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Splitting a pair: playing the gender card and the race card in American politics

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SPLITTING A PAIR:
PLAYING THE GENDER CARD AND THE RACE CARD
IN AMERICAN POLITICS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Theanship School of Mass Communication

by
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B.A., Westminster College, 2001
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May 2012

For my mother.

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ABSTRACT

More than any election before, the 2008 Presidential race revealed a persistent discussion of “race cards” and “gender cards.” In spite of the reported consensus that these alleged cards were everywhere, we know relatively little about those situations where the “card” label was applied, and even less about how this label influenced voters. In fact, among key electoral sources – political elites who use identity as a campaign tool, the journalists who cover and narrate elections, and researchers who make sense of elections-based behavior – there is no consensus regarding what a card is, how or when they are played, or who does the playing. This project seeks to begin to fill the gap in our knowledge of cards in campaigns by asking how were race and gender cards reported in news coverage of the 2008 presidential election, and how does labeling an appeal a “card” matter? Using content analysis and a two-part experiment, this study succeeds in drawing a much clearer picture of how card coverage, as an essential tool of narrating an election where women and racial minorities are present, affects American politics. While much of the research on cards defines their application and effects in terms of public policy issues, an examination of card coverage during the 2008 election reveals that much of the alleged cards were character-based. Moreover, the “card” label was not just used to categorize an appeal; cards were also invoked to maintain the identity narrative, even when identity was not a campaign issue. Using some of the most commonly reported cards from the 2008 race, the progressive experiments here revealed that, while the card label itself has little effect on how voters evaluate candidates, the addition of contextual information – for those with higher levels of racism and sexism – predicted increased support for white and male candidates, respectively. In short, these results show that how cards are covered defies our existing understanding of what a race card or a gender card is; moreover, in card coverage, the “card” label itself matters less than traditional cues like candidate sex and race in informing evaluations.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

“Oh, if only race was easy that we could boil it down to one rule. But I do think that the question you’re asking here is a key and central one that we are grappling with in America, and that is: how do we figure out what this mysterious race card is?”

- Melissa Harris-Lacewell¹

The 2008 Democratic primary saw two strong contenders, Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, vie for the Democratic nomination: Senator Clinton was the first woman to run as a frontrunner seeking the party’s nomination; Senator Obama, the first African American to win the party’s nomination for President. Though Clinton did not make it out of the democratic primary, the general election saw the introduction of a woman as the Republican Vice Presidential nominee, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin. Because of their collective strong media presence, gender and race were persistent narratives throughout the 2008 election season.

Author and columnist Shelby Steele commented that the practice of “politics as usual” in the presence of a Black candidate like Barack Obama made it “very easy to step across [the] line and seem to be racially insensitive” (CBS, 15 January 2008), but the “line” he referenced was never clearly drawn. Gloria Steinem called gender the “most restricting force in American life,” and yet Hillary Clinton was frequently packaged as a manipulative gendering force throughout the campaign (Steinem, 8 January 2008). Aside from offering commentary representative of the identity dialog in 2008, Steinem and Steele also reflect the ambivalence surrounding the race and gender conversation. On the one hand, pundits, candidates, and politicians believe very strongly in the weight of identity in politics; on the other hand, discussing identity is a conversation traditionally had in nuanced terms. This tension is particularly evidenced in, and perhaps best illustrated by, the role played by “card” coverage in the 2008 election.

More than any election before, the 2008 Presidential race revealed a persistent discussion of “cards.” The “race card” and the “gender card” were played, invoked, threatened, deflected, and rejected throughout the duration of the campaign: Hillary Clinton reportedly played the gender card when she

¹ From the April 5th, 2010 broadcast of *Countdown with Keith Olberman* on MSNBC.

choked up during a campaign stop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Barack Obama was accused of playing the race card when he remarked that he did not look like the other presidents on U.S. currency; the McCain campaign served as card watchdogs; and Bill Clinton could not open his mouth without reportedly playing a card. Each of these events – and many more – amplified the already resonant talk of race, gender, and politics in America. But like the inconsistencies in the larger identity conversation, the abundance of card talk uncovered remarkable variations in the way politicians and journalists applied the card label. Hillary Clinton, for example, was consistently reported as the primary player of gender cards. Sarah Palin, the Republican Vice Presidential nominee, however, received far less gender card coverage, and was never reported to have played the gender card. In short, Clinton's somewhat conflicted gender strategy (Lawrence and Rose, 2010) set off gender card radar, while Palin's highly feminized strategy (McGinley, 2009) did not. Simply observing campaign events and coverage of the 2008 election cycle – where card talk is abundant – does not reveal any clear or consistent picture of what a card is or how cards are played.

Interestingly, the academic treatment of cards is equally inconsistent, with value-laden operationalizations of the race card and the gender card varying widely. Frequently, the race card is one of white conservatism (Mendleberg, 2001), whereby white conservatives use the specter and fear of race to motivate white voters. But the race card has also been articulated as one of Black advantage (Ford, 2008; Williams, 2001), where minorities invoke race to gain, regain, or assert rights. Gender card research is almost nonexistent, but references are equally divergent in how they articulate what a card is and how it is played.

What the public does understand of cards is largely acquired through social life. We hear others apply the term to actions or statements where an advantage is being sought and become attuned to interpret card play as wrong because playing a card is unfair, underhanded and manipulative. In short, we know cards exist and that they are bad even if we cannot clearly define or identify their use. But in politics, statements that seek to shift or solidify support are common, especially negative statements. Strategic language and appeals are a natural and expected part of campaigning. If candidates manipulate

as a part of the process of campaigning, then how do reported cards fit into the political landscape? How do we reconcile a colloquial understanding of cards with the reality of political campaigns? Because of this dissonance, cards have the potential to hold a unique place in campaign discourse. Moreover, it is difficult to say whether or not alleged cards, as a part of narrating an election, are objectively bad.

Among three key electoral sources – political elites who use race and gender as campaign tools, the journalists who cover and narrate elections, and researchers who make sense of elections-based behavior – there is no consensus regarding *what* a card is, *how* or *when* they are played, or *who* does the playing. In fact, the manner in which “play” itself happens is also uncertain. Until now, these inconsistencies have not raised red flags or warranted any discussion. I contend, however, that the disparate manner in which cards are discussed moves focus away from the engagement of race, candidate sex and gender in political campaigns and toward game and narration of political campaigns. That is, the inconsistency reveals a prioritizing of the sensational aspects of identity over the substantive questions of how Americans continue to feel about race, candidate sex and gender in politics. The card label does not just sensationalize the campaign narrative, but also becomes a tool of shifting and manipulating candidate image and public support. Cards, then, are powerful elements in electoral politics, powerful elements we know very little about.

The media have become an inseparable and integral part of American political campaigns; what candidates say and do and how these strategic decisions are covered by the media has an impact on how voters decide. More specifically, the presence and coverage of women and minority candidates also influences how voters evaluate these candidates and the extent to which they succeed in running for office. In short, *whether or not candidates actually “play cards” – whatever that means – matters less than that they are reported to do so.* This project seeks to begin to fill the gap in our knowledge of cards in campaigns by asking three broad questions. First, how are race and gender cards reported in news coverage of the 2008 presidential election? Second, how does labeling an appeal a “card” matter? And third, under what conditions does reported card play matter? Answering these three questions will succeed in drawing a much clearer picture of how card coverage, as an essential tool of narrating an

election where women and racial minorities are present, affects American politics.

Key Assumptions

Three key assumptions guide my exploration of cards in campaigns. First, cards represent a unique portion of the universe of appeals. That is, not all appeals are cards, but all cards are appeals. Political appeals can engage a broad range of emotions or issues; cards, however, engage a constellation of social and economic realities and stereotypes to gain electoral advantage. Cards are unique cultural artifacts in that they are ubiquitous but rare. We understand a craftiness behind card play, a manipulation. Cards violate the unspoken etiquette of elections: the act of labeling an appeal a card amounts to an indictment against a candidate, campaign, or other political actor. In short, cards are a type of appeal made by candidates, campaign operatives, or confederates to activate or discourage support for a candidate for whom stereotypes may impact not only the strategic elements of campaigning, but also their reception and evaluation by voters. This is an important distinction to make, as crafting a new vocabulary for discussing cards, as well as new ways of studying cards, requires thinking about cards separate from thinking about standard political appeals.

