

**A New Approach to Measuring Campaign Effects:
Analyzing Themes of the 2008 Presidential Campaign**

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Abstract:

Campaign messages play a great role in introducing voters to candidates, especially in non-incumbent races. Because of this role, during the most recent non-incumbent American presidential election, the volume of campaign spending on advertising was at unprecedented levels. This study aims to further our understanding of campaign effects by looking at voter perceptions of candidates. One way to investigate campaign effects is to consider the extent to which campaign messages reached the electorate. Campaigns might have one or both of two goals for the messages they put out. One goal is to shape citizen perception and the second is to affect news coverage. Here I offer a new approach to campaign effects and examine citizen perception of candidates while recognizing that voters may be influenced by campaign events, political advertising, and other messaging even if they did not observe the events directly. I use the candidate likes and dislikes questions from the 2008 American National Election Study and look for the presence of eight campaign themes. I find that Republican messages about character were mentioned more frequently relative to Democratic messages, but Democratic messages were mentioned more frequently with regard to issues of the economy than Republican themes.

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In democracies the outcome of elections typically depends on the public's perception of participating political parties, the candidates running, and the issues at stake. The information and knowledge the public has determines public opinion about each of these electoral factors. This project considers candidate evaluations and whether the public absorbs campaign information in an era when elections are candidate-centered (Wattenberg 1991) and candidates are selected from a pool of candidates who have the resources to make inroads on the opposition early (Steger 2004). In 2008 the United States witnessed its first campaign season where the candidates for president spent over a billion dollars¹ as their campaigns worked to provide information to the public about why they should win. Yet, for all of this effort, many political scientists have argued that campaigns have minimal effects (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948) because voters decide early based on a variety of pre-existing dispositions and rarely switch away from their initial inclination. However, even if it is the case that campaigns are unsuccessful at persuading voters to change their minds, this is not to say that money spent on them is wasted. In fact, campaign events like debates and conventions (Holbrook 1996) and advertisements do have real effects on the public, as does TV news coverage (Zhao and Chaffee 1995) even if the effects are generally informational and reinforcing of existing views as people tend to discount dissonant views (Zaller 1992). Between the minimal effects theory premised on voters changing their minds and the isolated effects we observe of particular events, ads, or news coverage, there is room for a new approach that evaluates the effect of campaigns more broadly, by whether the messages generated throughout the campaign were heard by voters or not.

Walter Lippmann argued that advancing what we know about public opinion requires learning more about “the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture

¹ Federal Election Commission Website. <http://www.fec.gov/disclosure/pnational.do>

of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon that scene of action” (Lippman 1965, 11). We could also call this relationship one between the present, how humans perceive and process the present, and how they act (or not) upon the information they have. This project examines candidate evaluations from the 2008 American election for president and seeks to shed light on the complexity of this triangular relationship by taking a more holistic approach to campaign effects. I analyze (1) the messages that elites use to portray their version of the present, (2) how the American public perceived competing portrayals and (3) whether campaign characterizations of candidates and the state of society were more or less likely to resonate certain types of people.

Public Opinion and Campaign Effects

This project proceeds at the intersection of public opinion and political messaging by examining the influence of campaign messages on the popular perception of candidates. Scholars have been working toward a more parsimonious account of the factors that explain political opinion, both individually and collectively, and also have been concerned with the complex influence of political media and messaging on the public.

In the literature on public opinion scholars have sought to drive examination of public opinion toward studies of political belief systems. Some have considered certain aspects at play in belief systems, like ideology and party identification (Jacoby 1988) and of issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1989). We also find a significant contribution to this literature in research about the role of heuristics, particularly likeability, in political reasoning (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1994). Students of mass media and political communication have also used the concept of a heuristic, like the availability heuristic, to explore media effects as political attitudes are formed. Use of heuristics to form political attitudes makes sense at an intuitive level

because in practice many people do not read proposed policies in full nor do they often hear entire political speeches about those policies. So, campaign and news media serve as a tool to help people navigate the overwhelming amount of potential information at their disposal before the decide who to elect.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) underscore the importance of the availability heuristic in everyday judgment. They explain with regard to the public opinion of presidents that “judgments of the president depend less on the entire repertoire of people’s knowledge and more on which aspects of their knowledge happen to come to mind” (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 64-65). Using experimental data on the role of television, Iyengar and Kinder assert that accessibility and salience of information does affect public opinion in influential ways. For instance, they find that presidential evaluations can be susceptible to priming “triggered by achievements as well as problems... Stories about [President] Carter’s success at Camp David raised the significance of foreign affairs performance just as did stories that recapitulated the sorry history of the hostage crisis” (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 108). This finding, with regard to presidential evaluations, explains why campaigns work so diligently to raise money to spend on influencing the information and perceptions available to the American voter. But, if we limit our examination of campaign effects to direct exposure to messages, like those in the news, then we miss out on the indirect effects that the messages and issues in the news might have on those who received the same information in other ways, like through a friend. If we expand our notion of how campaign messages are received, then the effects Iyengar and Kinder describe are underestimated.

Darrell West (2010) in a more recent study of campaigns from 1952-2008 brought to the campaign effects literature research about the effects of political advertisement and the news media on public opinion during the time when campaign messaging was becoming more

strategic and professionalized. At the outset he notes that “[i]n recent presidential campaigns, campaign spots accounted for the largest item in total fall expenditures. Commercials are used to shape citizens’ impressions and affect news coverage” (West 2010, 1). There are two important observations here. First, political messaging is expensive and modern campaigns are willing to devote a significant portion of their resources to it. Not only was the 2008 election the most expensive presidential campaign in American history at the time, the victor, President Barack Obama, tried to get his messages heard by spending the most money on television advertising than any previous presidential candidate (Kaid 2009).

A second important observation we can draw from West is the notion that campaign messages have effects greater than just on those voters who heard or saw the spots directly in real time. Campaign themes also reach the electorate as they are discussed by the news media or citizens learn about the themes campaigns project through other forms of testimony. The facts of testimonial learning and increasing informational interdependence complicates our ability to isolate² causal effects (and the direction of them) that come as a result of specific news coverage, campaign ads, or events. Despite the difficulty in ascertaining the effects of campaign spots in particular, West (2010) explains that campaigns do aim for their messages to impact candidate favorability, electability, and familiarity with the candidates. While West does offer a sense of how voters perceived 2008 presidential contenders Barack Obama and John McCain in general, he ultimately concludes that “[o]verall, it remains to be seen how political commercials influence perceptions of the candidates” (West 1994, 100).

² Experiments, of course, are able to do better in this regard. One especially notable experiment found among other results that negative advertising created negative perceptions of both candidates. See Michael Basil, Caroline Schooler, and Byron Reeves. “Positive and Negative Political Advertising: Effectiveness of Ads and Perceptions of Candidates,” in *Television and Political Advertising Vol. 1: Psychological Processes*, ed. by Frank Biocca, 245-262 (Hillsdale: NJ Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1990).

In this paper I move forward from where West left off and suggest that political science needs a new approach to analyzing the effect of campaign messaging on perceptions of the candidates. Specifically, we should move toward considering the effects of campaign themes more holistically, just as when we study war it is more insightful to examine the conflict in its entirety than to only examine one of the battles. I attempt here to examine the broader effects of the campaigns in 2008 in five stages. I begin, first, by articulating in greater detail the objectives of the project and the primary hypotheses I evaluate about how citizen perception of the candidates in 2008 may have contributed to Obama's election. In the second part I specify the methodology used to analyze the perceptions of the public. Third, I present overall results, detailing how many people perceived messages the campaigns intended and how positive versus negative themes fared with the public. Fourth, I offer models that explain the effect of the political, media, and socio-demographic background of people on their likelihood of mentioning four perceptions each of Barack Obama and John McCain observed during the 2008 campaign season. Lastly I discuss how the results of this project contribute to our understanding of campaign effects and I posit a few directions for future research in this area.

Research Objectives

This study works to expand our knowledge of the effect campaign messaging has on voter perceptions of candidates. One way to investigate this relationship is to consider the extent to which the messages from campaigns yield the results intended. Recall that campaigns might have one or both of two goals for their messages. One goal is to shape citizen perception and the second is to affect news coverage. Here I examine citizen perceptions of Barack Obama and John McCain during the 2008 presidential campaign while recognizing that their perceptions may have been influenced by political messages even if they were not seen or heard by them directly.

A myriad of previous observational studies at the intersection of public opinion and political media have compared public opinion of candidates before and after different advertisements were aired. I depart from this approach and compare the content of campaign messaging with the content of voter perceptions. In particular I compare eight campaign themes with responses to two open-ended questions from the 2008 American National Election Study. 2008 has been selected for this study for a few reasons. First, it is the most recent non-incumbent election, so political portrayals of candidates are likely to play a greater role because they are introducing voters to the candidates. Second, during the campaign of 2008 we saw campaign spending at an unprecedented high in American politics (with 2012 surpassing it only recently), demonstrating a great investment in campaign strategy and communication by campaigns and their donors.

I examine one primary hypothesis that bears out in two ways. Senator Barack Obama was elected President Barack Obama in 2008, which may imply that voters had overall more positive perceptions of him relative to his contender, John McCain. For the 2008 election, I hypothesize that Democratic campaign themes working to shape positive perception of Barack Obama resonated with the public more than Republican messages working to portray Obama negatively. Likewise, I also expect that negative perceptions about John McCain resonated more with the populace at large than positive perceptions of McCain. To assess this hypothesis I present two sets of findings: (1) a comparison of positive and negative campaign themes with respective perceptions of Obama and McCain and (2) whether who was more or less likely to pick up on each theme is consistent with what we already know about the breakdown of the vote in 2008. I use the data presented to show how the themes projected by each campaign may have holistically influenced the electorate in 2008. Next, I detail the sources of data used in this analysis.

Data Sources

In order to determine the extent to which the messages of each campaign shaped voter perception of candidates, a necessary first step is to establish the perceptions that the campaigns were aiming for. Comparing whether the public absorbed more positive or negative projections of the candidates requires that we know how each campaign was attempting to characterize their candidate and also the perception of the opposing candidate that each campaign was trying to project. Political messages vary in many ways. For instance, some campaign messages appear to focus on projecting positive imagery of the candidate they support while others attempt to further negative perceptions about the candidate they oppose. Campaign messaging also varies by medium, with campaigns purchasing radio advertising spots and other forms of getting information to voters. Further, some messaging efforts emphasize the policies the candidate favors, whereas others emphasize their character attributes, and still more emphasize both issues and attributes at the same time. Yet, despite that the type of campaign messages that support the same candidate might vary in medium and content, there are common themes that run through them. To conceptualize the candidate perceptions that campaigns were projecting I use themes.

