department of Labor employee. And when you have participants write "disgusted" or "angry," I was thinking when I'm watching an ad I could end up disgusted at the candidate who was running it, I could end up disgusted at his opponent, or disgusted at the political system in general. Do you measure for that? Does it make a difference in your study?

MR. GEER: Well, we just ask does this ad make you feel disgusted and so there's a bunch of different targets that it could be. So one of the first results we had was that Republicans, for instance -- true for Democrats as well, but partisans -- when they see attack ads from their own team, so to speak, they don't like the ad. They say it's disgusting. But what that means, in fact, John Sides convinced me of this pretty quickly - - well, actually not that quickly, but he convinced me -- that what's going on is that the disgust is aimed at Obama. That is that they see the attack and that's what's going on.

And so we don't have the exact target, but we do have, again, the

standard by which we can judge because it's being asked the same way every time. So that imagine the scenario where there's an ad that supposedly is going to disgust people, right, and it's turning people off. Well, we can have measures of that and we can then take that data and then compare it to other ads. Is it, in fact, you know, a standard deviation unit higher among -- and then we can break it up to different groups as among the pure Independents, among the Democrats, among the Republicans. So we have the ability to measure this in a way that is systematic and speaks to it, but we can't speak to the specific target because that's not the way the question is worded.

Doug, you want to --

MR. RIVERS: Yeah, but you can cross that with whether people find the ad persuasive or not.

MR. GEER: That's right.

MR. RIVERS: Because presumably, the Republicans who are disgusted with Obama because of the attack ad, found the ad convincing whereas the Democrats who were disgusted by it would reject it.

MR. WEST: Okay. There's a question right in the very back on the aisle, in the next to last row. Yeah -- the guy with his hand up.

SPEAKER: I'm wondering if you can tease out any differences between candidate-sponsored ads and independent-expenditure ads, and in particular whether there has been any effect from the "Stand by Your Ad" provision of BCRA where the candidate-expenditure ads have to say, "I'm Barack Obama and I approve this message."

MR. PETERS: I don't think -- I would be curious to hear -- I mean, I think I probably paid attention to these a lot more closely than the average voter, but I remember being in Iowa during the caucuses and the most common sentiment that I heard from voters is that they had no idea who was running any given ad. I think that the

disclaimers at the beginning -- more and more they're at the beginning; they used to be at the end. And I don't know if there's any tactical reason for that or not, but more and more people are tuning those out. And if they see the ad, it's often not from start to finish, so they miss that. And it's very difficult for them to tell where the ads are coming from.

Furthermore, the groups, because they all have very similar sounding names, I even think that that's lost on them and they're not able to differentiate between, you know, one Super PAC to the next.

MR. WEST: I once did a focus group in a Senate race where we showed them an ad and then immediately afterwards asked them a few questions, and one of them was who ran this ad? Only 60 percent of the people could identify the source of the ad they had just seen like 10 seconds before.

But John and Doug: can you candidate versus Super PAC ads?

MR. GEER: Well, in the 10 baseline ads that we have, there is 2 Super PAC negative ads: one attacking Romney, one attacking Obama. So right now we don't have many ads. But over the course of the campaign, let's say that the outrageous ads, the ones that are controversial, the game-changers, whatever, the ones that people like Fred Davis think we should run and maybe some of you in the audience, we should have enough Super PAC ads to be able to answer your question more at the end of the campaign season than right now because, hopefully, we'll have enough that we would be able to compare some of those. It won't necessarily be a test of tagline. It would be a test of were these ads collectively generating different emotional reactions or were they viewed as more unfair? So we will be able to get a little bit of leverage at that, not perfectly, but we'll be able to tell a little bit of a story.

MR. WEST: Right here, this gentleman has his hand up. And again, if you can give us your name and organization, please.

MR. BECKER: Eddie Becker, Free Speech Television. It seems to me that you might be able to collect additional data based on quantitatively how many ads you put out about how much the expenditures are independent of them making their own expenditures. And with the wisdom of the Supreme Court, which is to declare these expenditures as part of free speech, you may even be able to determine the amount of influence these buyers have on policies in the administrations.

MR. WEST: Okay. Ken, you want to answer that because you ad buy data that --

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Certainly one thing that academics and scholars have done in the past and people will do in the future with the advertising data which we had at the Wisconsin Advertising Project, which they now have at the Wesleyan Media Project in which a number of media sources use now from Kantar Media CMAG, is to go merge that with election results and public opinion surveys.

MR. WEST: Okay. Jim, if you can get the microphone over to him.

MR. SNIDER: Jim Snider from iSolon and the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. A quick methodological comment.