Second, all cards can be organized on two dimensions: who plays the card, and who the card is played against. During the 2008 cycle, reported cards were not restricted to inter-candidate communication – those instances where a candidate plays a card against another. Campaign surrogates reportedly played cards without permission, campaign staff defended their candidate against card play, and cards were present simply because of the candidates running for office. In campaigns, then, cards do not represent “a single phenomenon” (Lee and Morin, 2009, p. 377); rather, cards represent a constellation of strategies, uses, descriptions, and offenses that vary widely depending on subjective experience. Turning to the established academic conversation on cards, we see several fundamental characteristics of cards: 1) that playing a card represents violating a social norm; 2) that the act of playing a card is about both creating and articulating advantage and disadvantage; and 3) that a card requires both a player and someone to play against. This third area of agreement makes it possible to create a more standardized system for classifying and identifying cards as a unique kind of strategic appeal.

Using the actors as a point of departure, this paper advances a two (majority player/minority player) by two (majority object/minority object) framework for characterizing all cards allegedly played in political campaigns. In this configuration, references to the “player” indicate the individual or campaign reported to have played the card; the “object” is the individual or campaign the card is played against. Similarly, “minority” refers to the candidate (or representative campaign) that is a political minority (women or racial and ethnic minorities), while “majority” refers to the candidate (or representative campaign) that is a political majority (generally white males). In this framework, cards can be played in one of four ways: an majority player against an majority object; an majority player against an minority object; an minority player against an majority object; and an minority player against an minority object. Categorizing card play, or use, on this 2x2 framework assures that scholars evaluate the universe of identity based appeals rather than omitting appeals based on more subjective assumptions based on grievance, advantage, strategy or other elements.

Third, because there is no objective standard for identifying and evaluating cards, what we know of cards is limited to those instances where an appeal is labeled as such. Though generally categorized as implicit or explicit (Mendelberg, 2001), cards more generally can take three forms. First, a card can be implicit, maneuvering strategically through the campaign landscape largely unnoticed. Second, and more practically, the card can also be an implicit appeal that is elevated to explicit status through the application of the card label. In this arrangement, reporting the play of the card has clear implications for the campaigns involved. The third option is an appeal that is so purely explicit that it’s identification as the card is unquestioned.

In theory, one could study the impact of the card label and reputed card play across each of these three kinds of appeals; this, however, would be a foolhardy and endless pursuit. Purely implicit and explicit appeals are not appropriate for understanding how the label influences voters precisely because there is no way of knowing that the universe of cards is achieved. Explicit appeals are supposed to be obvious, but racism and sexism are contextual and subjective. Implicit appeals are difficult to detect because we have no standard for identifying them. In short, elevated implicit appeals – those implicit

appeals that are labeled cards – are the appropriate and only thing to study because they are identifiable and cataloging the universe of cards is achievable. Because what follows is a study of how cards are constructed and covered in the media (and, by extension, what the consequence of that is), elevated implicit appeals are only focus of this investigation.

If cards are unique, then categorizing appeals based on the actors involved simplifies the process of understanding those appeals already labeled cards. By unpacking these alleged appeals, identifying a greater range of identity-based appeals becomes more manageable. Examining alleged cards through the lens of these three assumptions provides both a theoretically and methodologically sound way of examining how cards are constructed in news coverage of political campaigns.

Research Plan

To answer the broad questions outlined above, I conduct a series of analyses designed to build upon one another. In order to understand how cards are reported in campaign news coverage, I conduct a content analysis of news coverage of the 2008 Presidential race. The content analysis will focus on news stories across six popular news sources that mention either the “race card” or the “gender card” during the 2008 primary season and general election. The 2008 election is particularly important to examine because of the high volume of card-related conversation. The results of the content analysis will provide data on those political situations when the card label is applied. The players, the motivations, the extent to which a consequence is attached, will all paint a picture of how the race card and the gender card are covered in contemporary American politics. The content analysis, while illuminating how cards and their players are covered, will also inform the creation of a series of experiments meant to uncover how this card coverage matters, and in which situations cards matter.

Using the cards uncovered from the content analysis, the first phase of experiments tests the effect of the card label in news coverage on candidate evaluation. While studies on appeals have revealed an effect on vote choice and candidate evaluation (Huber and Lapinski, 2006; Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005; Valentino, Hutchings, and White, 2002; Mendelberg, 2001), none have examined the ability of voters to identify coded, or even explicit, language with the benefit of the card label (though Nelson et al. (2007)

have come close in their discussion of elite claims of racism). Moreover, all of the experiments conducted on coded appeals engage different definitions of cards.

In my experiments, exposure to identical editorial coverage of an issue or character-based card with or without the card label in the headline forms the structure of these experiments. The cards themselves are adapted directly from card coverage during the 2008 election, and are true to those cards differently engaged for both racial and gendered appeals. In the second phase, the card label is present throughout all conditions, but the individual doing the playing will be manipulated. The second phase directly addresses those circumstances in which card play matters. This phase of experiments also directly tests the effect of a woman candidate – like Hillary Clinton, for example – receiving greater gender card attribution than her male counterparts (a key finding from the content analysis).

While the construction of gendered and racial appeals in news coverage are at the heart of the following analysis, this analysis is also about how inconsistent news coverage can influence the way voters evaluate candidates. Media coverage matters, and while a dearth of research affirms that identity-based appeals have an impact on voters, no research has yet to address how the coverage of those appeals influences voting behavior. Using the race and the gender card as a conduit, this paper will show that the neutral actor-based framework outlined above is the best method for looking at cards as a campaign phenomenon rather than looking at different types of cards in different ways. It will also reveal that the manner in which political actors and journalists choose to label, call out, and use the race and the gender card affects how voters evaluate women and minority candidates.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1980's, and peaking with the most recent presidential election, a particular aspect of raced and gendered politics has emerged as a dramatic and powerful element: the card. Race cards and gender cards are familiar components of narrating elections: as accusations, stratagems, tropes, and derisions. Their omnipresence, however, belies their relative mystery. In fact, we know relatively little about these cards. While scholarly research tells us that the race card impacts white voters (Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005; Mendelberg, 2001, 1997; Valentino, 1999; Gilens, 1996) and that the gender card is something that women candidates struggle to play with success (Lawrence and Rose, 2010; Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hustebeck, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Perry, 2005), the true definition and identification of cards is uncertain. There are, however, common threads that exist between all of these definitions and explanations of cards. This common ground will facilitate the articulation of a framework for categorizing alleged card play that will streamline the process of understanding how news coverage of race cards and gender cards affects voters.

Guiding the theoretical review below are three broad questions: how are race and gender cards reported in news coverage of the 2008 presidential election? How does labeling an appeal a "card" matter? And, under what conditions does reported card play matter? Prior to outlining more specific research questions and hypotheses, I focus on cards themselves; their social understanding, heuristic presence, and varied meaning all point to a necessity for a more consistent way of communicating about cards. I offer a neutral framework for approaching card talk and research in an effort to create a structure for researching the impact of the card label on voters. After outlining three fundamental assumptions of cards, as well as a framework for categorizing all card play, I unpack a body of literature on gender, candidate sex, and race in American politics particularly as it relates to social construction, news coverage, stereotypes, and strategic cues. This literature, as it's related to the impact of the card label in elections, informs a series of research questions and hypotheses aimed understanding how cards are covered by the media, and what impact that has on voters.

Cards

Just the term, “card,” conjures notions of play: Cards are not singular objects, they come in decks or packs; cards are strategic, passed back and forth, traded, or thrown; and there is a hierarchy of cards, in that some are more powerful than others. We talk about cards as something played to gain or retain advantage, to manipulate, or defend injustice. In this regard, cards are a “term of art,” a tool that requires a measure of skilled craftsmanship to be effective (Lawrence and Rose, 2010, p. 141). In our social lives, though, Americans generally understand cards to be bad. That is, when someone plays a card they should not be rewarded for their cleverness, but discounted for the manipulation. The card label, then, acts as a heuristic – pointing us towards a negative evaluation of the individual(s) playing the card. In politics, however, this process is more complex: strategic language and appeals are a natural and expected part of campaigning. If candidates manipulate as a part of the process of campaigning, then how do “cards” fit into the political landscape? In politics, then, alleged card play cannot be immediately categorized as bad because they have the potential to represent an extension of strategic campaigning.

