**CONNECTing Theory and Method: Innovative Approaches to Measuring Audience Reactions to the 2012 Presidential Debates**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 8:00 AM  - 9:15 AM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Thurgood Marshall Ballroom East - Mezzanine Level**

This panel features six prominent researchers (and research teams) who are using Real-time Response (RTR) to study the 2012 presidential debates. This panel embraces the convention theme of connections in three ways: (1) it connects scholars using related research approaches, (2) it connects researchers from different disciplines, including communication, political science, marketing, and economics, and (3) it connects academic, market, and media research and brings several outside researchers to NCA. Although the papers use the similar methodologies, each addresses very different research questions, including the influence of nonverbal/visual symbols, the role of gender, partisanship effects, the party affiliation of undecided voters, the utility of large non-representative samples, and the normative implications of featuring RTR on news programs. Political debates are of core relevance to the field of political communication and an important topic of study. Furthermore, the panel will make several methodological and theoretical contributions and each author is committed to presenting a high quality, publishable paper.

**Chair**

[*John W. Self*](javascript:previewAttendee(34850);), Truman State University  - [Contact Me](javascript:emailContact(34850);)

**Sponsor/Co-Sponsors**

Political Communication Division

**Presentations**

**Are They Really Undecided? How Party Affiliation Influences Swing Voters’ Real-time Response to Campaign Messages**

From campaign strategists to cable pundits, a great deal of discussion surrounding the 2012 presidential campaign emphasized the role of undecided voters in the political process. Specifically, the campaigns developed sophisticated techniques to target undecided voters through social media, the news media frequently analyzed how campaign events were impacting swing voters, and Saturday Night Live mocked those still making up their minds near the end of the campaign. Yet, despite their prominence in election campaigns, little research has systematically examined undecided voters and message effects on undecided voters. This paper goes beyond simple descriptions of "undecided voters" to understand how the party affiliation of undecided voters influenced how these viewers reacted to the 2012 debates. Extensive previous research has found pre-existing partisan attitudes to be a major driver of debate effects and Bartels and Vavreck (2012) found that while 30% of undecided voters in 2012 said their party identification was "independent," four in ten were Democratic identifiers or leaners and 23% were Republican identifiers or leaners. This paper examines the mitigating factor of partisan identification by comparing the real-time response of independent undecided voters, Democratic undecided voters, and Republican undecided voters to the 2012 debates.

**Author**

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**Dialing in to Women... and Men? Examining Gender in 2012 Debates through RTR research**

Between "binders full of women" and the "war on women," issues of gender were prevalent in the 2012 general election. However, although the media found gender an important talking point and an important frame for examining candidate messages, did the voters respond accordingly when they weren't influenced by media voices? Using real-time-response data collection, this study examines the first presidential debate through the eyes of a focus group comprised of undecided/unaffiliated voters. Drawing from Huddy and Terkildsen's (1993) work on issues and issue-based gendered expectations, the candidates' responses are content analyzed and correlated with focus group responses captured in real time through dial technology. By examining male and female participant reactions to the candidate responses we seek to determine if men and women in fact responded differently both in the issues discussed and thus to how they were presented. We discuss implications regarding the role of gender in politics as well as strengths of RTR research in capturing voter reactions to candidates and their messages.

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**Losing Without Saying a Word: Visual Analysis of the 2012 Presidential Debates**

Nonverbal presentation style has been recognized as an important aspect of competition since the first televised presidential debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960. Once again, the 2012 debates underscored the importance of effective nonverbal communication in politics, as observers widely criticized President Obama for a lackluster and disengaged nonverbal communication style in the first debate, which Mitt Romney was credited with winning. Beyond television's purported capacity to highlight elements of candidate image, this study probes the specific nonverbal behaviors that lead viewers to form assessments, both positive and negative, of presidential candidates during televised debates. The study combines two datasets – continuous response measures of all three debates and a shot-by-shot analysis of the candidates' nonverbal communication style, visual presentation, and associated production techniques – to answer this question. Categories for analysis include gaze direction, facial expressions, blink rate, head movement, gestures, camera time, and voice tone. In addition to visual variables, the study analyzes dial test responses to key encounters between Obama and Romney during the debates, especially moments of separation between partisan viewers. In a broader sense, the study addresses what constitutes a nonverbal "winner" and "loser," given that Romney supporters expressed considerable enthusiasm and Obama supporters palpable frustration with their respective candidates. With winning and losing qualities of candidate behavior and visual presentation identified, subsequent research will be able to employ this framework in the analysis of contemporary televised political encounters.