As Kenski, Hardy, and Jamieson (2010) found in their book about the messages that were central throughout the campaign, there were many themes of the 2008 election. This project assesses how eight of those themes contributed to candidate evaluations. Table 1 categorizes the themes used in this project according to theme type. One comparison is between prominent slogans from each campaign. For the Obama campaign I call this the “future” theme, which is chosen to capture the 2008 Obama for President Campaign slogan, “Change You Can Believe In.” This is contrasted with a theme I call “patriotism,” which is chosen to capture the effect of the 2008 John McCain for President Campaign slogan of “Country First.” The second

comparison is between two dominant negative themes, or themes used by the campaigns to characterize their opponent, and both are character themes, related to past experience. The negative theme related to Obama's background I call the "inexperience" theme and the negative theme relating to McCain's past I call "Bush Similarity." Additionally, in an election that occurred just after a recession began, one dominant issue at the time was economic policy. I call this the "economic" theme, and consider whether Americans perceived the candidates more positively or negatively on issues of economic policy.

The campaign themes are operationalized using words that indicate content. But, there are numerous ways that the electorate might echo campaign themes in words. For example, we could find words that describe citizen perceptions of the candidates in letters to the editor, on posters at rallies, or in the blogosphere. To this end, I use survey responses to questions about Barack Obama and John McCain. There are a few advantages to using public opinion survey data as a measure of voter perception. First, the American National Elections Studies (ANES) Times Series 2008 Study is a random sample. Unlike the voice of voters that one might find in letters to the editor or at political rallies, the ANES captures popular perceptions. Second, respondents were asked specifically about their perceptions of each candidate. They were asked: "Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote for him?" (likes Obama) and "Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote against him?" (dislikes Obama). And they were asked the same questions about John McCain. I suggest that the answers to these open-ended questions reveal how the candidates were perceived by the American public. If campaigns had an effect on the perceptions of Americans, then we should expect the themes of the campaign to be manifested in the answers respondents give about the strengths and weaknesses of each of the candidates.

Although in previous years the ANES has released coding of the open-ended responses, the data presented here is the result of a team of two coders used specifically for this study. Responses to the likes Obama question were coded dichotomously for the presence (1) or not (0) of the “future” theme. While coding for this theme coders read for mentions of change, hope, and promise. Hand-coded data has the great advantage of capturing the context of the words, measuring as much as possible what the respondent meant to say in their own words. Using this technique, coders were able to distinguish responses that invoke the theme from those responses that may be typical in any election. For the “future” theme in likes Obama, coders included responses like “he’s for change” and excluded responses like “he’s a Democrat for a change.” Some examples of responses to likes Obama that were coded as having the “future” theme present are:

“He’s young and I like the way he talks. It sounds like he is for change and its good” (Respondent 270).

“Change for the minorities, and the less fortunate, and just a change period. He seems to emphasize the whole world needs a change for the positive. He emphasizes unity” (Respondent 464).

“His upbeat attitude; his change and hope; I think he is hopeful” (Respondent 574).

Responses to the likes McCain Question were similarly coded for the presence (1) or not (0) of mentions of the “patriotism” theme by looking for responses that characterized John McCain as a patriot, emphasized his military experience (including his experience as a prisoner of war), or referenced his service to the country. Some examples of responses to the likes McCain question that were coded as having the “patriotism” theme present are:

“Like him as a man, put his time in for our country, has a lot of experience and comes from a military family” (Respondent 32).

“He's unlike our current president. He's spent years in the military. He has a little more patriotism in him” (Respondent 183).

“He has leadership skills and puts U.S. before other countries. Open minded to research info before he opens his mouth” (Respondent 846).

With regard to the past comparison from the dislikes questions, responses to the dislikes Obama question were coded for mentions (1) or not (0) of the “inexperience” theme, as Republican advertisements worked to portray Obama as inexperienced, too young, not ready for the job, and therefore a risky choice. Some examples of responses to dislikes Obama that were coded as having the “inexperience” theme present are:

“People say that he lacks experience” (Respondent 1293).

“Lack of experience in the political arena and his inexperience in managing a large public entity, and not sure whether [he] displayed enough leadership abilities as a senator” (Respondent 1450).

“Concern about his inexperience, the fact that we do not know much about his background, as much as I would like to” (Respondent 2059).

Responses to the dislikes McCain question were coded for mentions (1) or not (0) of the “Bush similarity” theme. Coders looked for responses about links between fellow Republicans John McCain and George W. Bush by mentions of Bush, 8 more years, four more years, and anticipation of “no change” if McCain were elected. Responses about that merely characterized John McCain as a member of the Republican Party without elaboration were not coded as mentions of the “Bush similarity” theme. Some examples of responses to dislikes McCain that were coded as having the “Bush similarity” theme present are:

“He is a Bush . Has the same ideas as Bush does. Don't like his ideas at all. I think he is too old.” (Respondent 1041).

“He would be more of the same, a continuation of what we have now” (Respondent 1084).

“No creo que es un buen candidato. El y Bush son lo mismo en su manera de pensar.” (Respondent 1426).

As mentioned above, both the likes and dislikes questions for each candidates were also coded in this project for mentions of the economy, or the presence (1) or not (0) of the “economic” theme. While coding for this theme coders searched for mentions of the economy generally, jobs, debt, taxes, spending, and budget responses among other items. In this project, responses about class were included while responses about “the people” or “the little guy” were not and instead viewed as group benefits responses and not necessarily relevant to economic concerns. Some examples from likes Obama of mentions of the “economic” theme are:

“New blood, he talks the talk, I want to see if he walks the walk, he gives a good speech, if you rely on the TV ads you'd be lost. I haven't read his proposals/if he keeps his word, tax breaks for the middle class, cracking down on big oil, and trying to do something about health care in this country” (Respondent 426).

“Based on the commercials his viewpoints on taxes” (Respondent 669).

“I believe in his information about the economy and jobs and welfare of others” (Respondent 1818).

Some examples from likes McCain that mention the “economic” theme are:

“The capital gains tax that Bush reduced, his willingness to keep that tax I like. It keeps people who want to invest an incentive” (Respondent 465).

“Wants to cut down spending and give our troops victory” (Respondent 648)

“Because the Republicans are against abortion; and the Republicans are not so apt to promise everybody a lot and then have to raise taxes to pay for it” (Respondent 1118).

On the dislikes side, some mentions of the “economic” theme when asked about what they dislike about Obama are:

“His inexperience--he hasn't got the experience that it would take...I don't like some [of] his ideas, policies. I think he wrong on proposing the tax the way he has it set up and I don't particularly like his idea on health care” (Respondent 429).³

³ Some respondents mentioned both themes we coded for in the questions. This respondent is also an example of this.

“I don’t feel that we share the same ideas that he does, always talks about raising taxes on the rich and the middle class somehow winds up being rich. I’m not a big believer in entitlement and he is a large believer in entitlements” (Respondent 667).

And, some respondents mentioned the “economic” theme when discussing what they disliked about John McCain. Those responses included ones like:

“I don't think he knows what to do about the economy.” (Respondent 139)

“He doesn't want to help middle class people, she has concerns with taxes; can't depend on him to help low income people” (Respondent 486).

Each coder coded the entirety of both the likes and dislikes questions for each candidate. There were a few steps taken in this process in order to ensure consistency between the coders. First, each coder coded the first 250 respondents in likes Obama for the “future” theme and also the “economic” theme. Then, the coders discussed any instances of inter-coder disagreement and the codebook (see Appendix A) was revised, if necessary, for further clarification. After this the coders coded the remaining respondents for each theme and proceeded to discuss differences in respondents 251-2322, and then determine final codes. This process was repeated for dislikes Obama with the “inexperience” theme rather than the future theme and with the McCain themes of “patriotism” in the likes question and “Bush similarity” in the dislikes question. In the initial coding for each theme instances of non-response were left as missing data. Tables 2A and 2B, which detail the inter-coder reliability results (above 90% agreement for each theme within each question), reflects coding of cases where the respondent had a statement. However, while open-ended responses do provide for respondents to detail honestly their answers without being cued, many respondents also choose not to answer the question at all. Because there were separate questions about like and dislike, for some respondents it may simply be the case, for example, that they have reasons why they like Obama and could answer the likes Obama question and no

reasons why they disliked him and therefore chose not to answer the dislikes Obama question and vice versa. Therefore, it is necessary for a full understanding of candidate perceptions to include in this analysis those who said nothing. Accordingly, the data analysis is of theme mentions among *all* respondents, not only those who actually did respond to the questions they were asked. The next section describes the overall results of the theme coding.

Candidate Perceptions: Slogans and Character

Research on political advertising shows that people do learn from it, even when controlling for other forms of media consumption including the program the ads are actually aired during (Ridout, Shah, Golstein, and Franz 2004). People also don't need to necessarily be exposed directly to an ad, a bumper sticker, or other forms of political messaging in order to learn about it. One primary contribution this paper offers to this area of research is that unlike those who have tried measuring exposure, this paper does not try to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between actual message exposure and perception of candidates. Instead, this project takes a different approach and assesses whether the themes, not necessarily specific advertisements or events, etc., resonated with the members of the polity. This method presumes that campaigns are more interested in the end result of the public adopting a favorable perspective of their candidate around election time and less interested in the means of how precisely the public arrives at their decision, though knowledge of the latter would be instructive for future campaigns. The findings presented in Table 3 show the overall results of the percentage of respondents that mentioned each of the eight themes.

The primary hypothesis of this paper expects overall better candidate evaluations of Barack Obama than John McCain. Accordingly, we should expect the "future" theme to be mentioned more than the "patriotism" theme and, when it comes to the candidates' past, the

“Bush similarity” theme to be mentioned more than the “inexperience” theme. However, as Table 3 shows, 10% of all respondents mentioned the “future” theme when responding to the likes Obama question while 14% mentioned the “patriotism” theme in response to the likes McCain question. And, not only were respondents more likely to mention the positive McCain campaign theme relative to the positive Obama theme, they were also more likely to mention the negative “inexperience” characterizations of Obama at 16% relative to the “Bush similarity” negative characterization of McCain at 12%. Respondents were more likely to describe Obama as an inexperienced Senator with limited time in federal government, no experience in defense or foreign affairs and overall risky choice for Commander in Chief than they were to describe him as an exciting change from the past and a hopeful, optimistic leader moving the United States forward in the future. Respondents were also more likely to view McCain as a patriotic, experienced war veteran who had served honorably while taken as a prisoner of war than as just another candidate of the Republican Party that would continue the policies of the George W. Bush years.