Political appeals invoke “words, images, and symbols” to strengthen an argument (Jerit, 2004, p. 564). Appeals can take many forms – they can be emotional, factual, issue-based, etc. – but all seek to activate some familiarity in the mind of the voter. The question is, however, is the act of making any political appeal the same as playing a card? On the surface, they seem very similar. In politics, both appeals and cards are used to manipulate support for a candidate or campaign, both activate latencies, and both can be engaged at any stage of the political or electoral process. Whereas appeals may engage a broad range of emotions or issues, cards engage a constellation of social, historical and economic realities and stereotypes to gain electoral advantage. In short, cards are a type of appeal made by candidates, campaign operatives, or confederates to activate or discourage support for a candidate for whom stereotypes may impact not only the strategic elements of campaigning, but also their reception and evaluation by voters. Cards, then, represent a unique portion of the universe of appeals. That is, *not all appeals are cards, but all cards are appeals.*

The distinction between appeals and cards is an important one to make, and represents the first of

three fundamental assumptions of cards. Cards are unique cultural artifacts because they are ubiquitous but rarely invoked. We understand a craftiness behind card play, a manipulation. Cards violate the unspoken etiquette of elections; the act of labeling an appeal a card amounts to an indictment against a candidate, campaign, or other political actor. For the media to draw attention to an appeal by labeling it a card, the press acts as defender of a notion about how candidates are supposed to act. More importantly, the presence of cards reflects poorly on a modern America committed to equality. Appeals, in general, do none of these things.

Cards, because they are such a particular aspect of American campaigns, must be distinguished not only definitionally but also through research. In academic circles, cards are generally categorized as implicit or explicit (Mendelberg, 2001). While this is an established and parsimonious way of approaching researching cards, they can actually take three forms (Figure 1). First, a card can be implicit, maneuvering strategically through the campaign landscape largely unnoticed. According to Mendleberg (2001), implicit cards are particularly effective because no one notices the meaning behind the card. In the case of race, for example, the language blends seamlessly with campaign rhetoric, and the public is presented with “an ostensibly race-free...position in an issue while incidentally alluding to racial stereotypes or to a perceived threat from African Americans” (Mendelberg, 2001, p. 9). This can be achieved through images, as in the oft-cited “Willie” Horton advertisement where the issue of Michael Dukakis’ policy toward furloughs was paired with the example of William Horton, a Black inmate granted furlough who committed crimes while out of jail; the ad was so effective, scholars, like Mendelberg, argue because the story of William Horton was accompanied by his frightening booking photo, thus pairing the (ostensibly non-racial) issue of furloughs with the (highly racialized) photograph of Horton. This camouflaging of identity can also be achieved through words. Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) found that the simple integration of the phrase “inner city” into a survey question can be enough to form attachment “between a particular policy and a particular group” (p. 109).

An implicit gender card, then, takes a gendered issue and presents it in a way so as to make the gendered reference a coincidence rather than a purpose. It is important to note, however, that no scholar

has looked at gender cards in a systematic or similar manner. Mendelberg (2001) rejects the notion that gender cards are advantageous to candidates and parties, and yet the “gender card” label was frequently applied in the narrative of the 2008 presidential campaign (Lawrence and Rose, 2010). Because the social norms around race and gender operate differently, it is understandable that gender cards may persist in a less noticeable or quantifiable way than implicit racial appeals.

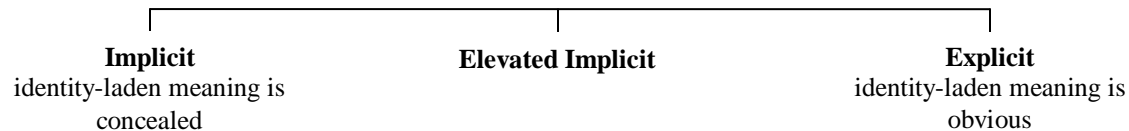


Figure 1: Kinds of Cards

The second kind of card is one that is so purely explicit, that its identification as a card is unquestioned. If the first type of card is the most powerful because the identity-based appeal goes unnoticed, then explicit appeals are ineffective because when a card is noticed “it loses its ability to prime ... voters ... predispositions” and voters “become more disaffected with the candidate” doing the playing (Mendelberg, 2001, p. 4). According to Mendelberg, explicit racial appeals have all but disappeared because they are automatically discounted by voters. It is with explicit appeals, then, that the heuristic power of the race card label discussed above comes into play: because the label is present, discounting and disavowing support for a candidate becomes easy.

As with implicit appeals, the same lack of treatment persists for explicit gender appeals. As will be discussed below in the section on news coverage, overt references to, for example, a woman candidate’s appearance persist in spite of the woman candidacy being less extraordinary than 20 years ago. Now, whether or not this constitutes a “gender card” we do not know – because, as previously discussed, there are no objective standards for knowing when a card is a card – but references to skirts, pantsuits, and cleavage all obviously put the spotlight on a woman politicians gender performance in a way that a mention of tie choice does not for a man.² We cannot say, then, whether or not an explicit gendered

² During the 2008 race pantsuits became a persistent mention when talking about Hillary Clinton, so much so that her campaign integrated a pantsuits option into a t-shirt contest they ran on their website. Sarah Palin skirts were the topic of much ire and perhaps admiration during her time as Republican Vice Presidential nominee in 2008 as well.

appeal that garners the “card” label operates in a similar heuristic manner to those labeled “race cards;” what we can say is that it warrants studying.

The third and final kind of card is one that represents a middle ground between implicit and explicit appeals. Mendelberg (2001) notes that the only way to render an implicit appeal ineffective is to make it explicit, though she does not treat these transformed implicit appeals as a separate kind of card. In fact, no other scholar has recognized this middle ground as an aspect of card play worth distinguishing. I argue, however that an implicit appeal elevated to explicit status through the application of the card label is the most important kind of card. In fact, elevated implicit appeals may actually be the only true “cards” we know. Elevated implicit appeals are those that warrant, for whatever reason, labeling. For example, during the 2008 election Barack Obama’s comment to a Missouri crowd that he did not look like the other presidents on U.S. currency was quickly labeled race card play by the McCain campaign. Was Obama highlighting his race in an effort to guilt white voters into supporting him? Or was Obama simply making an observation about a historical reality of the presidency? In this example and others, the motivations behind applying the label might be uncertain, but patterns in those appeals (and subsequent contexts) that receive the card label can be found. Elevated implicit appeals, then, represent a rich and under-studied aspect of campaign communication. Moreover, in elevated implicit appeals we find, unlike implicit and explicit appeals, a topic equally under developed for both race and gender cards.

As the following analysis will show, in the coverage of the 2008 election the application of the card label was inconsistent, both in terms of when and to whom the label was applied. What we know of card play in American politics is actually restricted to those instances where an implicit appeal was labeled a card. Without a clear understanding of when a card is, indeed, a card or what constitutes card “play,” using implicit and explicit appeals alone – the accepted way of approaching card research – is fruitless. If understanding the coverage and consequences of cards is the goal (the key objective of this research) then explicit and implicit appeals are ineffective because the universe of appeals cannot be efficiently captured. We may know that implicit and explicit appeals exist, but identifying and cataloging them is difficult and amounts to an entirely different study in itself. That leaves elevated implicit appeals – those implicit

appeals labeled “cards” – as the appropriate and only thing to study if you want to know how cards and the card label operate in American politics. The second fundamental assumption of cards, then, is that *what we know of cards is actually limited to Elevated Implicit appeals, and that these cards hold the key to understanding cards and card play in American Politics.*

The first two assumptions, however, just clarify the position of cards in politics. Though cards are unique, and we understand that they come in different forms, we still do not know precisely what a card is or how it is played. Moreover, we do not have the ability to identify them with any regularity. The true extent of the confusion surrounding cards, and the reason for researching cards, is apparent in the diverse and conflicting definitions and operationalizations of cards that already exist. In American politics, the cards most frequently referenced are the race card and the gender card. In an effort to understand more about the particulars of cards and card play, and move towards a consistent method for studying cards, I look to conversations on established cards to fill in the knowledge gaps.

Race Cards

Several different perspectives dominate research on race cards. First, Saggar (2001) argues that the race card “is a form of political science and journalistic shorthand that refers generally to the structural advantage enjoyed by one major party over its rivals on the electoral issues of race” (p. 760). Here, the race card play is not a strategic tool, but a linguistic one, used to construct a narrative instead of an actual campaign phenomenon. Saggar argues that the race card is an artifact of party competition that has been co-opted by journalists and scholars to describe a situational advantage, not a particular strategic move.

The majority of other race card scholars, however, would disagree. For them, the card is a very real strategic tool that reflects the state of race in American society. According to Elise (2004), only whites can play the race card; in fact, they must, as it maintains “white privilege [and] a set of rights attached to whiteness” (p. 410). Whites hold all of the cards and thereby control “access to power, freedom, and rights” (Elise, 2004, p. 410). In this sense, all of American society is playing a game designed to maintain white supremacy (p. 416). But for Cheng (1997) this kind of play does not make sense: If whites are playing with a full deck, then they “not only need not play at all, but indeed [have] no card to play” – only

those without a full deck should play cards (Cheng, 1997, p. 50). This is a key paradox of card play in politics. If whites have all the power, then they should not be drawn into the act playing cards. And yet, some of the most dominant perspectives on race card play focus specifically on card play by whites.