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**Non-Representative Polling and Real-Time Events**

Using a unique dataset from YouGov/Xbox Polls, we explore the impact of major events on political elections. During the 2012 election, Xbox conducted roughly 750,000 interviews with 350,000 respondents and collected millions of additional answers during the debates. In an election season, the likely outcome of any given race moves in conjunction with a series of preset and unforeseen events. For a presidential election, the preset events include the two conventions and four nationally televised debates; examples of unforeseen events in 2012 included the release of a hidden tape from a Mitt Romney fundraiser and Hurricane Sandy. Standard polling conducted before, during, and after an event can help estimate the impact of impact of preset events, but for unforeseen event there is unlikely to be any polling during the event; yet, even preset events can be too close in-time for polls to be cleanly conducted before and after. For some questions, standard polling cannot match the real-time, continuous polling of repeated users, even if the users are not fully representative of the voting population. First, we show how the Xbox data tracks standard sources. Second, we show how its added granularity provides additional insight.

**Author**

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**Polarization in the 2012 Presidential Debates: A Moment-to-Moment, Dynamic Analysis of Audience Reactions in Ohio and Florida**

Past studies have shown that televised debates reinforce existing predispositions as opposed to persuading viewers, but they have been unable to clarify whether this polarization occurs because viewers become more favorable toward their preferred candidate, more critical of the opponent, or both (Cho and Ha, 2012). Through online moment-to-moment responses collected by ResearchNow from a sample of 1000 likely voters in 2 key battleground states (Ohio and Florida), this study provides an answer to this question in the context of the 2012 presidential debates. Further, we examine the impact of partisanship and preferred media channel on attitudes toward the candidates. Using multiple discriminant analysis and cluster analysis, we are able to provide insights into the dynamics of responses of likely voter segments that go beyond characterization by simple demographics.

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**Strategic Insights: The Potential News Value of Real Time Response Measurements**

During the 2012 Presidential election every major television news station used some sort of Real Time Response (RTR) information to enhance news coverage. This paper will assess the various attempts to use such measures, explore its news value, and identify the various ways that such insights could be more productively used by news organizations.

**Author**

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**The Obama Presidency and Republican Opposition Watch in Year Five: The Rhetoric and Politics of Governing and Forging Foreign Policy**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 8:00 AM  - 9:15 AM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Delaware A - Lobby Level**

Pursuant to his close victory – and claim of achieving of a mandate -- for re-election, President Barack Obama confronts domestic issues, including national debt and deficit, immigration, and gun violence, as well as foreign policy issues, including Iran's nuclear weapons status, Syria's instability, and Egypt's turn from democracy and world economic crises. This panel analyzes the rhetoric and politics of a second-term president with arguably more on his plate than was the case in term one.

**Chair**

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Political Communication Division

**Social Media and Political Engagement: Examining the Content and Effects of Citizens’ Twitter Behavior during the 2012 U.S. Presidential Debates**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 9:30 AM  - 10:45 AM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

Room: Thurgood Marshall Ballroom East - Mezzanine Level

The studies that make up this panel consist of empirical analyses of tweet content and effects of Twitter use during the 2012 U.S. presidential election. Specifically, each of the four studies examines Twitter conversation as an expression of public opinion in response to the televised U.S. presidential debates. Together, these investigations explore and illuminate the possibilities and challenges found in using citizens' Twitter comments to understand public opinion in a political context.