The themes analyzed here show McCain messaging, both by positive characterizing McCain and negatively characterizing Obama, was about 4% more likely to resonate with the public than the Obama messages. If we do view the “future” theme and the “inexperience” theme as attempts to shape perceptions of Obama’s character, then this finding is consistent with Wattenberg’s (2004) observations about the effect of candidate character on election results. He explains (2004, 126) that “personal image has been highly overrated as a decisive factor in presidential elections. This is especially true for the period from 1976 to 2000, during which the most personally popular candidate won only two out of seven contests.” However, candidate evaluations only comprise one factor that drives election results.

Candidate Perceptions: Handling the Economy

This project also reveals perceptions about an issue that dominated advertising from both campaigns -- the economy. The data supports the primary hypothesis that Obama would fare better when comparing mentions of the “economic” theme between responses to the likes Obama question and the dislikes Obama question. As Table 3 shows, respondents overall were about twice as likely to mention the “economic” theme as something they liked about Barack Obama (13%) than they were to mention it as something they liked about John McCain (6%). We observe the same pattern when reviewing negative evaluations, with 6% of respondents mentioning the “economic” theme as something they dislike about Obama and 12% mentioning the same theme as something they dislike about McCain. These findings suggest that although the public was concerned about Obama’s inexperience in 2008, he may have been able to produce net-positive candidate evaluations due to perceptions of how he would handle economic issues.

The data from this study does not determine whether the respondents that mentioned the “economic” theme were reflecting retrospectively or prospectively, but either theory may explain the mechanism behind Obama’s positive evaluations relative to McCain. The long-standing theory that the party of the president does not fare well when economic times are bad (Tufte, 1980; Fiorina 1981) would indeed predict that the Democratic nominee, Barack Obama, would trump the Republican nominee, John McCain, in 2008 because Republican President George W. Bush exited his presidency in the midst of a recession. Others (MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson, 1992) have argued that the electorate has a prospective focus on economic issues, anticipating future events and rewarding or punishing political actors prior to events actually occurring. If this theory were correct, then the data presented here reveals support for Barack Obama’s

political agenda over that of John McCain's. Although, in an evaluation of the same ANES open-ended responses from 2008, Wattenberg and Powell (2012) find voters to be more prospective-oriented in 2008 than in the past, which may suggest the data from this project supports a prospective theory about the relationship between of the economy and political behavior in U.S. presidential elections.

Determinants of Theme Mentions: Model Specification

The American public in 2008 was more likely to mention Barack Obama's negative character attribute of inexperience relative to his optimism and promises of change while at the same time more likely to perceive Obama positively with regard to the "economic" theme of the campaign. Conversely, John McCain's slogan and the positive perception of the "patriotism" theme was mentioned more than the negative characterization of the "Bush similarity" theme while the number of people who mentioned the "economic" was double for McCain in response to the dislikes question relative to responses to the likes question. As Table 2 displays, each theme was mentioned by 6% to 16% of all respondents. The next part of the paper reveals who was more and less likely to mention each theme. First I discuss how the models were specified. Then, I present the results of eight models, one determining who mentioned each theme. I assess whether the theme mention findings are consistent with how supportive groups were of the candidates in 2008.

Knowing which themes resonated with which kinds of people can help us assess the broad impact of political messaging. To ensure consistent comparisons across themes, the model for each of the eight themes includes the same determinants. They include independent variables accounting for the respondents' relationship to American politics, i.e., whether they are Republican, Independent, interested in the campaign, and have high or low political knowledge.

In order to capture media exposure, though which some respondents may have learned of campaign themes, I include measures of how often they watch television news, listen to radio news, and read the newspaper. I also include measures of socio-demographics using the respondent's age, gender, whether they identify as Black or another race, and their education level. The dependent variable used in each model is binary, measuring whether or not the respondent mentioned the theme in their response to the likes and dislikes questions about Obama and McCain. Appendix A details the ANES questions and the coding scheme used for each measure.

Table 4 presents the results of logit models estimated for the slogan and character themes and the respective average marginal effects are displayed in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. Similarly, Table 5 models theme mentions for the four economic themes and Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8 present the average marginal effects. Next I detail the results of the models explaining the slogan and character theme mentions and then I discuss the models for the "economic" theme mentions.

Determinants of Theme Mentions: Slogans and Character Results

As Table 4 shows, when comparing who was most likely to mention the slogan themes of "future" for Obama, "patriotism" for McCain, and the past and character themes of "inexperience" for Obama and "Bush similarity" for McCain, the data analysis yields political party as a common predictor of mentions of all four themes at the $p < .001$ significance level. Relative to members of other parties, being a member of the Republican Party was positively associated with the dislikes Obama "inexperience" theme and the likes McCain "patriotism" theme with average marginal effects as displayed in Figures 2 and 3 of .11 and .16 respectively. And, as Figures 1 and 4 show, Republicans had a negative average marginal effect on the probability of mentioning the likes Obama "future" theme (-.12) and the dislikes McCain "Bush

similarity” theme (-.21). Given the nature of two-party politics in the United States, Republicans are expected to mention the likes McCain themes and dislikes Obama themes more than the dislikes McCain and likes Obama themes.

However, the models also include a measure for people who do not lean either direction in their partisanship i.e. Independents and respondents who mentioned that they have no preference. In all of the models presented in Table 4, the effect of being in the middle is in the same direction as being Republican, with positive associations toward liking McCain and negative associations toward liking Obama. But, this relationship is only statistically significant twice. First, at ($p < .05$) as a predictor of the mentioning the dislikes Obama “inexperience” theme with, as Figure 2 shows, a positive average marginal effect of .067. Second, identifying as Independent is a statistically significant ($p < .01$) predictor of the likes McCain “patriotism” theme with, as Figure 3 shows, a positive average marginal effect of .08 on the probability of mentioning the theme. This finding indicates that, for those who did not identify with one of the two major parties, Republicans were successful at characterizing Obama negatively as inexperienced and not ready for the job and at characterizing McCain as a true patriot that would put always put the interests of the United States first relative to the efforts of the Democratic party with the “future” and “Bush similarity” themes.

The second common predictor to Models 1, 2, 3, and 4 is respondent interest in the campaign, which is positively associated with all theme mentioned displayed in Table 4. Figures 1 and 2 show that being interested in the campaign had a positive average marginal effect of .033 on the probability of mentioning the likes Obama “future theme” and a also a positive effect of .073 on the probability of mentioning inexperience as a reason to dislike Obama. Additionally, Figures 3 and 4 show that people who were more interested in the campaign were more likely to

mention the McCain themes with average marginal effects of .04 on the probability of mentioning the “patriotism” theme as something to like about McCain and of .33 on the likelihood of mentioning the “Bush similarity” theme as a reason to dislike McCain. That this variable was significant at least $p < .05$ in all the slogan and character models suggests that these types of campaign themes resonate most with people who follow campaigns and politics and find them interesting as opposed to those who do not.

Turning to the influence of political knowledge, Table 4 shows that in higher political knowledge is associated with an increased likelihood of mentioning the “future,” “inexperience,” and “patriotism” themes. Political knowledge surfaces as a statistically significant predictor (at $p < .05$) only of the “Bush similarity” theme with, as Figure 4 displays, a negative average marginal effect of $-.018$ on the probability of mentioning John McCain’s association to President George W. Bush as a reason to dislike McCain. This finding furthers our understanding of the relationship between political sophistication and retrospective voting, mediated by the influence of the campaign. The notion that elections are candidate-centered suggests that voters are more concerned about what the candidates now will do in the future and less concerned about how those who won in the past delivered. The results revealed here suggest that those who are thinking about the election in retrospective terms are less politically sophisticated than those who did not mention the “Bush similarity” theme.

Age was also a factor predictive of mentions of the “Bush similarity” theme in response to the dislikes McCain question. Table 4 shows that at the $p < .01$ significance level the likelihood of mentioning concern about McCain’s ties to Bush increased with age. Specifically, as displayed in Figure 3, age had a positive average marginal effect of .001 on the probability of mentioning the “Bush similarity” theme. Kenski et al (2010; 40) explain that the “the Democrats

spent almost \$8 million on national cable from mid-October to early November on an ad titled '90 percent' whose opening footage was drawn from the final debate...[when McCain said] 'I voted with the President over 90% of the time. Higher than many of my, uh, even Republican colleagues.'" One explanation for this finding might be that older respondents are, strictly speaking, more likely to have voted in previous elections and therefore more likely to mention their retrospective view in their responses to surveys. This is not to say that young people do not evaluate elections in retrospective terms. Rather, it may be that in 2008 in particular young people found other themes of the campaign more important than those that were analyzed for the purposes of this project.

In addition to age, two other demographic measures predicted mentions of these types of themes. The first presents an interesting finding. Female respondents were negatively associated with mentioning the likes McCain "patriotism" theme and also with mentions of the "Bush similarity" theme, both significant at a p-value of $<.01$. Figures 3 and 4 show that relative to males, females had negative average marginal effects of $-.054$ on the probability of a "patriotism theme mention" and of $-.456$ on the probability of a "Bush similarity" theme mention. This election may be a case where males were more likely overall to pick up on campaign themes than females. Or, females were more likely to mention other themes of the campaign that were not analyzed in this study. Another possible explanation is one of descriptive representation. Namely, messages from candidates are most likely to resonate with people who are like them. In 2008, both of the presidential nominees were male (though McCain did have Gov. Sarah Palin on his ticket) and this study observes females in five out of the eight themes modeled to be less likely to mention themes of the campaign, with significance only appearing in the negative

direction. A possible avenue for future research would apply a similar holistic approach to campaign effects to a case where the candidates were most similar, except for their gender.