Perhaps the most widely adopted perspective on the race card is that of Mendelberg (2001; 1997). Here, the race card is a tool of white conservatives who implicitly invoke race so as to avoid backlash from violating the norm of equality. Implicit appeals contain identical messages to explicit appeals, but are bathed in race-neutral context. The play codes race in a way that primes voters to turn to racial latencies in their decision making (Mendelberg, 2001). Mendelberg's race card is similarly used by Huber and Lapinski (2006) and others, including Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) who further characterize race card play as the use of coded language to racialize and undermine a policy (this is a common, if understated, assumption in a whole category of research on race coding). The underlying theme of this perspective on the race card is that racial appeals are particularly effective when covert rather than overt, and that white political elites are generally the ones doing the playing.

For Ford (2008), playing the race card amounts to a minority making "a claim of racial bias in order to gain something" that is not deserved (p. 7). In this articulation, playing the race card works for minorities for the same reason Mendelberg's (2001) version works: because the history of verifiable events regarding race makes the accusation believable (Ford, 2008). That is we believe that white conservatives will play the card because they wish to maintain the level of power guaranteed in pre-civil rights era America, just like we believe blacks will play the race card to make up for the inequalities that still exist even after the passage of civil rights. These historical and political realities make any accusation of play contextually believable. Playing the race card is wrong because it devalues a community, advances inequality, and makes it difficult to "address the legitimate concerns of others" (Ford, 2008, p. 20). Here, the advantage is sought by racial minorities, who invoke race to gain advantage.

Williams (2001) similarly articulates one version of the race card where a presentation of racial suffering casts one racial group as a victim of the other (p. 5). In particular, the racial suffering of blacks is a race card that can trump others because it takes advantage of our collective memory of racial abuses;

the engagement of racial appeals has been cataloged as far back as Reconstruction, where whites created a “rhetorical environment” designed to maintain the slave status of recently freed blacks while appealing to “blacks to submit to their former subservient status” (Logue, 1977, p. 242). This history of economic, cultural, and rhetorical oppression fuel a card that is played to ameliorate history and even the score. But not all race cards are packaged so negatively. More recently, Nelson et al. (2007) seem to imply that any invocation of race, even those that are meant to mobilize on behalf of minority interests, can be a kind of race card. Black leaders can play the race card in an attempt to elevate important community issues.

The only race card scholars to recognize that the race card takes many forms are Lee and Morin (2009). The authors point to at least three different race cards in recent memory. The first is exemplified by Mendelberg (2001) and the “Willie Horton” advertisement. The second and third, by Williams (2001) who uses the O.J. Simpson trial as a conduit. What’s extraordinary is that Lee and Morin (2009) successfully negotiate the different kinds of race cards without becoming bogged down in some of the value-laden assumptions of other race card scholars. To be sure, they recognize norms and racial context, but it does not become the driving force behind their analysis. Instead they use them as master-types upon which to compare race cards in the 2008 presidential race.

Gender Cards

In their analysis of the 2008 election, Lawrence and Rose (2010) found almost twice the number of race card references compared to gender card references in campaign news coverage of the 2008 primaries. A GoogleScholar search of articles containing the phrase “gender card” reveals 252 hits, over nineteen times fewer than the 4,880 articles GoogleScholar produces from a search of “race card.”³ The card conversation, then, clearly prioritizes race over gender to a significant degree. This disparity does not mean, however, that race is more politically important than gender, just that the gender card is packaged as an extension of the race card. Interestingly, there is some acknowledgement that a card-gap exists; according to Storrs (2007), “Scholars widely recognize U.S. political elites’ historical playing of the ‘race card,’ but we have paid insufficient attention to the ‘gender card’ that often was part of the same

³ Search conducted on 25, March 2010.

hand” (p. 143-144). The strategic uses and consequences of gender are not overlooked in research, but there is a clear hesitancy to apply the label to gendered behaviors and strategies.

Most of the references to the gender card in academic research are unoperationalized. That is, the authors mention the gender card without ever revealing what it is, how it’s played, or what’s assumed by its use. Instead, the gender card is mentioned either anecdotally, or in passing as an element of the gendering of campaigns. Of the 252 articles on GoogleScholar, very few focus on politics.

In her study of the campaign communication of two female French candidates, Perry (2005) lamented the fact that candidate sex was not used as a legitimate campaign strategy:

While it is perfectly understandable that [former French prime minister Edith Cresson] thought it would undermine her legitimacy to be seen as a token woman, chosen only for her sex, it is interesting that she chose not to play the gender card: convinced it would be a handicap, she failed to turn it into an asset (p. 345).

From Perry’s (2005) perspective, playing the gender card is actually a way for female candidates to assert themselves as legitimate candidates. Perry’s (2005) gender card, then, is one played by women through feminine presentation. By emphasizing feminine characteristics, Cresson could have played the gender card that capitalizes on femininity. Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hustebeck (2006) observed a different gender card among female politicians in Asia where female candidates were unable to play the gender card through the challenging of traditional Asian gender roles (p. 268). While the card was one that could have been played by a woman, the gender card of Asian women politicians was one that should have been downplayed traditional roles and expectations.

Jenkins’ (2006) gender card, played in the 2005 Australian Labor Party’s leadership election, is different still than those outlined by Perry (2005) or Derichs et al. (2006). Jenkins (2006) concluded that the gender card was a common tool used to discourage Julia Gillard from even considering a run for party leader. Party members, and even television broadcasters, “depicted Gillard as a sad spinster” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 60). This gender card, then, is one played by a male majority in an effort to suppress the candidacy of a capable woman. Moreover, this gender card was based entirely on Gillard’s character and

personal life rather than her political capabilities. (Jenkins, 2006).⁴

Lawrence and Rose (2010) offer the most comprehensive treatment of the gender card in their analysis of Hillary Clinton's run for the Democratic nomination in 2008. While the application of the label was anchored around particular campaign events (like the "Politics of Pile On" video released after the Drexel University debate, or her emotional moment in Portsmouth, New Hampshire discussing the meaning of her campaign), the authors illuminate a conflicted card conversation:

[There were] two competing frames: that Clinton was right to play the gender card, or, more frequently, that she played the card but shouldn't have. Virtually absent from the coverage was the notion that Clinton did not play the gender card at all, or that Senator Obama or media pundits played the card (Lawrence and Rose, 2010, p. 125).

The conflicting coverage and inconsistencies articulated here underscore the reality that Clinton's card coverage contributed to an abundance of already negative coverage. The accusations of play, defenses of play, and framing of play – in the Clinton case – made it more difficult for Clinton to negotiate the gendering of her campaign. Lawrence and Rose (2010) are two of the few scholars to recognize that "playing the gender card" lacks a clear definition. Moreover, they are the only two that tackle defining play (at least in the specific case of Hillary Clinton); for Lawrence and Rose, "the term was used to suggest that Clinton raised gender to gain advantage, and that in doing so, she assumed a victim status" (p. 141). This definition of card play closely mirrors those outlined by Ford (2008) and others.

The above research assumes, however, that gender cards represent a legitimate appeal. For Mendelberg (2001), parties, campaigns, and candidates experience electoral pressure to activate latent racism through implicit appeals, but they "do not experience pressure to appeal to voters' sexist predispositions" (Mendelberg, 2001, p. 244). In short, she claims there is no incentive to alienate female voters at the expense of male voters like there is to alienate African-American voters at the expense of the white electorate. All of this points to her conclusion that there is no expectation for appeals based on gender (p. 245). Mendelberg (2001) does not imply that gender is not an issue throughout the universe of

⁴ It should be noted that the Perry (2005), Derichs et al. (2006), and Jenkins (2006) studies all focus on elections outside of the United States. These studies are used not to make any direct connections to those gender cards encountered by American women seeking office, just to provide examples of the kinds of alleged gender cards being discussed in academic research. It is interesting, however, that Lawrence and Rose (2010) provide the only direct references to the gender card in research on women in American politics.

politics just that in the realm of parties and strategy, gender card-play is an illogical consideration in the electoral context. In contrast, I contend that while it may not be in the best interest of political parties to actively alienate women voters through strategic implicit appeals, the institutional reality of American politics dictates that gendered appeals, along with those based on race, are a reality nonetheless.