**Chair**

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**Sponsor/Co-Sponsors**

Political Communication Division

**Presentations**

**Examining #debates: Live-Tweeting the 2012 U.S. Presidential Debates**

This experimental study combines analysis of both effects and content of debate viewers' Twitter behavior by comparing those who live-tweeted the 2012 presidential debates to debate viewers who engaged the debate with a single (televisual) screen. Specifically, a number of candidate perceptual, debate learning and attitudinal outcomes are compared across the two groups of tweeters vs. non-tweeters. Additionally, the study explores the content of debate tweets, specifically issue vs. candidate image tweets, as well as sentiment of tweets (positive and negative) directed toward the two candidates. The analysis of tweet content explores how different debate viewers, including those who are highly partisan and also those with greater political interest and knowledge, tweet compared to those who are less politically interested, partisan and knowledgeable.

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**Examining the Role of Humor in the Presidential Debate Tweet-stream**

This study collected and analyzed all debate-related tweets sent during the six hours surrounding each of the three U.S. presidential debates in October 2012. A large portion of these tweets are jokes, and a significant number of the top-retweeted accounts either belong to professional comedians or are parody accounts. In our analysis, we examine the role humor plays in the debate-related conversation on Twitter, and explore the implications Twitter humor may have for the broader political discourse.

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**Social Media’s Influence on Candidate Perceptions**

Online social media such as Twitter facilitate the rapid flow of short, informal communication among self-selected networks of users. By doing so, these services could alter citizens' understanding of political reality, potentially exacerbating schisms between individuals of opposing political affiliations. This study will examine the interplay between online social media use, social network heterogeneity, and outcome variables including affective reactions to the presidential candidates and perceptions of the candidates' debate performances.

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**The Effects of Social Watching the 2012 Presidential Debates**

This study examines the impact of watching the presidential debates with others – whether those others are present in person or accessed through Facebook or Twitter. Theory about the impact of debate content suggests that viewers may experience negative mentions as "their" candidate is attacked, and may experience great uncertainty about issues at the same time. These negative responses may occur simultaneously with the excitement of knowing one is sharing an experience of importance with millions of others. All three of these possibilities suggest that all three forms of social watching will produce a better view of ones responses to the debate (more enjoyment, attention, interest) as well as a higher likelihood of more debates being watched and watched longer. These predictions are strongly supported with a sample of American adults in two different parts of the country.

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**Politicians and Campaign Managers: Electoral Viability, Strategy and Media Coverage**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 11:00 AM  - 12:15 PM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Thurgood Marshall Ballroom East - Mezzanine Level**

This session feature papers on candidate viability, campaign managers, presidential speeches and youtube strategies.

**Chair**

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**Respondent**

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**Sponsor/Co-Sponsors**

Political Communication Division

**Presentations**

**Perceptions of Candidate Viability and Electability in a Fragmented Media Landscape**

This study examines how exposure to network news, partisan opinion talk, and political satire programs during the 2012 Iowa caucuses affected audience members' perceptions of candidate viability and electability. It draws on a textual analysis of three programs-ABC World News, Fox News Channel's Hannity, and Comedy Central's The Daily Show with Jon Stewart-to develop hypotheses and research questions about the effects of each program's distinctive framing of the caucuses. It then uses a randomized field experiment to test whether exposure to these different programs shaped audience members' perceptions of how likely the candidate declared as the Iowa winner was to capture the party's nomination and to win the general election. The different frames used in each program's coverage led viewers to different assessments of the front-runner, signaling the significant implications of media fragmentation for the presidential nomination process.

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**The Stage Managers of Political Communication: New Media Designs and Campaign Production in a Fragmented Era**

New media technologies have often been lauded for their revolutionary potential in mobilizing citizenry, de-monopolizing gatekeeper power, and rejuvenating democracy. Amidst an era of information abundance, some forecast the decline of traditional institutions that set the political agenda. This research inquires into how those changes in the media environment are impacting (and being impacted by) the perspectives and processes of consultants involved in the production of political communication. Drawing upon dozens of in-depth interviews with these campaign "stage managers" – press secretaries, media advisors, advertisers, technology specialists, and other public relations personnel – the paper highlights how strategies are developed, practices are executed, and messages are encoded given the increasing fragmentation of and narrowcasting to the U.S. electorate. It examines these consultants' roles in expanding the potential spaces for and loosening veracity of political content, the decentralized navigation of more partisan channels within that media ecology, and the segmented targeting of more nuanced, flexible messages capacitated through data refinement. These efforts suggest designs against public sphere principles dependent on factual objectivity, shared truths, and a common culture to bind citizens together and a behind-the-scenes, empirical counterpoint to the techno-utopianism that often accompanies new media change.