The last demographic predictor we observe of who mentioned the slogan and character themes in 2008 measures whether or not the respondent identified their race as Black alone (not multi-racial) or not. At a statistical significance level of $p < .01$ we observe in Model 1 that Blacks were more likely to mention the “future” theme and, in Model 2, we find Blacks were significantly (at $p < .001$) less likely to mention the “inexperience” theme. Specifically, Figures 1 and 2 show that being Black had a positive average marginal effect of .050 on the probability of mentioning the “future” theme as a reason for liking Obama and negative average marginal effect of -.179 on the probability of mentioning the inexperience theme as a reason to dislike him. Moreover, Blacks were significantly less likely (at $p < .001$) to mention that they liked McCain’s patriotism. As Figure 3 shows, being Black had a negative average marginal effect of -.16 on the probability of mentioning the “patriotism” theme as a positive attribute of John McCain. These results are completely consistent with how Blacks voted in 2008. Ansolabehere, Persily, and Steward (2010) focus on this in their article on “racially polarized voting” and calculate that Barack Obama won 96% of the Black vote in 2008. However, intent to vote for a candidate does not also mean that one would necessarily mention the candidate’s dominant campaign theme as the reason for that vote when answering a survey question.

The data presented here demonstrates that Barack Obama’s campaign was especially effective at reaching the Black population in particular. Some may suggest that this relationship is captured by desires of description representation, with Blacks more likely to absorb messages from Barack Obama as he is part Black. Yet, because the theme variables are derived from open-ended response data, we cannot assume that Barack Obama’s race is the reason behind the future

theme mentions as respondents also could have mentioned Obama's race as the reason for liking him. A cursory review of the open-ended responses from 2008 would reveal that many respondents, Black and Non-Black did mention race, but this research is out of the scope of this project.

Determinants of Theme Mentions: Handling the Economy Results

In addition to comparing pictures of the candidates based on slogans and images of character that each campaign worked to portray, I also evaluate themes that measure how the candidates fared on a key issue in 2008 -- economic policy. As with the themes in Table 4, Table 5 shows that party identification is also a strong predictor of who mentions which "economic" themes. Being Republican is statistically significant at $p < .001$ in each of the "economic" theme models. Specifically in 2008, as Figures 5 and 6 show, relative to being a member of another party, being Republican had a negative average marginal effect of $-.218$ on the probability of mentioning the "economic" theme in response to the likes Obama question and a positive average marginal effect of $.077$ on the probability of mentioning the theme as a reason to dislike Obama. Likewise, as shown in Figures 7 and 8, identifying as Republican had a positive average marginal effect of $.073$ on the likelihood of mentioning the "economic" theme as something to like about McCain and a negative average marginal effect of $-.149$ on the likelihood of mentioning the same theme as something to dislike about McCain.

Additionally on the impact of party identification, I find that being an Independent predicted at the $p < .05$ significance level a decreased likelihood of mentioning the "economic" theme as something to like about Obama with a negative average marginal effect of $-.046$ as we see in Figure 3. Furthermore, Independents were significantly more likely to describe economic concerns as something McCain would handle well than not at $p < .05$ and $p < .001$ statistical significance levels, respectively. As determinants of "economic" theme mentions, as Figures 7

and 8 show, being Independent had a .039 positive average marginal effect for the likes McCain question and a negative average marginal effect of -.077 for the dislikes McCain question.

Overall, the findings presented here indicate that Independents were likely to mention similar themes as Republicans.

That Independents leaned Republican in their mentioning of themes is not consistent with what we know about how Independents voted in 2008. In a compilation of data from exit polls and phone surveys of early and absentee voters the Roper Center for Public Opinion found that 52% of Independents as a group voted for Obama, while 44% voted for McCain⁴. This discrepancy between vote share in 2008 and the perceptions that resonated with Independents in 2008 as measured here reveals one of the limits of this study. If Independents were more likely to vote for Obama in 2008 and simultaneously less likely to mention the positive perceptions of him analyzed here, then the data implies that other perceptions or issues were more important to the Independent vote than Obama's focus on the future, his inexperience, or his economic plans. It may also imply that they were less likely to respond to open-ended questions.

As in the slogan and character theme models, Table 5 shows interest in the campaign significantly increases the likelihood of mentioning each of the "economic" themes analyzed in this project. This finding has two implications. First, it is good news for parties and campaigns. Among those who are interested in politics, political messages appear to get through. That is to say, the money spent on campaign communication strategy appears to be money well spent. Respondents to the ANES are given an opportunity to say anything in the world about what they like or dislike about candidates. If what they say echoes the themes portrayed by the campaigns, then the campaigns are connecting with the public. On the other hand, a better result for

⁴ Roper Center for Public Opinion Archives.
http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_08.html

campaigns (and democracy) would be if political messages also resonated among those who are uninterested and do not choose to follow the campaign, as those people have a vote too.

Among the slogan and character themes, those with more political knowledge were found as less likely to mention the “Bush similarity” theme. Among the “economic” themes, at the $p < .001$ statistical significance level, higher political knowledge predicts mentions of the theme as something liked about John McCain. Coupled with the finding about the “Bush similarity theme,” this result has a few potential implications. The findings show that when interviewed, those with more political knowledge were more significantly less likely to mention a dominant dislikes McCain theme and significantly more likely to mention a dominant likes McCain theme. One explanation is that the McCain campaign themes resonated more with those with high political knowledge because those themes confirmed beliefs they already had, as Republicans tend to have higher political knowledge (Pew Research Center 2012).

In the measures of candidate perceptions presented here, older respondents characterized McCain as someone who they felt was similar to the previous president. Among the “economic” themes, age presents a relatively similar phenomenon to that described above with regard to the Black vote. In 2008, there was a partisan gap in the vote, though not as stark as the racial gap presented, among different age groups. The Roper Center⁵ evaluates the vote share for different age groups and finds that 18-29 year olds voted 66% for Obama and 32% for McCain while those 65 and over voted 45% for Obama and 53% for McCain. As Table 5 displays, age is a statistically significant predictor of “economic” theme mentions at the $p < .001$ significance level. This finding mirrors the vote share, with the likelihood of mentioning this likes Obama theme declining with age. Specifically, as shown in Figure 5, respondent age had a negative average

⁵ Ibid.

marginal effect of $-.003$ on the probability of mentioning the “economic” theme when responding to the likes Obama question.

In sum, political party, interest in the campaign, and race had the greatest predictive power for explaining mentions of the themes analyzed in this study.

Discussion

This paper approached campaign effects in a new way by assessing the degree to which some of the dominant campaign messages from 2008 resonated with the electorate. Taken as a whole, respondents to the ANES in 2008 were more likely to mention McCain’s “patriotism” than they were Obama’s “future” theme. They were also more likely to mention the negative perception of Obama’s “inexperience” theme than the “Bush similarity” negative perception of McCain. This may suggest that the margins of Obama’s victory over McCain would have been greater had the McCain campaign failed to push the “inexperience” theme. Alternatively, it is plausible that McCain’s character and slogan themes were more evident than Obama’s simply because McCain had fewer viable arguments to make altogether. In other words, McCain may have won a big battle of character framing, but lost the war due to the vast number of smaller battles the messaging from the Obama campaign won. The second overall finding, about perceptions regarding the economy, shows respondents were twice as likely to mention this as something they liked about Obama relative to McCain and also twice as likely to mention the economy as a reason to dislike McCain relative to Obama. This perception may have contributed to Obama’s ultimate election to the presidency. Yet, as Kenski et al. (2010) show, there were many themes of the 2008 election, and this analysis is only of eight of the most prominent ones. This project is a first attempt to show how we might evaluate campaign effects more holistically, and one path future research might take is to conduct a similar analysis of more themes, dominant and not, that we observe in other campaigns.

Of the themes that were analyzed in this paper, one limitation to the findings is that mentions of the “economic” theme were not distinguished between retrospective and prospective mentions, making it difficult to ascertain whether the mentions of the economic theme are the result of the nature of the times or campaign effects. Even though the economy is traditionally a strong predictor of American presidential elections, the messaging deployed by the Obama campaign amplified the effect of the negative downturn of the economy. Referencing Campbell (2000), Johnston, Brady, and Sides (2006, 7) explain that campaigns have influence even when systematic predictors, like economic conditions, are strong because “we could not predict elections so well if the campaign did not somehow translate objective conditions into an actual outcome.” Johnston et al. (2006) also suggest that campaigns may have an effect on the dimensionality of issues. For instance, the vibrant debate about health insurance during the 2008 primary campaigns and in the general election campaign shaped the discussion of economic issues, adding to what voters may recall when evaluating economic conditions. One avenue for further research might be to delve deeper into the nuances of the effect that campaigns have on voter interpretation of economic conditions, with specific attention to the mechanisms behind retrospective versus prospective voting.

This paper also explains the effects of campaign messaging by looking at who was more or less likely to invoke each theme. Among what I have called the political variables, we observe, as expected, that Republicans are more likely to mention the dislikes Obama themes and less likely to mention the likes Obama themes. Most interesting are the effects of being Independent, where respondents appear to lean Republican. A second avenue for further research would explore the nature of the Independent vote in 2008, revealing what did motivate them to vote for Obama as the findings of this project imply that it was not his optimism about the future

or economic issues. Another political variable, interest in the campaign, is a significant predictor in mentioning all seven of the themes. As discussed above this finding may mean that campaign messages are resonating with those who are intrigued by politics generally, demonstrating that those who are uninterested in politics are likely not being reached.

Among the demographic variables, age, gender and race had significant effects on theme mentions. Older respondents were more likely to dislike Obama and younger respondents were more likely to like Obama, and vice versa with McCain. This relationship was a significant predictor of mentions of the “Bush similarity” theme and the likes Obama “economic” theme. Even while controlling for party identification, people of the same age tended to similarly evaluate Obama on the economy. This may be explained by the Obama campaign’s emphasis on young voters or this finding may simply show similarly situated people with regard income have similar perceptions about who would best serve their interests⁶. The themes analyzed in this study are not especially conclusive with regard to gender, but point to new avenues of research about descriptive representation. Blacks were significantly more likely to mention the likes Obama “future” theme significantly less likely to mention likes McCain “patriotism” theme and the dislikes Obama “inexperience” theme. As discussed above, we cannot assume that Blacks were more likely to mention the future theme because Obama is also Black. Respondents of all races and ethnicities could have mentioned race as an influence on their positive or negative perceptions of Obama. I suspect there are other characteristics that could explain among Blacks who mentioned the “future” theme versus who chose to mention race, but more research is required to assess this inquiry.