Much of the gender cards coverage discussed here occurs in the context of strategic decisions. But the strategic elements of these decisions extend far beyond looking to issues (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes, 2003). Is a mention of one's family playing a gender card? Is what one chooses to wear playing a gender card? Can men play the gender card against other men by engaging questions of masculinity? These are all important questions that the current gender card conversation does not answer. Equally interesting is the pattern of play found in the research discussed above: women are largely the ones doing the playing. This is in stark contrast to the substantial body of race card research that pins the responsibility of play on whites as a tool of modern racism and oppression. So while our knowledge of the race card is mired in competing definitions, the gender card suffers from too little definition, a circumstance that has particular consequences for the treatment of gender and race in politics.

Operational Problem

The diversity across academic operationalizations and understandings of the race and gender card reveal that, at present, there are no established academic criteria for objectively detecting identity appeals or cards in campaign discourse. The inconsistency exposes both the convenient usage of the term and an assumption that cards are universally present *and* universally identifiable. That is, identity based appeals are not only a reality of campaigning (Mendelberg, 2001), but they are also recognizable within a campaign context – we know them when we see them. This recognition, however, is unpredictable: sometimes we may recognize code words as cards; the subtle use of images can be cards play; other times we may not know a card is there until long after the appeal is made; it may even be the case that there is no appeal, just an accusation of play that itself becomes a card. In campaigns, then, cards do not represent “a single phenomenon” (Lee and Morin, 2009, p. 377); rather, cards represent a constellation of strategies, uses, descriptions, and offenses that vary widely depending on subjective experience. This

inconsistent labeling of cards has become a breeding ground for misunderstanding. Cards are potentially laden with meaning and heuristic; but a know-it-when-we-see-it attitude toward cards is not good enough when we are trying to legitimize a conversation on race and gender in politics.

By discussing cards in such a disparate manner, scholars, journalists and political elites direct the conversation away from the appeals themselves, and towards the accusation and label of card play as a tool of political campaigning and reporting. To put it a different way, cards become less about stereotypes and inequality and more about the game of winning elections and political reporting. The different uses and descriptions are not just confusing, they are counter-productive: removing focus from a fruitful conversation on gender and race, and placing the spotlight on sensational reporting and strategic campaigning. Linguistic sloppiness is not passive in nature; there are consequences – especially in politics. If we learned anything from the 2008 Presidential election it is that there is still a conversation to be had about the role of gender and race in modern political campaigns.

If the current approach to talking about how race and gender are engaged in political campaigns (cards as political and narrative tools) pulls the conversation away from race and gender, then a new, more consistent, approach is required to redirect the dialog. Why not have conversations about the engagement of identity that classifies cards and appeals not on assumptions, but on neutral factors? A new system for discussing appeals and cards would have to be value and assumption neutral. One that recognized the historical and cultural nuances of race and gender (something the current card conversation does to excess) while allowing the discussion to shift as political and social conditions change. A value-free understanding of the cards that have been played has the potential to lead to a better understanding of the contexts and consequences of race and gender cards. We may never be able to know what a card is for certain, but we can understand how cards and their context matter in American politics.

A New Framework

Because cards are unique (Assumption 1), and because Elevated Implicit cards represent a fundamental but neglected aspect of American politics (Assumption 2), developing a standardized approach to card research is necessary. Though there is confusion regarding what a card is and how it is

played, the key to understanding cards lies not in discarding conflicting definitions, but rather in looking to the common ground found in these diverse operationalizations. Once tapped, the common ground reveals a new framework for categorizing card play.

Common Ground

That a race card could be *both* a card of white oppression (Mendelberg, 2001) and a card of black advantage (Ford, 2008) is puzzling. Even more curious is the limited – almost nonexistent – treatment of the gender card. The varied articulations of cards outlined above underscore the relative lack of knowledge about cards themselves, thus mitigating their importance and undermining their value. We can, however, more fully understand when and to what effect reported cards operate in political communication. Across both scholarly and popular understandings of cards there are three common threads: 1) the act of playing a card represents the active violation of a social norm; 2) card play is about creating and articulating both advantage and disadvantage; and 3) cards require both a player and someone to play against.

First, most card scholars would agree that playing a card amounts to an active violation of a social norm. According to Mendelberg (2001), a norm is “an informal standard of social behavior accepted by most members of the culture that guides and constrains behavior” (p. 17). She continues, indicating that the driving force behind norms is not punishment, but acceptance; political norms develop out of social norms and gain strength through imitation, socialization, and electoral success (Mendelberg, 2001). For Mendelberg, racial appeals, in particular, challenge a norm of racial equality that has developed in a post civil rights America. In the case of race, the norm of equality protects our democracy from the strategic use of race in a society where the civil rights movement has resulted in “[aspirations] to equality” (Mendelberg, 2001, p. 4). This commitment to equality is not just a societal issue, but a personal one as well: “almost all whites genuinely disavow the sentiments that have come to be most closely associated with the ideology of white supremacy” (p. 19). While the norm of equality does not eliminate the use of race by candidates and voters, it greatly constrains the extent to which racial predispositions are used in politics (Mendelberg, 2001).

Mendelberg (2001) distinguishes race from gender, however, based on expectations: “in the case of gender, the negative predispositions do not contain fear, resentment, and other negative emotions so much as role expectations” (p. 240). And though women still face “lingering disadvantages,” Mendelberg argues that evidence of a norm of gender equality can be found in political parties and public opinion (p. 242). In short, even though there may be disagreement on specific policy issues, in general, neither party has paid an abundance of attention to women’s issues (compared to racial issues). Not only are both parties “driven in the same direction” toward women’s rights and issues, but so too is public opinion reflecting the desire that women have an equal role in society and become active in political life (p. 243).

While this is true, a “complex set of images and expectations ... have evolved as our country has elected and will continue to elect women” (Anderson and Sheeler, 2005, p. 12). Women seeking public office face a different set of expectations than their male counterparts, meaning that the norm of gender equality is not as straightforward as Mendelberg (2001) might claim. In a list experiment testing the presence and internalization of social norms, Monson and Riding (2009), find evidence that while the gender norm of equality does exist, the norm is not internalized as it is for the norm of racial equality. This means that while respondents ascribe to the norm of gender equality, the norm has not yet penetrated at the individual level. Penetration of the norm assures “compliance in private,” or that the norm of gender equality is compelling even when no one is looking (or asking for survey responses) (p. 4). The norm of gender equality then, is no less compelling than the norm of racial equality. It exists, though with markedly different challenges than the norm of racial equality: there is a social commitment to equality for women, but this commitment has yet to become as entrenched at the individual level. In terms of constraints on political behavior, it is difficult to say how this has an impact on how candidates communicate, or (more germane to this inquiry) how journalists cover elections. The norm of gender equality could constrain overt displays of sexism in political campaigns, but the private inclination to also deny stratagems that engage gender may be weak.

While violating a norm, in terms of social convention, carries with it negative connotations, in truth, the violation is just the mechanism through which a card can be effective. What if some cards are

effective precisely because they violate social norms? Even though, as Mendelberg (2001) contends, the norm of equality constrains the use of explicit racial cues, implicit cues are still effective because they activate latencies. These latencies exist alongside the constraints of the norm of equality. For an individual with, for example, high levels of latent racism, a white candidate who plays the race card could be appealing. Here, the violation of the social norm is in line with latencies, thereby increasing support for a white candidate playing the race card.

Second, the scholarly discussion of cards also reflects that the act of playing a card is about creating advantage and disadvantage. The assumption is that card play is deliberate and carried out with the intention of undermining opposition and thereby elevating support for the player. While the play may not result in more votes or support for the player, the decreased support for the opposition results in a strengthening of the player's position. Cards are held in hand for the purpose of playing, and their power lies in their ability to shift the tenor of public opinion or evaluation away from one candidate and (possibly) toward another.

While less divided in terms of identity, this second area of common ground still provides a difficult platform for standardizing the card conversation. Measuring true advantage and disadvantage is difficult. What we know of play is so limited, that there is no consistent way of approaching the question of advantage. For example, what if "play" isn't really play, but just a subjective interpretation of campaign strategy? Or, what if an accusation of card play is a form of play itself? In short, advantage and disadvantage, while representing common operational ground, is insufficient because of the challenges associated with measuring advantage and disadvantage.