MR. WEST: Actually can you speak into the microphone, please?

MR. SNIDER: Yeah. A quick methodological comment and then my question. All the data that's been presented so far has had to do with presidential campaigns, but the title of today's event is, "New Ways of Evaluating Campaign Ads." And there's an implication that's been pointed out in the questions and the presentations that your findings are relevant to the other 499,000 elections that go on and campaigns in the United States. Clearly there are very significant differences, like logical negative advertising early, just completely different for a presidential versus a local campaign.

But my question has to do, and it's primarily directed to Ken, to insider

access to political ad buys. So it's valuable, competitive intelligence to know what the plan is. I don't consider this to be a problem in presidential campaigns, but it's a big problem in local campaigns where classically the local TV station, the sales guy would have an advance knowledge of ad buy and also is often part of one of the candidate's political teams -- not the news side, we're talking about the marketing side -- and is advising the candidate on how to buy ads and selling them and recommending it. So there's the clear potential for problems.

Now, I don't know in the new media realm if this is a problem. I imagine that campaigns try to guard themselves against giving away their negative -- you know, their ad campaigns ahead of time. How do campaigns guard themselves against tipping off their opponents, which is very valuable information? And to what extent do you sense this might be a problem? I don't think it's a problem at the federal level, but I do sense that it's a problem for, say, at a level of a congressional campaign or mayoral campaign.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Yeah, I really don't think it's a huge problem. You have people at television stations whose job is to sell ads and I don't know if they're members of one campaign or the other. I've certainly not heard about that. But their interest is in selling ads.

And they will certainly tip off people whenever there is an ad buy. And they tip off everybody when there is an ad buy, which is how people like Jeremy can get information about what's going to be bought down the line because the second a buy is made -- whether it's the Romney campaign, the Obama campaign, if the person running for dogcatcher has enough money to put on a television advertisement -- the second that salesperson gets off the phone, they're calling everybody else about that buy. So they may be leaking the information, and they certainly are, but not in any sort of partisan way where it's the secret Republican or the secret Democrat who's the guy in the sports

jacket at WKRP then telling the other side what's going on. They tell everybody.

MR. WEST: Okay. My colleague, Tom Mann, has a question up in front.

MR. MANN: One of the working hypotheses of this election year is that Super PAC money, together with their 501(c) affiliates, will have the greatest potential of impact beneath the presidential level -- House, Senate, and other races -- partly because of the possibility of dropping a lot of money late in the campaign with the other side not prepared to respond. What do we know about the impact of spending patterns, the use of ads at this level of government? And is there something we can garner from the new projects that would help us think about these advertising parachutes in the House and Senate elections?

MR. GEER: Well, let me take the second part and then maybe Lynn or somebody else can deal with the first. The project, and it actually speaks to the other question, there's no reason why we can't throw in any ad. So, for example, if, you know, I'm from Tennessee and so the "Call Me" ad from 2006 that was so controversial run by the Republican Party against Congressman Ford, we could put that, so to speak, in the hopper and we could take a look at it. There's obviously limited resources and the difficulty is that we do want to have the baseline, and we would have the baseline of presidential ads, which I'm not sure how that would necessarily work, but it is possible to be able to do it.

The additional difficulties are that let's say that a controversial ad is run in Missouri. You know, why would people in Arizona have much stake in reacting to these ads? So there's a lot of different problems. But, you know, there's no reason to think we can't. And in some cases, some of these ads begin to take on a national flavor and so we could be able to run it.

I mean, I think the real value of just this project is that when, you know,

let's say that some reporter and some commentator or some academic, that ad is really disgusting, it's going to turn off the American public, it's terrible. That may be true, but we'll actually now, at least at the presidential level, be able to have some data that will give us a handle on whether, in fact, that's the case. And that's the real advantage of this is that we're moving beyond kind of an elite discussion, in some sense, to use the term I had earlier, to try to democratize it into -- and also to make it systematic and reliable as well.

MS. VAVRECK: It's so important because we've just relied for way too long on assumptions in this area. The Harold Ford ad is a great example. You know, if he won, people would have written that election into history and said, you know, this inflammatory attack ad backfired. You know, he loses, it's, you know, a race-baiting, critical attack ad that changed the election at, you know, the 11th hour. And, you know, we don't know which one of those things is actually true and we don't know if that ad turned off voters in Tennessee. So I think, you know, what John and Doug are doing here is really important.

And I've just been counting the number of times people on the panel have actually said things that are -- we've just believed in these assumptions for so long and there have been five or six comments that we've all said just up here that your data could actually speak to and might prove that we're just wrong about the baseline things that we assume about attack advertising and promotional advertising.