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**Media Attention to Major Presidential Addresses: An Examination of Conceptualizations, Predictors, and Effects**

The relationship between presidential speeches, news media, and the public has long been a primary area of interest for scholars of political communication. This study provides new insight into that relationship by adding to Coe and Neumann's (2011) conceptualization of "major presidential addresses" a new criterion: media attention. Via nearly 2,000 New York Times stories focusing on more than 400 presidential speeches across eight decades, we track media attention to major addresses in order to answer three questions: 1) How can focusing on media attention refine our understanding of what constitutes a major address? 2) What predicts media attention to major addresses? 3) Do major presidential addresses, and media attention to those addresses, influence public approval of the president?

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**YouTube and the 2012 Presidential Election: An Examination of how Obama and Romney’s Official YouTube Channels were used in Campaign Communication**

YouTube first became a blip on the United States' political radar during the 2006 mid-term election when former U.S. Senator George Allen, a Virginia Republican, was captured on video saying a racial slur and uploaded to YouTube. Online video, in general, and the YouTube platform in particular, have become vital campaign and political communication tools. Online video allows for a level of image and message control outside of the purview of the mainstream media that is relatively cheap to produce, highly accessible, quick to disseminate, and easily shared via social networking sites. This study examines the Obama and Romney official campaign YouTube channels during the 2012 presidential campaign to see how each political team utilized this medium to engage with potential supporters. Through a mixed-method content analysis, the study found to some extent, both campaigns incorporated YouTube usage into their overall campaign strategies. However, by examining the pages, it is evident that the campaigns had different tactics for using YouTube, and arguably, achieved differing levels of effectiveness in terms of addressing users' primary motivations for watching online political videos.

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# Citizens, Cell Phones, and Community Action… Connected: A Multi-Perspective Interactive Analysis of the Textizen National Project

**Sponsor: Connections to the Community**

**Fri, 11/22: 12:30 PM  - 1:45 PM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Marriott Salon 3 - Lobby Level**

What does civic engagement look like "in action"? Textizen is an attempt to inspire civic engagement through text-message surveys manipulated to encourage conversational interaction. The idea is encouraging and cities are jumping on a chance to use it… but does it work? This panel group evaluates several of the national efforts for external effects, increased social and political efficacy as well as public media use in engagement and actual responses from NCA 2013 Textizen surveys.

#### Chair

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#### Presenter(s)

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#### Sponsor/Co-Sponsors

Connections to the Community

**Top Papers in Political Communication**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 12:30 PM  - 1:45 PM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Thurgood Marshall Ballroom East - Mezzanine Level**

This panel features the top four competitively ranked papers in political communication.

**Chair**

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**Sponsor/Co-Sponsors**

Political Communication Division

**Presentations**

**Communicating Openness in Deliberation**

Normative and practical accounts of deliberative democracy cite open-mindedness as a key feature of good deliberation, yet scholars have often focused on attitude change to empirically demonstrate openness. This paper draws on grounded practical theory to understand openness as a stance in public deliberation and how participants use openness to address interactional problems. On the technical level, openness functions as an interactional and a propositional stance, as participants communicate their intent to be open in the deliberation through explicit references to listening and understanding, asking questions, and paraphrasing. Openness is used to address three practical problems encountered in deliberation: opinion formation, deliberative sense making, and dysfunctional community problem-solving. Based on analysis of how openness is used to address problems, we argue that indicating openness and expressing attitude change are different discursive practices and should be distinguished. Expecting participants to refrain from forming opinions before deliberation may be naïve. Instead, participants' eagerness to make sense of deliberation by invoking shared understanding and openness should be used to develop meta-consensus.