Finally, most definitions of card play require both someone to play and someone to play against. For Elise (2004), the highest, most powerful cards in the deck are dealt to whites automatically, making blacks "guaranteed losers" (p.410). Every play by whites is a play against blacks – there is no such thing as victimless play (Elise, 2004). But cards are not strictly thought to be the tools of white men; cards have also been operationalized to be played by blacks (Ford, 2008; Nelson et al., 2007) and women (Derichs et al., 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Perry, 2005). These cards – those played by women and African

Americans – exist in opposition to the card of white males, and could be played in an effort to elevate a campaign. Cards, in short, do not exist unless someone possesses them; and since holding cards equals leverage, to not play them would be a waste of potential power. The competitive nature of modern campaigns requires, then, that candidates and campaign surrogates use the cards they have against their opponents.⁵ Hence, cards always require both a player and someone the card is played against.

This focus on the actors involved – the player and who the card is played against – is also an important element in narrating the use of race and gender in political campaigns. The oft-cited “Willie” Horton example is one where a group (the National Security Political Action Committee), advocating on behalf of a white candidate, George H. W. Bush, invoked race to discredit Michael Dukakis, his white opponent; here, a white player and a white object of play. During a gubernatorial debate in Massachusetts, after being pressed regarding his shifting views on reproductive rights, Republican candidate Mitt Romney called the behavior of his opponent, Democrat Shannon O’Brien, “unbecoming.” O’Brien took offense at Romney’s characterization, speaking out against his behavior following the debate, and was immediately reported as having played the gender card. In this example, a woman reputedly played the gender card against her male opponent. In short, it is not only formal operationalizations of cards that require a player and an object of play; journalists narrating elections also require these primary actors to talk about this particular aspect of race and gender in political campaigns.

This third common thread provides the most neutral ground from which to compare cards in campaigns and elections. To use social norms or advantage as a means for comparing cards would require negotiating far too many particulars. The nuances of norms and advantage represent a complex constellation of variables that would have to be controlled for *before* a comparison could be made. By looking at the actors involved, the cards are compared and categorized by the simplest means first, thereby allowing the details of specific cards to become explanatory rather than obfuscatory. Actors are history and value neutral, representing broad types of play (X playing against Y) that can be compared.

⁵ The fact that cards can be held and played by women and minority candidates, as well as their white male counterparts, further highlights the assertion that, even though in other spheres cards may be viewed as negative, in the world of politics their rightness or wrongness is immaterial.

Separating cards based on player and object of play means that a large amount of card conversation can be sorted quickly and without any particular kind of special training, and that no distinction has to be made between real “play,” perceived “play,” and accusations of “play.” Moreover, using the actors involved transforms theory – that what we know and can know of cards is limited to Elevated Implicit cards (Assumption 1) – into practice by actively pursuing those instances where *both* a labeled card and actors are present. *A framework for analyzing cards based on the actors involved* represents the third fundamental assumption of cards.

4 Types of Cards

Using the actors as a point of departure, this paper advances a two (majority player/ minority player) by two (majority object/minority object) framework for characterizing all identity-based appeals in political campaigns (Figure 2). In this configuration, references to the “player” indicate the individual or campaign reported to have played the card; the “object” is the individual or campaign the card is played against. Similarly, “minority” refers to the candidate (or representative campaign) that is a political minority (women or racial and ethnic minorities), while “majority” refers to the candidate (or representative campaign) that is a political majority (generally white males).

		Player	
		majority candidate	minority candidate
Object of Play	majority candidate		
	minority candidate		

Figure 2: Types of Card Play

In this framework, only four kinds of cards exist: a majority player against a majority object; a majority player against a minority object; a minority player against a majority object; and a minority player against a minority object. Categorizing card play, or use, in this 2x2 framework encompasses the universe of identity-based appeals. In this regard, this framework is preferable to other card

conversations that engage cards of convenience, invoking particular appeals based on narrow, occasion-specific cards.

Majority/Majority Cards. The most referenced majority/majority card is that played by the National Security Political Action Committee in their “Willie Horton” advertisement. Produced on behalf of a white candidate, George H. W. Bush, in an attempt to discredit another white candidate, Michael Dukakis, the advertisement uses a picture of William Horton – the inmate that served as the subject of the ad – to play the race card. In this instance, neither candidate is a racial minority, but the fear of minorities is invoked to motivate white voters. A majority/majority gender card could be similarly played between two male candidates who invoke masculinity, toughness, or the treatment of women’s issues to gain electoral advantage.

Majority/Minority Cards. This second type of card represents, perhaps, a more direct identity-based attack on a woman or minority candidate. Mitt Romney’s “unbecoming” comment, one which inspired a gender card play accusation by his opponent, Shannon O’Brien, is a clear example of a majority/minority gender card. Similarly, other gender cards of this type could reference things like qualification, weakness, and viability all in an effort to discredit women candidates. Majority/minority race cards could also invoke qualification and viability in an effort to undermine support for a racial minority candidate. Interestingly, an accusation of card play by a majority candidate could also fall into this type. A white candidate, for example, accusing a minority candidate of playing the race card is also playing a card by invoking race through the accusation.

Minority/Majority Cards. The 2008 election was full of examples of minority/majority cards. Barack Obama was labeled as playing the race card when, in a campaign speech, he commented that the Republican opposition “want [the voters] to be scared of me,” presumably because he is Black. Hillary Clinton was accused of playing the gender card against her male opponents when her campaign spoke of her Democratic opponents “piling on.” In both of these examples, the onus of play was put on the minority candidate for using their identity to manipulate votes: Barack Obama using the specter of old-fashioned racism, and Hillary Clinton invoking unfair treatment.

Minority/Minority Cards. Though it is difficult to find concrete examples of minority/minority cards, a feasible example could be an occasion where a candidate accuses another of being ‘not minority enough.’ A race card, then, would look like one minority candidate accusing the other of being out of touch with the community they hope to represent. A woman candidate could play the gender card against another woman through expressing reservation about qualification, viability, or toughness.

In this simple framework there is still no system for systematically identifying when or how a card is played, or even what play is. What this does achieve, however, is a way of grouping and comparing those appeals labeled cards. Any time card play is reported in campaign coverage, its type can be easily determined by who is playing and who the card is played against. That particular appeal can then be compared to appeals of its type, or even totally different cards. That is, this framework allows scholars to group the cards reportedly played not by assumption or grievance, but by similar modes of play. Now we can compare alleged cards based on the strategic intentions of the appeal, the characteristics of both the player and to whom the appeal is being directed, the accusation being made, as well as the contextual elements of the election in which the card is reportedly played.

The categories of play outlined above represent a movement toward being able to know how cards matter in American politics. Categorizing appeals based on the actors involved simplifies the process of understanding those cards of which we are certain: elevated implicit appeals. Moving towards the development of research questions and hypotheses, it is important to remember that cards are important to study because *they are a specific type of appeal* and the labeling of cards has a very specific heuristic and political value (Assumption 1). Because, however, there is no objective standard for evaluating cards, we have to look to *those instances where an implicit appeal is elevated to explicit status through the application of the card label* in order to understand how cards operate in American politics (Assumption 2). *All cards can be categorized based on the actors involved*, and this framework is the most efficient and neutral way of categorizing and discussing cards in American politics (Assumption 3). The primary goal of this research, then, is to identify elevated implicit appeals in elections coverage and to determine the impact of the card label, in diverse circumstances, on voters. This analysis will take place through the

lens of gender, candidate sex, and race as they are influential forces and common cards in American politics.

Coverage

News coverage matters in elections. This is particularly true for women and minority candidates who do not benefit from equivalent coverage – either in quantity or quality – to their white, male opponents. For women, though the quantity of coverage has gained parity, the content of the coverage still disadvantages women running for office. For racial and ethnic minorities, race frames pervade coverage, a reality that only succeeds in highlighting how rare their candidacies are. Because cards are a unique and influential campaign artifact, one that directly invokes issues of identity, and because news coverage is a particularly powerful aspect of the success of women and minority candidates, then studying the intersection of these two becomes particularly important for understanding the changing electoral landscape for women and minority candidates.

Gender

The earliest work on coverage of women candidates in the 1980's revealed that women candidates received less coverage than their male counterparts, and that this coverage emphasized horse race coverage and a lack of viability (Kahn, 1994; 1992; Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991). Coverage also broke along stereotypical lines regarding the personality traits (compassionate, empathetic, etc.) and issue strengths of women (education, healthcare, etc.) (Kahn, 1996). In the 1990's, however, coverage studies revealed subtle changes to this coverage gap. In particular, Smith (1997), Devitt (1999) and Jalalzai (2006) all pointed to a greater level of parity in coverage of male and female candidates both in terms of size and substance. Each of these authors, however, still found slight differences between the coverage of men and women running for office. In particular, Smith (1997) still found evidence of horse race coverage and Devitt (1999) found significantly higher levels of coverage focusing on women's appearance and personality. Even these small differences in coverage – especially coverage that leans toward existing stereotypes of women (see Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a) – “significantly influence[s] the public's perception of women by portraying them as less competent” (Major and Coleman, 2008, p. 319).