But can a group parachute in in the last couple days, in the last week, of a governor, House, Senate, down ballot election and change the outcome of the election? I think absolutely in those last few days. But I think two other things are interesting here.

The first is we know that source credibility can matter when people know

who these sources are. So the trick is, I think, will there reach a point, whether it's in this election or in a future election, where voters figure out if the advertisement is not from the candidate, then I'm going to discount it heavily. And I think that day may be coming.

Why are candidates putting the tagline at the front of the ad, "I'm Barack Obama; I approved this message," instead of at the end? There's been some pretty neat research that shows that since the ads are becoming more attack-oriented, the candidates -- you don't want to play your ad, you know, Barack Obama is the worst president in American history and then say, "I'm Ben Quayle; I approved this message," right? Like you want to say that at the front before you've said anything inflammatory, so that it's not in people's minds, and then you can ease into it, play some music, show some images, and get to the Barack Obama's the worst, you know, at the end when you're not in your own voice taking accountability for it. So it is a strategic move.

But I think the source credibility and then also you have to have the right message to do that. And I think that's what's neat about what these guys are doing and bringing Fred Davis on board. I think he has a long list of these kinds of moments where the, you know, party calls him at the last minute and says save this seat for us, and he goes in with the right creative and does it. So I think he's a real addition to this project that can, you know, help us figure out what these ads are doing.

MR. GEER: Well, you ask about the impact that these Super PACs can have on down ballot elections and you're absolutely right, at the very end that could make a big difference. Well, one of the things that they've already started doing is forcing candidates to spend money early on. I mean, the classic example of this that springs to mind is with Claire McCaskill in Missouri. Crossroads has gone after her, American Crossroads, the Super PAC that was founded with the help of Karl Rove and other top Republican strategists, has been hammering her, just relentlessly, these ads that show

her this very unflattering picture that makes her look much heavier than she actually is, next, you know, arm-in-arm with Barack Obama, kind of like that famous image from the 2008 campaign with McCain and Bush, you know, with their arms around each other. And so what they did is they forced Claire McCaskill to go on the air earlier than she ordinarily would have. And, I mean, in an election that's going to be this close or is expected to be that close, spending that money early on is not something that she wanted to do.

MR. WEST: And the other thing with the Super PACs is there's a story that House Democrats have had difficulty getting incumbents, who they would assume would not be in tough races, to contribute to the DCCC. And Representative Cooper basically said, hey, I don't know what's coming down the line. There could be somebody who drops, you know, a couple million dollars into my race. I want to hold onto my money in case I need it. So they're not giving money to the party organizations at the levels that they have done in past races.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Two quick points about that. You can probably put on two of your hats, Tom. One is, you know, a longtime campaign reformer and the other is a social scientist.

Going in at the last minute with this one-sided flow is one of the reasons why it's been really difficult to figure out campaign effects because typically, in a competitive election, you don't have one side out-advertising the other.

MR. MANN: Exactly.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: So there might be part of you that has concern, but then they know the answer because this does set up that possibility. One of the reasons why it's so hard to find effects at the presidential level, because, unlike 2008, presidential elections are typically pretty equal.

That last point that Darrell made also was something very interesting about the outside groups and the Super PACs. If you're a candidate and you raise 12 million bucks and your election doesn't end up being competitive, either against you or for you, you still go and spend all that money out. These outside groups and Super PACs make very hard-headed decisions and triage decisions, and they will come in and out very quickly. So it gives them the flexibility to go in and maybe try and light up a race, advertise for a week, see if it moves numbers, and if it doesn't, unlike a candidate who's raised all that money and is going to stay in, they will pull it out immediately and go elsewhere. So it's going to be a big -- you know, if you're a poker player, a big tell is going to be when these groups go in and out of these races.

MR. WEST: But that suggests there actually could be some last-minute surprises this year --

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Absolutely.

MR. WEST: -- just based on that type of payer.

In the very back, we have a gentleman with his hand up.

MR. SCANS: Curtis Scans (phonetic). We've worked together, Darrell.

MR. WEST: Yep. (Laughter) Thank you for joining us.

MR. SCANS: My, you know, question is essentially an elaboration of what Tom raised, which is to say ads in presidential elections are less important than they are in every level below that because by the time the most over-covered event in American politics, you know, is concluded, you have your debates, you have your, you know, traveling entourage, you have your front-page stories, you know about who the candidates are and your choices. You have none of those things below the level of president. And, you know, the ads have much more effect there and cannot be counted there by impartial sources because they won't do it. You had a Kane-Allen debate, you

know, this past weekend, no television station covered it, you know. We did a study of 10 states, general election, gubernatorial, senatorial, and congressional campaigns, and we found that 82 percent of the broadcast outlets covered none of them, and those covered them, none of them covered them prime time. What you don't have in races below the president is any superego.