The models also included three media exposure variables measuring the amount of days per week that respondents watch the news on television, listen to the news on the radio, and read

⁶ Because income was found to be highly correlated with education, it was not included in the theme models.

the newspaper. In all eight models explaining who was more or less likely to mention each theme, the media exposure variables did not achieve statistical significance. This result supports the holistic approach to campaign effects used in this study. If the effects of campaigns were primarily a result of specific types of messaging exposure through various mediums, then we should find that those who engaged with media were more likely to mention the messages they saw, heard, or read. Media exposure did not increase the likelihood of mentioning any theme, supporting the claim made here that campaign messages have effects on people through other forms of learning, which has gone largely unmeasured in American politics.

While Kenski et al. (2010) moved the study of campaign effects toward more holistic endeavors by including analyses of messages that might be otherwise overlooked, like “Saturday Night Live” parodies of Sarah Palin, their data relies on survey responses that ask people directly about campaign discourse and themes. One primary contribution of this paper is that it provides a different measure of the effect of campaign rhetoric on perceptions of candidates than we have seen in previous studies. Specifically, the data presented here on themes is from open-ended questions, where respondents were not prompted by interview to think about or mention any particular themes. Future research should also work to create other ways to measure the holistic effects of campaigns on the perception of candidates. This paper offers an analysis of perceptions at only one point in time. Research designs employing this approach for other elections may wish to push for open-ended questions at multiple points during the campaign season.

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Appendix A: Model Measures, Survey Question Wording, and Coding

All Questions are from the 2008 ANES

Republican: Question wording “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a [Democrat a Republican / a Republican, a Democrat], an Independent, or what?”

0= Democrat, Independent, Other Party, No Preference; 1= Republican

Independent: Question wording “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a [Democrat a Republican / a Republican, a Democrat], an Independent, or what?”

0= Democrat, Republican, Other Party 1= Independent and No Preference

Campaign Interest: Combined two questions. Questions wording [OLD]: “Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been very much interested, somewhat interested or not much interested in the political campaigns so far this year? 0= Not Much Interested; 1=Somewhat Interested; 2= Very Interested

Question wording [NEW]: “How interested are you in information about what's going on in government and politics? Extremely interested, very interested, moderately interested, slightly interested, or not interested at all?” 0=Slightly Interested or Not Interested At All; 1= Moderately Interested; 2= Very Interested and Extremely Interested

Political Knowledge: Index Variable of 3 Questions: 0= 0 Questions Correct; 1=1 Question Correct; 2=Questions Correct; 3=3 Questions Correct

Question Wording: As far as you know, what is the current unemployment rate in the United States, that is, of the adults in the United States who want to work, what percent of them would you guess are now unemployed and looking for a job? 0= 0-4, 8-100, and Don't Know 1=5-7

Question Wording: Do you happen to know which party had the most members in the U.S. Senate before the election (this/last) month? 0= Republicans or Don't Know; 1=Democrats

Question Wording: Do you happen to know which party had the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington before the election (this/last) month? 0= Republicans or Don't Know; 1=Democrats

Watches TV News: Combined two questions. Question Wording [OLD]: How many days in the past week did you watch the national network news on TV? 0= None; 1=One day; 2=Two days; 3=Three days; 4=Four days; 5=Five days; 6=Six days; 7=Seven days

Question Wording [New]: During a typical week, how many days do you watch news on TV, not including sports? 0= None; 1=One day; 2=Two days; 3=Three days; 4=Four days; 5=Five days; 6=Six days; 7=Seven days

Listens to Radio News: Combined two questions. Question Wording [OLD] How many days in the past week did you listen to news on the radio? 0= None; 1=One day; 2=Two days; 3=Three days; 4=Four days; 5=Five days; 6=Six days; 7=Seven days

Question Wording [NEW] During a typical week, how many days do you listen to news on the radio, not including sports? 0= None; 1=One day; 2=Two days; 3=Three days; 4=Four days; 5=Five days; 6=Six days; 7=Seven days

Reads Newspaper: Combined two questions. Question wording [OLD]: How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper? 0= None; 1=One day; 2=Two days; 3=Three days; 4=Four days; 5=Five days; 6=Six days; 7=Seven days

Question wording [NEW]: During a typical week, how many days do you read news in a printed newspaper, not including sports? 0= None; 1=One day; 2=Two days; 3=Three days; 4=Four days; 5=Five days; 6=Six days; 7=Seven days

Age: Respondent age in years. Available responses include 17-89 raw years and 90 years or older

Female: Gender of the respondent coded 0= male;1=female

Black: Respondent Race coded 0= White, White and Black, Other race, White and another race, Black and another race, White, Black and another race; 1= Black/African-American

Education: Highest grade of school or year of college respondent completed. Available responses include grades 0-16 and 17+

Likes Obama Future Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote for him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned change, hope, future, and promise. Included responses like, “he’s for change” and just “change.” Did not include responses like “it is time for an African-American, for a change.” Emphasized future in a broad sense, not necessarily discussion of specific future policies. Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Likes McCain Patriotism Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about John McCain that might make you want to vote for him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned country first, patriot, patriotism, McCain’s military experience (including as a prisoner of war), and service. Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Dislikes Obama Inexperience Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote against him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned inexperience, not ready, risk, and young (in context), not qualified. Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Dislikes McCain Bush Similarity Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about John McCain that might make you want to vote against him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned Bush, four more of the same, 8 more years, no change from Bush if McCain elected. Did not include responses about political party like “he’s a Republican” without elaboration. Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Likes Obama Economic Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote for him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned taxes, the economy, middle class or lower class, jobs, spending, debt, budget, contrasted the rich and poor. Did not include mentions of “the people” or “the little guy.” Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Likes McCain Economic Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about John McCain that might make you want to vote for him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned taxes, the economy, middle class or lower class, jobs, spending, debt, budget, contrasted the rich and poor. Did not include mentions of “the people” or “the little guy.” Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Dislikes Obama Economic Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about Barack Obama that might make you want to vote against him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned taxes, the economy, middle class or lower class, jobs, spending, debt, budget, contrasted the rich and poor. Did not include mentions of “the people” or “the little guy.” Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Dislikes McCain Economic Theme: Question Wording: Is there anything in particular about John McCain that might make you want to vote against him? Coded 1 if respondent mentioned taxes, the economy, middle class or lower class, jobs, spending, debt, budget, contrasted the rich and poor. Did not include mentions of “the people” or “the little guy.” Coded 0 if the survey respondent did not answer the question or if they had a statement, but did not mention the theme.

Table 1: Theme Categories

	Obama	McCain
Likes Slogan Theme	Future	Patriotism
Dislikes Character/Past	Inexperience	Bush Similarity
Likes Issue Theme	Economic	Economic
Dislikes Issue Theme	Economic	Economic

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Table 2A: Obama Inter-Coder Reliability Results

Survey Question	Theme	Respondents Coded	Percent Agree	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha	N Agree	N Disagree	N Cases	N Decisions
Likes Obama	Future Theme	First 250	91.9%	0.789	0.79	0.789	147	13	160	320
Likes Obama	Economic Theme	First 250	95.6%	0.796	0.796	0.796	153	7	160	320
Likes Obama	Future Theme	Rest of Sample	90.3%	0.637	0.639	0.637	1175	126	1301	2602
Likes Obama	Economic Theme	Rest of Sample	98.2%	0.951	0.951	0.951	1278	23	1301	2602
Dislikes Obama	Inexperience Theme	First 250	91.7%	0.802	0.802	0.803	111	10	121	242
Dislikes Obama	Economic Theme	First 250	95%	0.82	0.82	0.821	115	6	121	242
Dislikes Obama	Inexperience Theme	Rest of Sample	94.8%	0.875	0.875	0.875	750	41	791	1582
Dislikes Obama	Economic Theme	Rest of Sample	97.6%	0.856	0.856	0.856	772	19	791	1582

Table 2B: McCain Inter-coder Reliability Results

Survey Question	Theme	Respondents Coded	Percent Agree	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha	N Agree	N Disagree	N Cases	N Decisions
Likes McCain	Patriotism Theme	First 250	96%	0.913	0.913	0.914	119	5	124	248
Likes McCain	Economic Theme	First 250	98.4%	0.919	0.92	0.92	122	2	124	248
Likes McCain	Patriotism Theme	Rest of Sample	93.5%	0.842	0.842	0.842	705	49	754	1508
Likes McCain	Economic Theme	Rest of Sample	98.8%	0.938	0.938	0.938	745	9	754	1508
Dislikes McCain	4 More Theme	First 250	98.8%	0.966	0.966	0.966	161	2	163	326
Dislikes McCain	Economic Theme	First 250	98.2%	0.925	0.925	0.926	160	3	163	326
Dislikes McCain	4 More Theme	Rest of Sample	97.6%	0.933	0.933	0.933	1141	28	1169	2338
Dislikes McCain	Economic Theme	Rest of Sample	96.8%	0.905	0.905	0.905	1132	37	1169	2338

**Table 3:
Percent Mentioning Characterizations of Candidates in 2008***

Perceptions of Obama	% Mention		Perceptions of McCain	% Mention
Likes Obama Future Theme	10		Likes McCain Patriotism Theme	14
Dislikes Obama Inexperience Theme	16		Dislikes McCain Bush Similarity Theme	12
Likes Obama Economic Theme	13		Likes McCain Economic Theme	6
Dislikes Obama Economic Theme	6		Dislikes McCain Economic Theme	12

Source: Coding of the ANES 2008 Survey, weighted (N=2322).