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**Nate Silver’s Presidential PECOTA: Sport, the Statistical Frame, and the Rhetoric of Electoral Forecasting**

Since the advent of political communication research, scholars have noted the prevalence of sports metaphors in media coverage of campaigns and elections. One longitudinal study of the New York Times, for instance, concludes that in the years from 1952-2000, 40 percent of coverage was dedicated to the "horse race," well ahead of issues of character (31%) and policy (25%) (Benoit, Stein, & Hansen, 2005). During the 2012 presidential election, however, a cluster of terms associated with science and math emerged as an alternative model for monitoring the campaigns' progress. This "statistical frame" was best symbolized by Nate Silver, a former baseball analyst whose attention to politics was among the most celebrated aspects of the 2012 election. This essay evaluates the rhetorical effect of the statistical frame, which helps to shift attention away from outmoded political communication practices associated with predictions and punditry. This shift has implications not only for political media but for the candidates and parties who engage in political campaigns.

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**Social Networking Sites and Knowledge of the 2012 Presidential Election**

This study presents a multifaceted examination of the impact of social networking sites (SNSs) on the acquisition of campaign and debate knowledge during the 2012 presidential election. This study addresses five questions: 1) Did SNS use increase knowledge of campaign content?; 2) Did living in the battleground differentially affect whether and how much one learned from SNSs?; 3) With younger adults less likely than older ones to attend to political content, did social networking sites increase campaign knowledge in this group?; 4) Does having a politically likeminded network on SNSs affect what information is learned?; And, 5) does consumption or generation of political information from SNSs while also consuming debates affect debate learning? We provide initial evidence that SNSs foster learning. This relationship is stronger for those who live in battleground states than those who do not. And whereas those aged 18-34 did not learn from traditional media, SNS use increased knowledge among the youngest and older cohorts at the same rate. Those with homophilous mediated online social networks also learned more about their candidate closer to their ideological identity. That said, SNSs invite media multitasking, which may minimize learning from live campaign events such as the debates.

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**Why Do Knowledgeable Partisans Polarize? Cueing Knowledge, General Political Knowledge, and Policy Attitudes**

There is abundant evidence that politically attentive identifiers of each major party differ in their policy attitudes. Two theoretical mechanisms provide competing explanations for this well documented polarization among knowledgeable partisans. Elite cue theory predicts that party labels and other elite cues attached to a policy influence attitudes among those aware of these cues. Alternatively, a number of theories claim that knowledgeable partisans have greater cognitive resources for accepting only considerations consistent with their predispositions. Using ANES cross sectional and panel data, I show that partisans polarize in policy attitudes when they can correctly identify the parties' positions on the issues. This relationship between party cues and attitudes is large and robust. After controlling for cueing knowledge, general political knowledge does not influence partisans' policy attitudes in a consistent way. The pattern of results supports elite cueing theory over theories based on cognitive resources.

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**Political Communication Division Business Meeting**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 2:00 PM  - 3:15 PM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Thurgood Marshall Ballroom East - Mezzanine Level**

**Presenter**

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**Gender and Campaign 2012: Drawing CONNECTIONS between Voters, Issues, and Candidates**

**Sponsor: Political Communication Division**

**Fri, 11/22: 3:30 PM  - 4:45 PM**

**Marriott Wardman Park**

**Room: Thurgood Marshall Ballroom East - Mezzanine Level**

These papers use various methodologies to examine the influence of gender on voters and candidates during the 2012 election campaigns. Papers explore the gendered use of social media, the frequency and influence of the "war on women" rhetoric, gender and vote choice, the self-presentation of female and male candidates through their television advertising and websites, and the newspaper coverage of women and men U.S. Senate candidates.

**Chair**

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Political Communication Division

**Presentations**

**Finding a Role Model on Facebook: Political Candidates’ Use of Facebook and Young Women’s Political Engagement**

With the increased use of social media in political campaigns it is important to understand the effect of this messaging on voters, particularly young voters who are active on sites such as Facebook. This study tests Campbell and Wolbrecht' s (2006) role model theory by using an experimental design where participants followed two U.S. Senate candidates on Facebook for six weeks prior to the election. Some participants followed a female and male candidate, some two male candidates, and the others did not follow any political candidates on Facebook. The three groups are examined to test the influence of following a female candidate, as compared to male candidates or no candidates, on the political engagement, confidence, efficacy, or cynicism of young female and male voters.