MR. WEST: Okay. We have a question in the back right there.

MR. LADD: Hi. I'm John Ladd (phonetic) from Georgetown. First of all, this looks like a really great project and the data's going to be really great. The one question I have is I wonder whether, looking at some of the data, I wonder whether a lot of them seem to be -- they have a lot of self-reports of things, like self-reports -- particularly I was concerned about things like "memorable" and other things like that lecture. You're all familiar with literature in social psychology and in political science, but we're all skeptical a little bit of self-reports. I wonder, I'm sure there are strategies you can use to get around that, just asking people -- getting at something like memorable by asking people, you know, in a little while about the ad again or getting at effects these other ways. But I'm sure you've thought about this and have strategies, so I wonder if you could talk a little bit about strategies for getting around this problem of asking people about effects, even asking about emotional impacts and things like that, which, you know, may be a good measure sometimes, but maybe not good measures other times. Thanks.

MR. GEER: Well, I mean, Doug can address this as well, I mean, the concern about recall often is did you see this ad and what did you think of it? And then there's that whole problem, which is a total nightmare, John, as you know. But in this case, everybody has seen the ad, right, so it's not a matter of recall. It's just a matter of what is their emotional reaction? So my position is that I put up the emotional questions, for example, anger and disgust. They're asked right after the ad because I wanted to see

what their visceral, in some sense, reactions were to these particular spots, and they all have seen them. So that was just simply a strategic decision to get that, to capture it.

Is there a decay to those effects? Surely. You know, Lynn was talking about those kinds of data. But, again, because we're comparing a whole bunch of different ads, we can get leverages. Was people's initial visceral reaction different for ad X versus another ad? And if you have a "Swift Boat" ad or the equivalent, is there, in fact, a big shift? So that's what we're trying to get at.

And you're right, I mean, there's a variety of issues, like, you know, what exactly does "memorable" mean? We actually do, by the way, have -- which we haven't coded -- we actually asked people what do you remember about the ad, and they write it down in an open-ended format, which is, you know, going to be great for folks like you and I after the election when we sit down and try to write up some results. But, you know, I could try to do something with it, but given the quick turnaround time of the media, coding open-ended comments seems something for you and I to do after the election, not before. But let Doug weigh in.

MR. RIVERS: Well, John promised not to say the word "endogenous," but I'll say it. The self-reports are endogenous. (Laughter)

MR. GEER: I had that in the pool that you'd say it first, by the way, Doug. (Laughter)

MS. VAVRECK: Endogenous to what?

MR. RIVERS: But, you know, self-reports are what you've got in a contemporaneous study. The one advantage we have is these people are all members of a panel and they take surveys on a periodic basis and so we can actually go back and measure memorability later on by, you know, ability to identify which ads they saw or didn't see. So I think there may be some analytical way around that.

MR. WEST: Okay, we have time for a couple more questions. Right here is one.

MR. SAUNDERS: Thank you. My name's Matt Saunders (phonetic). I'm a student at Princeton University. My question looks at social media.

First, how effectively are these campaigns using them, especially with the type of nanotargeting that you were talking about where people elect to give all this information? You can, you know, single out those people who would be really interested in some sort of ads and, also, the fact that they have choice, that they really don't have to go and then click on that ad.

The second one is does the effect of an ad once it's placed on social media change? You know, we see all of these, like the "America the Beautiful" ad or "These Hands" ad on TV, and then you see it on YouTube when a friend who you do trust as an independent critiquer of these types of things puts it up and you see this. Does that change your mind at all?

So I just generally want to see where new media is kind of leading the charge in all this.

MR. PETERS: Well, I know that campaigns consider that, what you were just talking about, getting a video in someone's Facebook feed, to be a very valuable form of communication and they try to do that. Because, as you say, it's a trusted group of friends and people, you know, they see it, it has much more impact than something that they can just kind of, you know, click on on the side of their Facebook page or whatever.