*Data are rounded to the nearest whole percentage

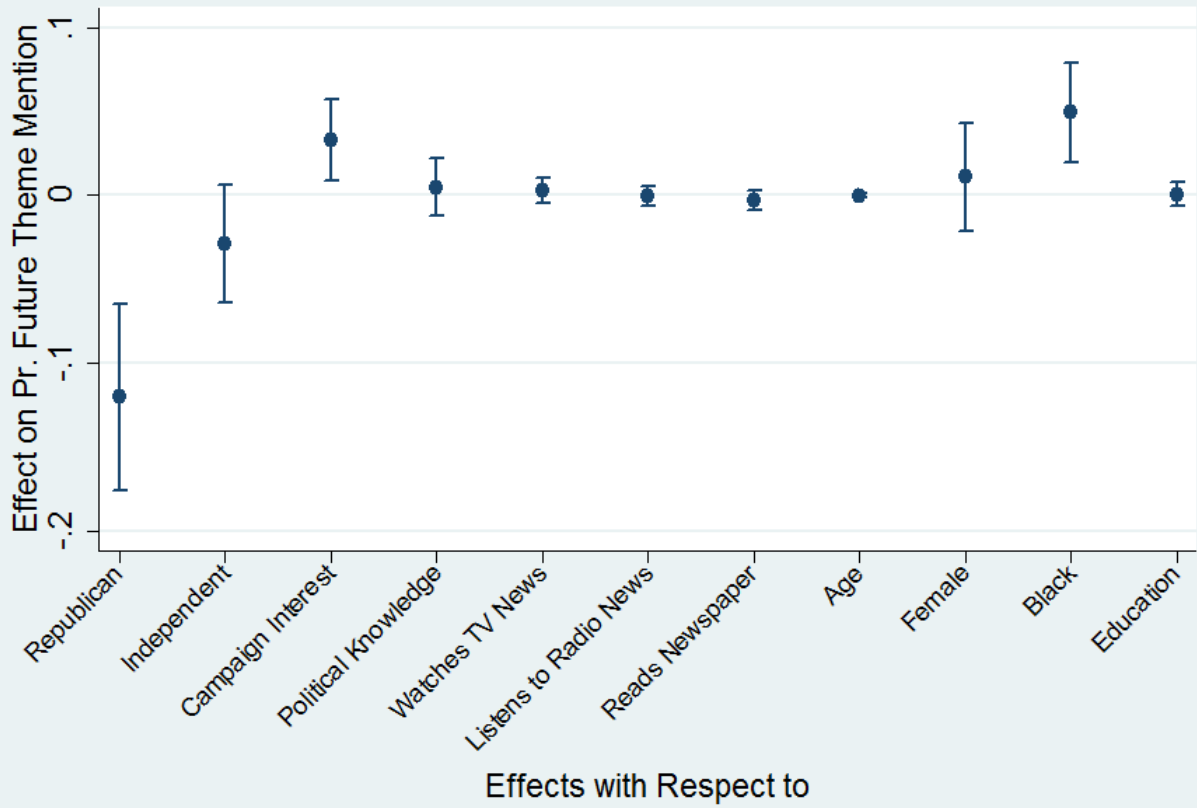
Table 4:
Determinants of Mentions of Campaign Characterizations of Candidates in 2008

	Model 1 Likes Obama Future Theme		Model 2 Dislikes Obama Inexperience Theme		Model 3 Likes McCain Patriotism Theme		Model 4 Dislikes McCain Bush Similarity Theme	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Republican	-1.330***	0.313	0.831***	0.219	1.414***	0.237	-2.101***	0.353
Independent	-0.317	0.199	0.528*	0.223	0.708**	0.247	-0.241	0.183
Campaign Interest	0.365**	0.136	0.571***	0.143	0.386**	0.135	0.326*	0.134
Political Knowledge	0.054	0.096	0.143	0.083	0.082	0.092	-0.177*	0.082
Watches TV News	0.033	0.041	0.030	0.033	0.036	0.035	0.059	0.037
Listens to Radio News	-0.007	0.033	-0.030	0.030	0.005	0.034	-0.041	0.030
Reads Newspaper	-0.034	0.034	0.056	0.030	-0.032	0.034	-0.032	0.031
Age	-0.001	0.006	0.004	0.006	0.008	0.006	0.014**	0.005
Female	0.121	0.183	-0.237	0.169	-0.492**	0.190	-0.456**	0.173
Black	0.549**	0.177	-1.409***	0.287	-1.45***	0.313	-0.242	0.185
Education	0.007	0.040	0.070	0.037	0.041	0.037	0.033	0.033
Constant	-2.60	0.663	-4.236	0.621	-3.95	0.621	-2.760	0.571
Log-likelihood	-655.131		-840.569		-747.893		-708.028	
Pseudo R ²	0.054		0.099		0.109		0.084	
N	2035		2035		2035		2034	

Notes:

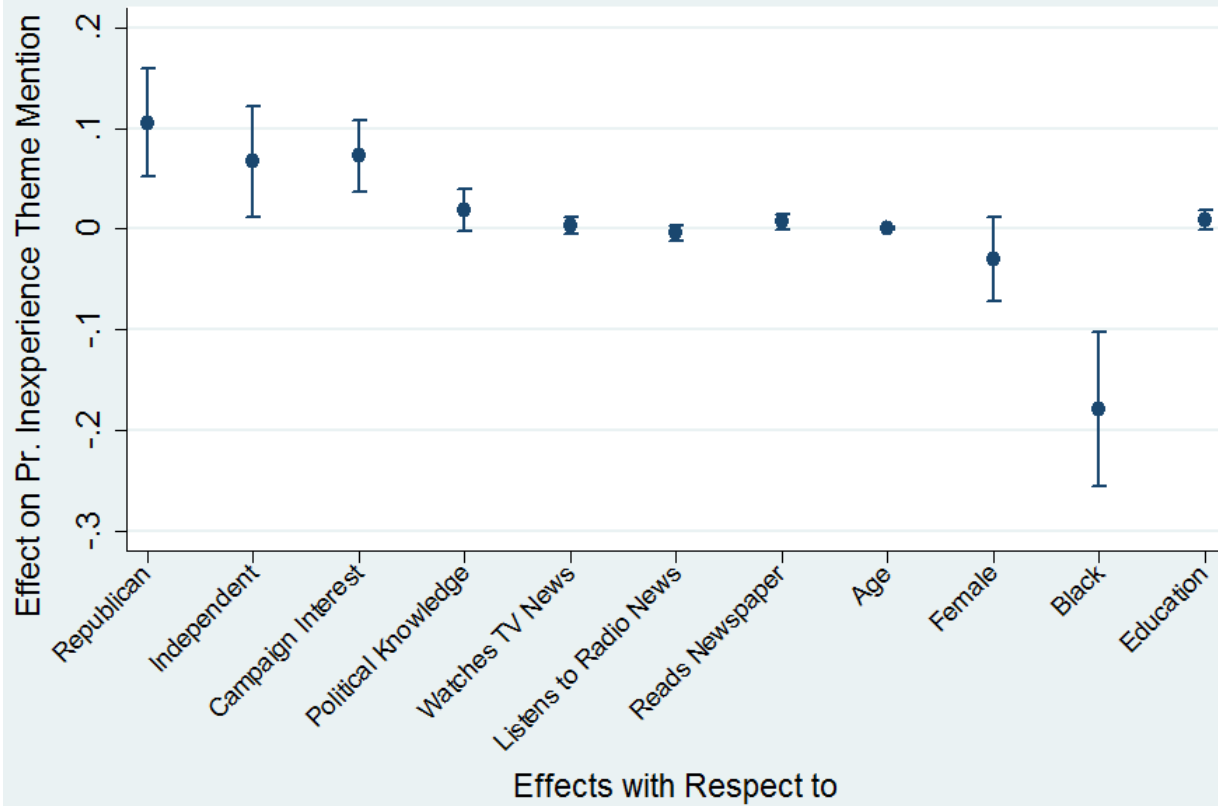
1. Cell entries report logit coefficients and robust standard errors.
2. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at $p < .001$, $p < .01$, and $p < .05$ respectively.
3. Pseudo R² reports McFadden's R²
4. Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.

Figure 1: Likes Obama Future Theme Average Marginal Effects

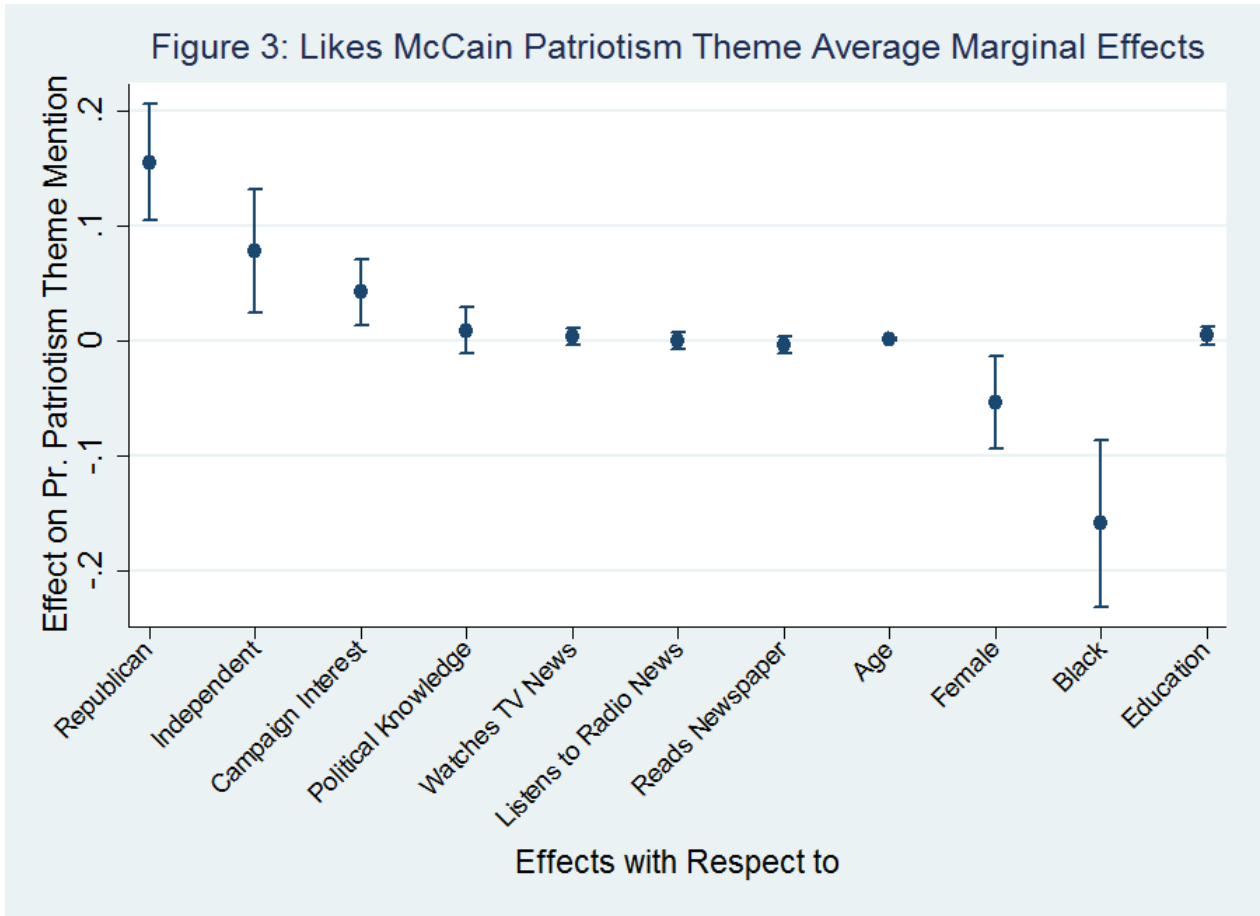


Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.