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**Gender Bias Bygone? A Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Female Candidates for the U.S. Senate in 2012**

In 2012, a record number of women ran for and were elected to the U.S. Senate despite concerns that they would be turned off by an increasingly partisan, gridlocked Congress; a hostile political environment; and the aftermath of negative and often sexist media coverage received by presidential and vice presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin in 2008. The success of women congressional candidates in 2012 led one researcher (Hayes, 2012), to speculate that gender bias – either by the media or the voters – was no longer the impediment to female candidates that it once was. Our study is designed to examine the newspaper coverage of female U.S. Senate candidates in 2012 to determine whether it was equitable, or gendered, in comparison to male candidates. Through a content analysis of the newspapers with the largest circulations in 15 states with women running for the U.S. Senate in 2012, we examine the coverage of the 12 women who ran against men and the three women vs. women races. Our analysis compares and contrasts the media coverage of female vs. male races for U.S. Senate, especially the images and issues with which they are associated, the tone of their coverage, and the way in which they are framed. We also examine the coverage of women running against other women. Finally, we analyze the coverage of female and male candidates by political party to see if that makes a difference.

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**Gendered Framing of the 2012 Election: Prevalence and Influence of the “War on Women”**

This study utilizes content analysis and survey data to explore the prevalence and influence of the "war on women" rhetoric that was often used to frame the 2012 election. Using computer-assisted content analysis, we examine the extent and contexts in which the phrase "war on women" was utilized in election coverage by national newspapers, network and cable television news shows, and political blogs. To understand the implications of the media's use of this particular frame, we also analyze polling and survey data to help determine whether or not the "war on women" rhetoric was effective in swaying female voters. Some exit polling data suggests that the vote choices of married women and single women were based on different issues with married women citing jobs and the economy as their top concerns and single women citing reproductive choice, health care reform, and pay equity. Through our analysis, we address the ways in which the media's coverage of the "war on women" can explain the varying motivations reported by different subsets of women voters. This study contributes to our understanding of the possible implications of the media's framing powers, across mediums, within the political arena.

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**Is it the Message or the Medium? Female and Male Candidate Messages in 2012**

Televised advertising and campaign websites provide candidates with one key benefit: control of the message. Through both of these mediums, candidates can connect directly with voters to communicate their message and image as viable candidates for office. As research demonstrates, this is a key benefit for female candidates due to media coverage of male and female candidates still differing--albeit subtly--in ways that connect with stereotypes question women's roles in a traditionally masculine field of expertise (Bystrom, 2009). This study examines, therefore, how female and male candidates present themselves in their televised ads and on their campaign websites to determine if (1) gender still matters in how candidates present themselves to voters, and (2) now that campaign websites are institutionalized as an expected form of campaign communication, do female and male candidates present their candidacies differently across both mediums? This research draws on videostyle and webstyle analysis (Bystrom et al., 2004) to study the self-presentation strategies of candidates in mixed-gender races during the 2012 general election.

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**Tolerance for the Other Side: The Moderating Effects of Gender in the 2012 Presidential Campaign**

Surveys indicate that political polarization is taking place on many levels–among political elites, within the media environment (Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2006), and in society (Saad, 2010). Although the news media present the political parties as diametrically opposed entities, previous studies suggest that citizens do not see parties and candidates as the antithesis of one another (Green, 1988). Also, polarization among citizens has become more prevalent with increased selective exposure to news media (Stroud, 2011). Research based on data from the 1970s suggested that there was an asymmetry in the evaluations of the other side by ideological groups such that conservatives tended to dislike liberals more than liberals disliked conservatives (Brady and Sniderman, 1991). This study tests the robustness of those findings using data from the 2012 National Election Study and further examines the findings by gender. Some research indicates that women are more open and tolerant when it comes to attitudes toward different groups, such as homosexuals (Kite & Whitley, 1996) and that men are more social dominance-oriented than are women (Pratto, Stallworth, and Sidanius, 1997). This study investigates whether or not gender tolerance differences extend to evaluations of presidential candidates and political parties and whether or not gender moderates the relationships between party identification, ideology, and evaluations of the other side.

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