If women do not conform to the “masculine imagery” of campaigns, then “women do not really belong in politics” (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003, p. 211). The coverage gap, then, is inseparable from the stereotypes of voters and the strategic decisions of candidates. In fact, Kahn (1996) points to stereotypes as the primary influence behind “the candidate’s behavior, the news media’s campaign coverage, and the views of the voters” (p.1). This layering of gendered perceptions and injections makes it that much more difficult for any race with a woman present to *not* be gendered.⁶ And, moreover, if coverage cannot be gender-neutral, then voters will always be affected by this coverage. With so many opportunities for the application of the gender lens, the campaign is a potential minefield of gender cards.

Like previous studies, analysis of the 2008 election reveal competing views regarding the quantity and quality of gendered coverage. Carlin and Winfrey (2009) point to consistent sexist coverage of both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, even in spite of their dramatically different performances of gender. Walsh (2009) also analyzed the coverage in terms of expectations of race and gender, but incorporated a sense-making component. For Walsh, the media made sense of the historical candidacies by masculinizing Clinton and feminizing and deracializing Obama; the white supremacy of the presidency was kept intact by drawing the images of the candidates closer to the norm. In particular, Clinton was packaged as a “mythical man,” who, even in spite of her “macho gender performances” was still cast as a victim by her supporters (Walsh, 2009, p. 125). These traditional gender biases were not found, however, by Lawrence and Rose (2010) who attribute Clinton’s negative coverage more to her frontrunner status as opposed to her gender. Instead, Lawrence and Rose argue, Clinton suffered from a lack of coverage when gender and sexism became campaign issues. These “moments that weren’t” – “instances of sexist speech that were not called out by the nation’s leaning media outlets” – represent a more covert form of sexism in media coverage (Lawrence and Rose, 2010, p. 169). While Miller, Peake and Boulton (2010) found that Clinton received more coverage than her male competitors, they also found that coverage was more negative – findings similarly confirmed by Lawrence and Rose (2010) – with significantly more questions

⁶ More precisely, all campaigns – even those featuring two male candidates – are gendered. Instances of this are, however, hard to identify and are not cataloged in the literature. Similarly, in a broad search of news coverage, I have found no examples of male player/male object gender cards.

regarding gender and electability. Their computer-based content analysis also revealed that the negative coverage was more focused on character traits and stereotypes.

While only one of these studies (Lawrence and Rose, 2010) looks at alleged cards in particular, all point to challenges for women candidates in terms of news coverage. That women are covered differently matters; and “women should be concerned about how the media portray them,” especially in those instances where the “card” label is invoked (Falk, 2008, p. 17).

Race

Like women, minority candidates receive measurably different coverage than their white counterparts. Zilber and Niven (2000) point to patterns of coverage that emphasize the race of minority candidates and racial issues. More recently, Caliendo and McIlwain (2006) found a preponderance of racial references in bi-racial elections, with higher levels of race framing in elections that contain a black candidate compared to all-white races. Interestingly, though, greater levels of race talk also coincided with greater policy talk, which could blur some of the established lines regarding what issues are racial issues. Like gendered coverage, the coverage of race in politics cannot be separated from voter perceptions and candidate strategy. For Terkildsen and Damore (1999), this manifests as “racial dualism,” whereby “the media act to suppress the racial emphasis of other political players while at the same time highlighting the race of African-American candidates” (p. 683). While race cards may be the exception to the rule regarding the suppression of race talk, a black candidate who is framed as emphasizing race may already be one step closer to playing the race card. The media then, may have a finely tuned radar when it comes to race cards: picking up on the exception(al) card play by whites and the race talk of black candidates.

This radar, however, was not present in the 1988 presidential election when the “Willie” Horton ad, meant to undermine confidence in Dukakis’ ability to govern, became a focus of campaign coverage. Examined by Mendelberg (2001), the example of the coverage of the Horton ad affirms the position that “the news media is prone to inadvertently aiding in the communication of implicit racial messages” (p. 137). Her content analysis revealed that for months between the airing of the ad in mid-June and weeks before the election, few if any direct references were made to Horton’s race, and equally few referenced a

race strategy on the part of the Bush Campaign. While direct references to race were few, visual references were everywhere, particularly in television coverage; this was the implicit phase. Jesse Jackson, several weeks before the election, ushered in the explicit phase of race framing when he called out the racial intent of the Horton ad. Mendelberg found that the media, though unconvinced of the racial intent, gave Jackson's accusation – and the subsequent rebuttal by the Bush campaign – significant coverage. Aside from the impact of this shift, which will be discussed in further detail below, a key takeaway is the fact that the media did not police the racialized strategy on their own. To be more precise, “journalists apparently believed that for anyone to accuse a major candidate or party with racism was counterproductive,” and the implicitness of the message worked its way into the narrative decisions of journalists and editors (Mendelberg, 2001, p. 163). In terms of a discussion of cards, these findings are significant. When the race card or gender card label is applied in news coverage of a campaign, it amounts a means of making explicit an implicit statement. Even if journalists are not the ones making the accusation of play – that is, even if they are just reporting the accusation – then they are participating in a process of making the implicit, explicit, without having to be completely accountable. In this regard, narrating identity in an election using the “card” label fulfills the watchdog role with minimal effort. Aside from these benefits, the potentially charged nature of the “card” phrase makes for good strategy or game coverage.

In contrast to previous coverage of black politicians, Obama's coverage contained significantly more positive trait references, with those primarily focusing on his charismatic leadership; Obama's negative trait references focused mostly on inexperience (Miller et al., 2010). This emphasis on character, though usually harmful for black candidates, did not impact support for Obama (McIlwain and Caliendo, 2008). This is not to say, however, that Obama's coverage was without distinction. Squires and Jackson (2010) found that “race emerged as a grand narrative” particularly through references to voting blocs (p. 392). The simple presence of Barack Obama racialized the coverage, though it did not yield any kind of broader discussion on race in politics. Perhaps this is due to what Walsh (2009) argues is the press' construction of Obama's image as “less than a real man” in an effort to counteract the hyper-masculine images of

Black men (p. 127). He was similarly cast as less-than-Black, an effort that rendered Obama – like Clinton – less of a threat to the social order (Walsh, 2009, p. 129).

What all coverage research does reveal is a continued focus on the strangeness of women and minority candidates. Though measurement produces nuanced differences in particular aspects of coverage, the fact remains that the coverage of women and minorities in politics is *different*. With the exception of Lawrence and Rose (2010), research on coverage does not address – either directly or peripherally – the nature or impact of coverage of the “gender card” or the “race card” on campaigns, yet the “race card” and the “gender card” are present in the campaign narrative. Given this research gap and what we already know about “cards,” I advance the following coverage-related research questions and hypotheses.

RQ1: In news coverage of the 2008 election, what appeals are labeled “cards?”

RQ2: What are key characteristics (actors involved, tone, etc.) of these “cards?”

H1: Because of the relative dearth of race card attention compared to the gender card in the existing canon, there will be more reported race cards than gender cards.

H2: I expect that reported gender cards are more likely to be played by women – or their campaign surrogates – than men, and their coverage is more likely to be negative.

H3: Race cards will be reportedly played equally by both white and minority candidates (or their surrogates), though white players will receive more negative coverage because of the perceived violation of the norm of equality (Mendelberg, 2001).

H4: Accusing another of “playing a card” is likely to be reported as a form of card play itself.

A Closer Look at Race and Gender

There is no disagreement that race, sex and gender operate differently in social or political life. For Wolbrecht (2000), these differences originate in the timing of the heightening of awareness about issues of sex, race and gender:

...for the majority of the populace, women’s rights required a period of discovery – a realization that an interest, cause, or concern existed – that most public policy issues need not experience. In comparison, for example, while attention to the rights of racial minorities has waxed and waned over American history, black Americans did not need to be made aware of racial inequality in the way the women (and men) became conscious of sex discrimination (p. 137).

While she, and others might take the position that “issues of race ... are somewhat more crystallized in the United States than issues of gender” (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 646), America is far from post-racial. The successes of the civil rights movement did much to advance racial equality, but negative racial stereotypes

are still pervasive among the white population (see Bobo and Charles, 2009, for a review). Moreover, while the evolution of race in American politics has compelled extraordinary political change (Carmines and Stimson, 1989), racism – with its “origins in the ideology that justified domestic repression, domination, and enslavement” (Entman and Rojecki, 2000) – still affects electoral outcomes. Even the most educated voters use information shortcuts – heuristics – to make political decisions (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). And while geography, partisanship, and ideology all present themselves as regularly used heuristics, so too do race, sex and gender inform political decision making (McDermott, 1997; 1998).