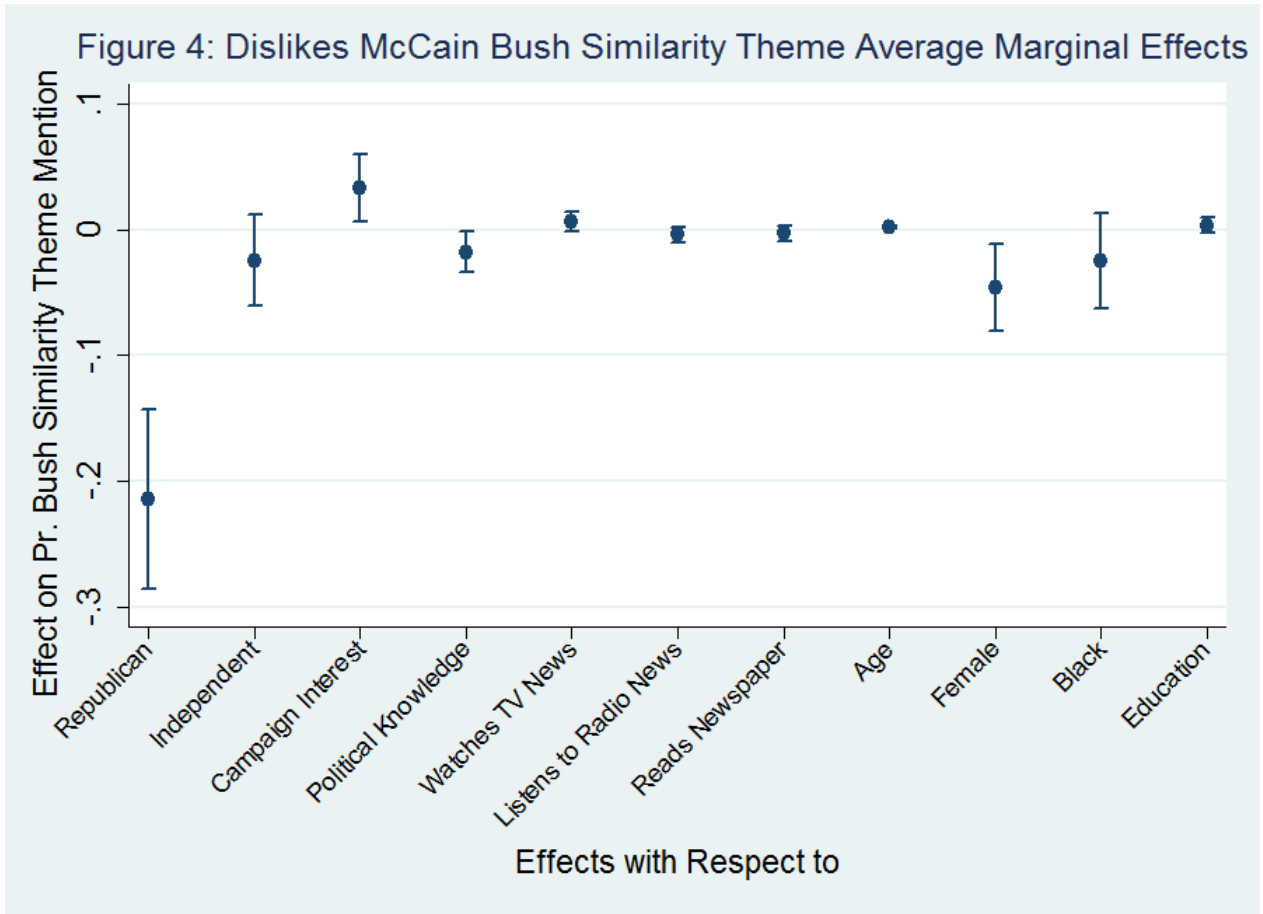
Figure 2: Dislikes Obama Inexperience Theme Average Marginal Effects



Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.



Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.



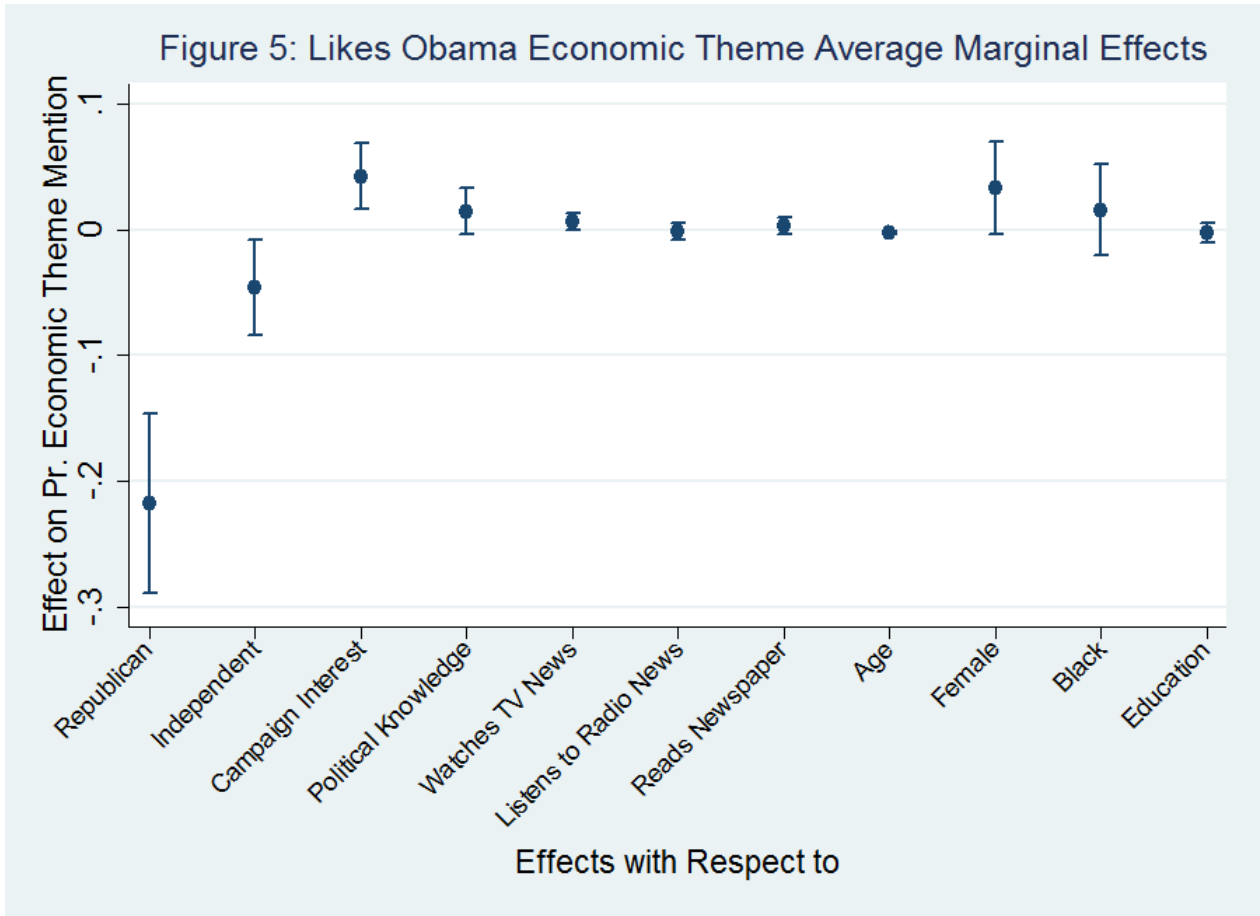
Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.

**Table 5:
Determinants of Economic Theme Mentions in 2008**

	Model 5 Likes Obama Economic Theme		Model 6 Dislikes Obama Economic Theme		Model 7 Likes McCain Economic Theme		Model 8 Dislikes McCain Economic Theme	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Republican	-2.054***	.343	1.475***	0.371	1.494***	0.384	-1.459***	0.293
Independent	-0.437*	.184	0.596	0.387	0.807*	0.405	-0.756***	0.204
Campaign Interest	0.395**	.126	0.395*	0.198	0.332	0.249	0.317*	0.136
Political Knowledge	0.134	.089	0.039	0.131	0.535***	0.154	-0.027	0.091
Watches TV News	0.059	.033	-0.078	0.045	0.008	0.051	0.024	0.035
Listens to Radio News	-0.012	.031	0.074	0.043	-0.026	0.046	-0.003	0.032
Reads Newspaper	0.027	.031	-0.063	0.052	-0.041	0.045	-0.003	0.033
Age	-0.027***	.006	0.006	0.009	-0.014	0.010	-0.005	0.006
Female	0.309	.174	-0.500	0.255	0.194	0.283	-0.279	0.172
Black	0.147	.176	-0.895	0.511	-0.574	0.497	-0.012	0.188
Education	-0.026	.037	0.057	0.062	0.061	0.068	0.044	0.044
Constant	-1.015	0.613	-4.69	1.035	-5.063	1.031	-2.162	0.703
Log-likelihood	-728.486		-414.488		-388.145		-721.529	
Pseudo R ²	0.094		0.099		0.121		0.054	
N	2035		2035		2035		2035	