I'm skeptical overall at using social media to persuade anybody. I think what's more important is using it as a Get out the Vote effort. I think the Obama campaign has been particularly good at this, but don't count Romney out either. They

have, you know, kind of an unwritten about, but very sophisticated, online effort. And they've been doing this exact same kind of thing, trying to get their video out through Facebook streams. And I think, you know, when November comes around it could be, you know, something that tips the scale.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: With the social media it is a terrific way to communicate with people who are already going to vote for you, perhaps to mobilize them and definitely to raise money. And I always sort of risk sounding like, you know, a Luddite, oh, ignore all that Internet stuff. But it's still the case, and even the Obama campaign in 2008 was all Internet; 2012, a very sophisticated digital social media presence. They used all of that new media to raise a bunch of money. And you know where they spend that money?

SPEAKER: On television.

MS. VAVRECK: On television.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: On local television, on the old media.

And then, you know, I'm very careful about guarding my partisanship, but my mom, the Massachusetts committed Democrat who's probably watching us now, she gets an ad and she sends it to all of her friends. Nary an undecided voter ever sees that. (Laughter) But Mom and all her friends in Western Massachusetts get all upset about it, and I think that's one of the problems for the campaigns targeting social media.

MR. WEST: So a great shout-out to Ken's mother. (Laughter)

In the very back there's a question.

SPEAKER: Thanks, Mr. West. I'm a producer here in television in the city, so I'll speak for news and go into some of the questions that were put up earlier. Before I go any further, I started out at NBC downstairs and then went upstairs to local. And I want to give a great greeting to a former peacock, Eleanor Clift, who is with us

today.

When I stated in television, I did the morning show and we'd have to bust out a rundown, and that's essentially dropping in commercials to make up the back time, which is what you see minus the commercials on television. And ad placement is pretty competitive. It was so to the extent then that opposing campaigns would have spots during the same commercial break and they do try to go for the prize -- ad placement for the prize programming or ads ran in the cut-in for *The Today Show* in our 4:00, 5:00, and 6:00 broadcasts and then afterward or even during the 11:00 newscast. So, I mean, they're very targeted and specific efforts to convince people, especially people in this area at the time, to vote one way or another in a campaign.

My question on that is your perspectives on how ad placement is today for the Senate race in Virginia, and an effort to move swing voters in the Commonwealth toward one campaign or the other. Thanks.

MR. GOLDSTEIN: Pod placement's crucial. The campaigns pay attention to that. One of the ways they use our data is to make sure that one side isn't getting a better pod placement than the other. Quite frankly, there's so much volume that if you're going to be watching local news in Virginia this fall, all you're going to see is political advertising.

Now, I think we were talking about the I take credit for this ad, when they're going back to back to back, it's hard to know who's taking credit for what, right? (Laughter) Because it literally can be, you know, six 30-second ads in a row. And I know Jeremy's about to go do a project where he's going to sit and, you know, actually watch these live. And it'll be interesting to see if you can tell when one starts and another begins.

MR. PETERS: Well, people are also confused by --there's this one ad

that opens with Barack Obama speaking to -- I believe it was the speech that made him famous in 2004 at the Democratic National Convention. And it's actually an attack ad against Obama. And the people who are watching it start out thinking like, oh, my god, this is great, you know. And you can see the positive shift through the roof from the Democrats, like this is fantastic. (Laughter) And then, of course, it turns and to watch the line on the screen just plummeted is entertaining.

MR. WEST: So it used to be a golden oldie, but it doesn't turn out that way.

MR. PETERS: Right.

MS. VAVRECK: I think it's an exciting time for political advertising because I think all these things are going to force the creative people in the field to get more creative. And when I was thinking about this panel, I went back and watched a lot of my favorite political ads from the last, you know, 60-whatever years. And one of the things that was great about Reagan's ads in '84 is that they really did make this big effort to change the type of advertising that they wanted to put out there. And so everybody remembers the, you know, "It's Morning in America" for what it said and the visuals, but what's also very interesting about that ad is the pacing of the voiceover and, you know, sort of like these long, you know, interstitial like silences in the ad where you just hear music. And I think those kinds of things, people are going to have to do more and more of it, but the sound of ads is going to have to change to signal that this is now a different ad or maybe just the lack of sound. You know, silence will make people turn to their television because we never hear that anymore.

And so I think those kinds of creative things are going to have to happen. And for people who love advertising like we all do it's, I think, going to be a very interesting, you know, 15 years.

MR. WEST: And humor often is a great distinguishing quality, so I'm predicting some funny ads somewhere along the line. But I think I want to agree with Lynn, it is going to be a fascinating election. It's going to be an interesting test of the three Ms: money, media, and message. What matters the most and under what types of circumstances.

So I want to wish John Geer and Doug Rivers great success on your ad rating project, and thank you for sharing your research with us. And Jeremy Peters, Lynn Vavreck, and Ken Goldstein, thank you very much for joining us as well. (Applause)

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