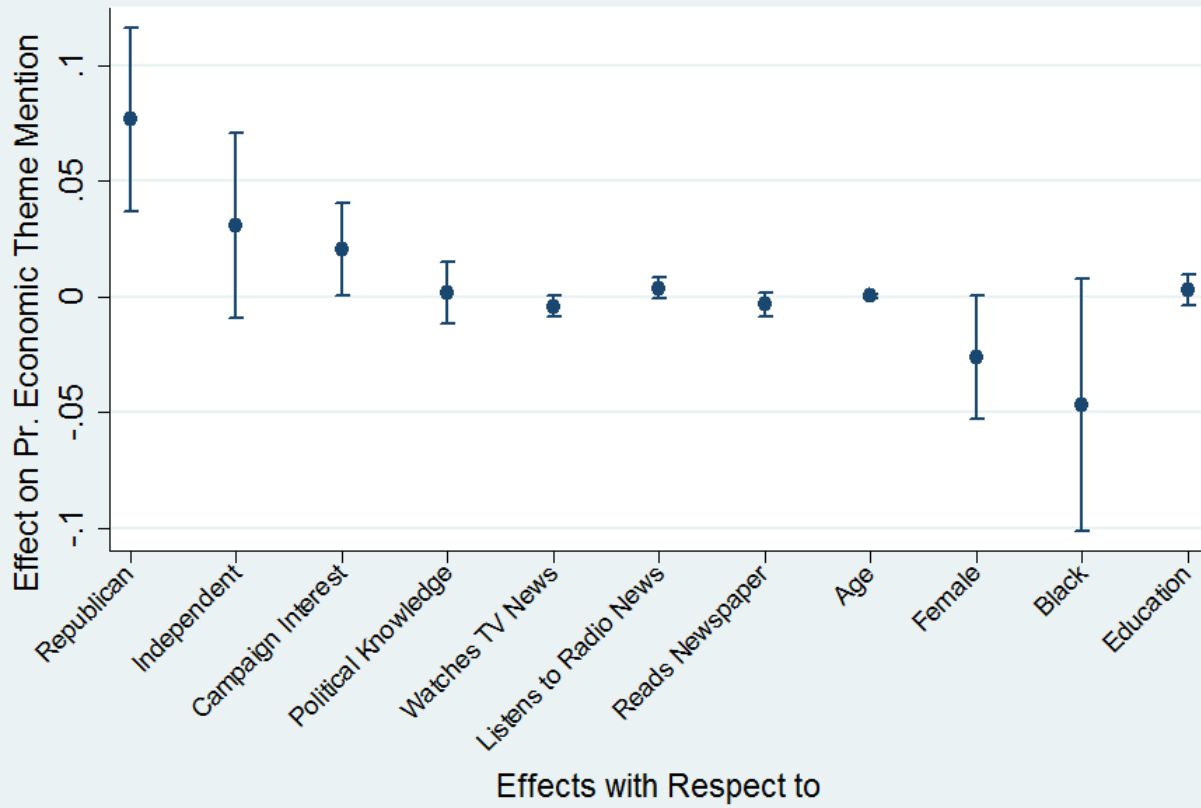
Notes:

1. Cell entries report logit coefficients and robust standard errors.
2. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at p<.001, p<.01, and p<.05 respectively.
3. Pseudo R² reports McFadden's R²
4. Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.

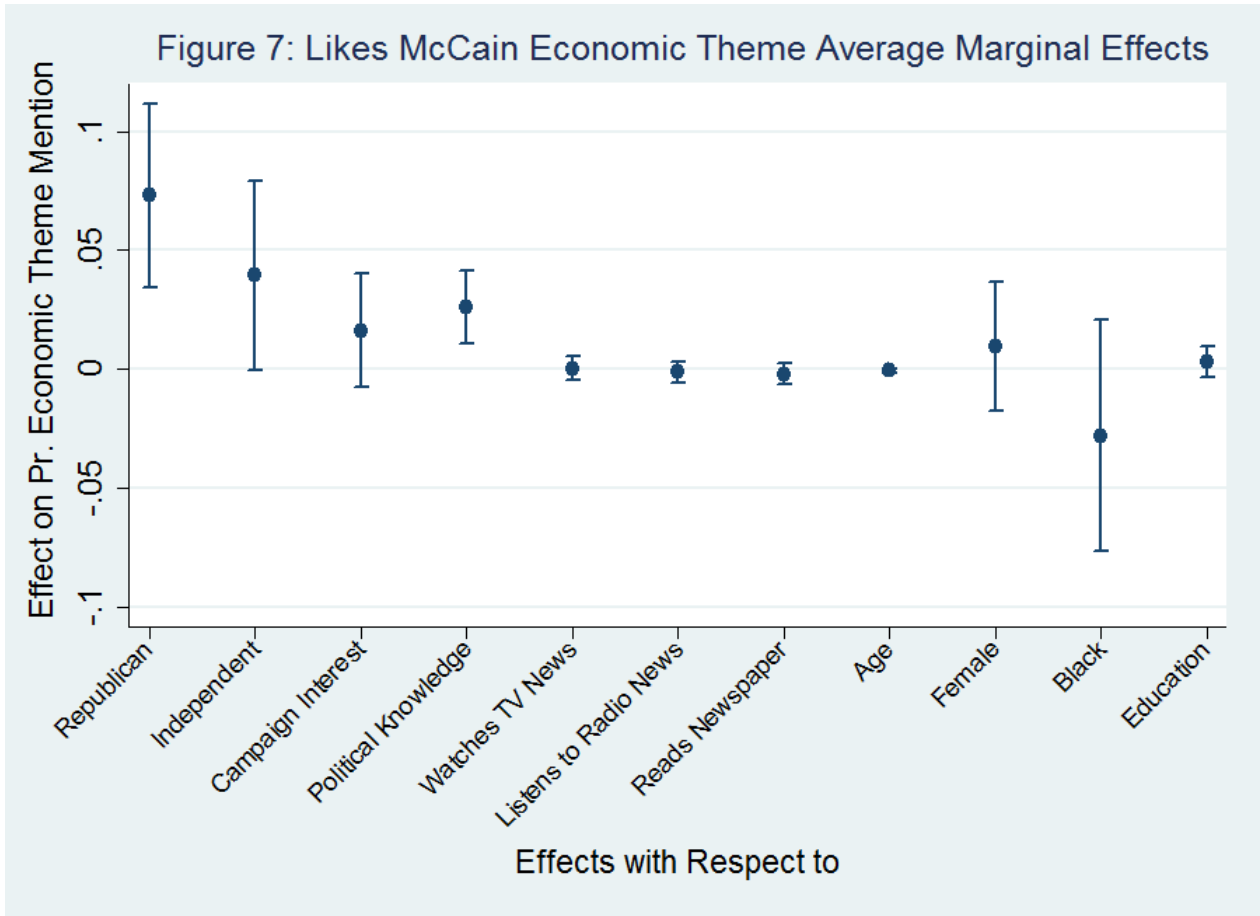


Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.

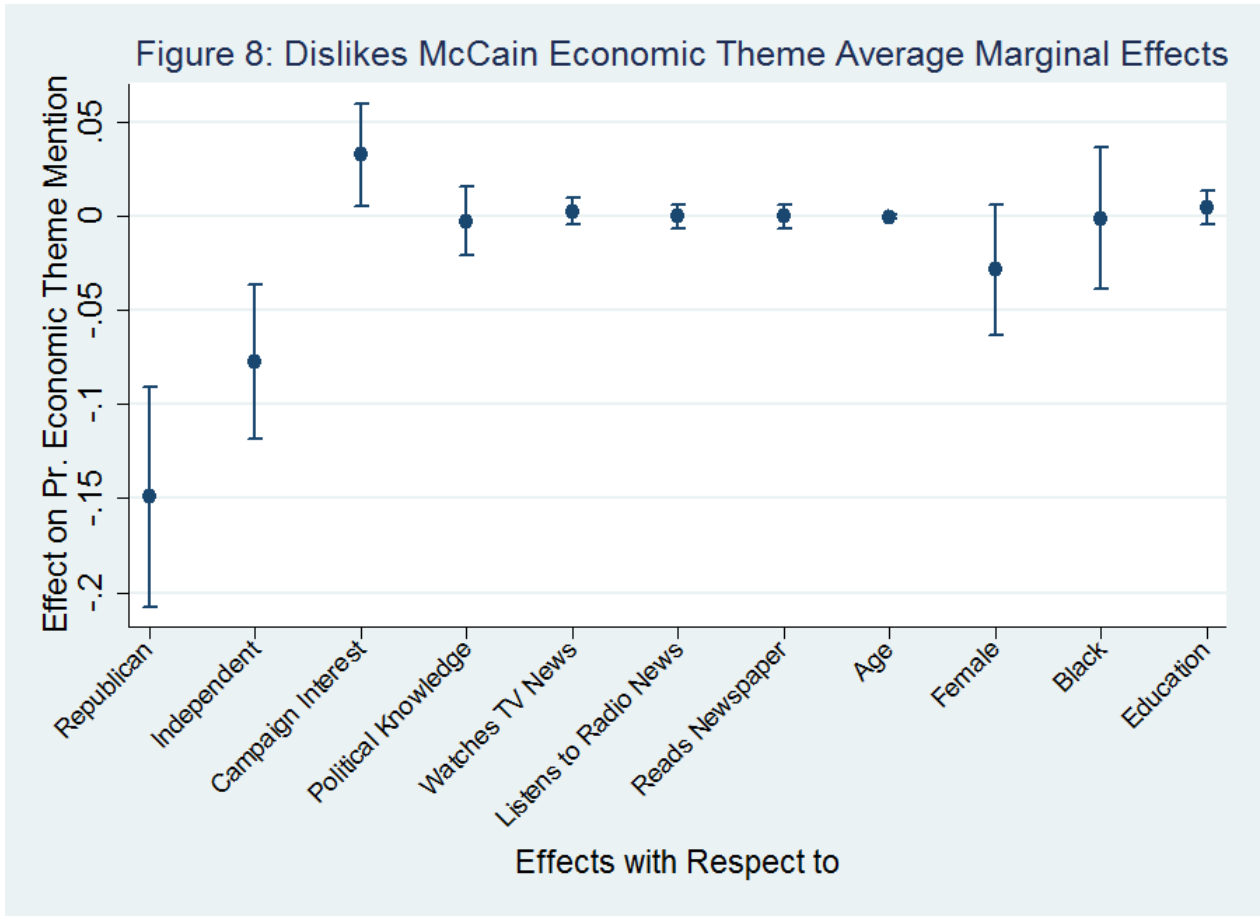
Figure 6: Dislikes Obama Economic Theme Average Marginal Effects



Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.



Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.



Source: The ANES 2008 Survey and the coding of the ANES, weighted.