A particular aspect of these shortcuts – stereotypes – manifest themselves as collections of traits individuals use to tell groups apart; and, in our efforts to make these distinctions between groups, social identity emerges as “*the ... fundamental underling motivation behind prejudice and discrimination*” (Stangor, 2009, p. 3; emphasis is the author’s own). As such, stereotypes exist as a powerful force both in and out of politics. Voters cannot be confronted with a woman or minority candidate without engaging stereotypes, and politicians cannot campaign and govern without understanding how stereotypes can be manipulated. Stereotypes, however, also exist in a state of tension, with their automaticity sometimes conflicting with rules of polite society. Bodenhausen, Todd, and Richeson (2009) note that the “flurry of apologies” that usually follows a prejudicial gaffe is the result of the threat to “[an individual’s] identit[y] as [a] civilized, unbigoted person” (p. 111). This tension is similar to the one enjoyed by alleged cards: on the one hand, social convention points to cards being negative; on the other hand, manipulations and stratagems are a part of modern political campaigns. Like stereotypes, then, cards are not necessarily bad, just artifacts of social and political life. As an aspect of political communication that potentially represents a means of manipulating stereotypes and our response to them, cards offer a new avenue for understanding how the coverage of sex, gender and race operates in American politics.

Candidate Sex and Gender

Gender Stereotypes. Stereotypes create an environment where women running for office have to make choices about the issues they discuss, how they look, how they campaign, and how they

communicate. Broadly, research reveals that women candidates are stereotyped as being more liberal and likely to be a Democrat, but also compassionate, warm, and emotional, while men are perceived as being strong, rational, and self-confident (Dolan, 2005; McDermott, 1998; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a; 1993b). These personality trait stereotypes bleed into voter perceptions of issue competency; in particular, that women are more capable of handling compassion issues like healthcare and education, while men are better at handling issues like crime and the economy (Kahn, 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a; 1993b). Moreover, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993b) found that voters prefer male characteristics over female ones, a reality that puts women candidates at a disadvantage. For those voters with no other shortcuts to access (like partisanship), candidate gender and appearance become important heuristics (Johns and Shephard, 2007; McDermott, 1997). Koch (1999) found that these stereotypes did not necessarily disadvantage female candidates. Specifically, he found that when social issues were a more important consideration for voters, as opposed to more masculine security issues, voters felt more confident voting for a woman. Moreover, the outsider status of women in politics may work in electoral contexts where dissatisfaction with government is present (Koch, 1999). So while the public, when asked, supports women candidates, “this support in the abstract is colored in the real world by the stereotypes that people hold about women and men” (Dolan, 2005, p. 59). In fact, stereotypes may influence a “baseline gender preference” for either male or female candidates (Sanbonmatsu, 2002, p. 20). So even though stereotypes can help in some circumstances and hurt in others, voters may have preferences that are immutable when it comes to candidate sex.

While stereotypes have been found to both help and hurt women candidates, stereotypes have never been examined in their relation to news coverage of the gender or race card. Understanding how coverage of a woman, for example, allegedly playing the gender card influences stereotyping is important because of the potential that it may actually strengthen positive responses to candidates. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993a; 1993b) found that women can defy stereotype bias in an election when they are able to advance male traits over their female ones. If voters perceive reported gender card play by a woman candidate as assertive, or strong within the campaign context, then they may be more likely to accept her

as a viable candidate. In this regard, news coverage reporting gender card platy by a woman candidate may actually increase electability.

Sexism. Swim and Hyers (2009) define sexism as “individuals; attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and organizational, institutional, and cultural practices that wither reflect negative evaluations of individuals based on their gender or support the unequal status of women and men” (p. 407). Academic articulations of sexism have undergone a transition from traditional expressions of sexist views – largely biologically based – to a more modern version. The new sexism “is characterized by the denial of continued discrimination, antagonism toward women’s demands, and lack of support for policies designed to help women” (Swim, Aiken, Hall and Hunter, 1995, p. 200). Stereotypes themselves can be seen as sexist when they challenge the notion that men and women should be equal. More specifically, some stereotypes may accurately reflect gender differences (Hall and Carter, 1999), except in those cases where they oversimplify or essentialize the differences between men and women (Swim and Hyers, 2009). Measuring sexism, then, requires negotiating a complex set of stereotypes, roles, expectations, and social constructs.

Two of the most commonly used measures of sexism in political research – the modern sexism scale (Swim et al. 1995) and the Neosexism scale (Tougas, Brown, Beaton and Jolly, 1995) – are modeled on after the modern racism literature; specifically, from McConahay et al.’s (1981) modern racism scale. Both Neosexism and Modern sexism rest on largely negative affective views. Departing from these traditional constructs, Glick and Fiske (1996) advance an ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI), which captures both the negative and benevolent aspects of sexism. Glick and Fiske argue that sexism is usually assessed only in terms of hostility toward women, a perspective that negates the benevolent sexism that operates in social and political life. These measures, while capturing different aspects of sexism all reveal that sexism influences both political and non-political aspects of life.

In terms of assessing the impact of card coverage, measuring latent sexism could prove illuminating. For Swim et al. (1995), the development of a sexism scale was necessary because in rejecting “old fashioned discrimination and stereotypes, ...[people may] feel antagonistic toward women who are

making political and economic demands” (p. 200). And while, as Mendelberg (2001) claims, the norm of equality reflects increased support for women candidates, fundamental stereotypes about the fitness of women in office, and a lack of parity in news coverage still point to disadvantage for women in politics. Women who are reported to play gender cards may be the beneficiaries of the kind of antagonism and resentment Swim et al. (1995) were highlighting. So while from a stereotype perspective a woman reportedly playing a gender card may make her more attractive to some voters, for those with high levels of modern sexism a woman playing the gender card may be viewed as making an inappropriate demand. Conversely, a news report alleging a male candidate playing the gender card, for those with high levels of modern sexism, might benefit from the shared view that women should not have a prominent place in politics. Understanding how sexism influences candidate evaluation is essential to understanding how coverage of the gender card matters to women in politics.

Appealing to and Using Gender. Women candidates cannot escape perceptions of gendered behavior in their strategic campaign decisions just like voters cannot separate themselves from gender stereotypes in their evaluation of women candidates. Whereas outright bias defined approaches to candidate selection and strategic campaigning in the past, now, for women, the electoral landscape is far more nuanced. Dolan (2005) summed the shift tidily: “suspicion and hostility have been replaced by a more complex set of considerations that involve people’s social and political reactions to candidate sex and gendered issues” (p. 59). For Carroll (2006), the consideration of candidate sex has fueled participation on the part of women seeking elective office. The problem, however, is that increased participation has not led to more neutral consideration; women have more political influence, but “that influence has been somewhat tempered by the fact that candidates have often used symbolic appeals, rather than strictly issue-based appeals, to respond to the growing influence of women” (Carroll, 2006, p. 76).

As discussed above, these strategic decisions occur in response to a campaign environment rich in stereotypes and female candidates are forced to assess their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their gender (Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes, 2003; McDermott, 1998; 1997; Kahn, 1996; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993). In particular, to take advantage of the stereotype, by emphasizing

effective management of feminine issues like healthcare and education, or to reject it, by masculinizing campaign messages. When it comes to personality traits, however, the fact that women are viewed as being less competent than men (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993), and that voters prefer candidates with more masculine traits, may lead female candidate to over emphasize masculine traits in campaign messages (Bystrom, 2006; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Sapiro and Walsh, 2002; Kahn, 1996).

Though women in politics “need to show they are capable of being strong, determined, and decisive,” they must also negotiate expectations of emotion and compassion (Sykes, 2008, p. 761). For Hillary Clinton in 2008, her political history already revealed a record of toughness; her strategic choices confirmed it. Lawrence and Rose (2010) observed that Clinton’s strategic choices were largely in line with the scholarly recommendation to masculinize, or toughen up, her campaign. These choices, however, were not at the expense of a more feminine strategy: “messages of feminine solidarity” and gender cues were particularly important in her surrogate selection and video strategy (Lawrence and Rose, 2010, p. 122). And yet, criticisms do exist charging Clinton of not feminizing her campaign enough. Eisenstein (2008) accuses Clinton of both betraying her gender and embracing the white male hegemony of the presidency by “never once [mentioning] the unacceptable misogyny ... or any of the great racial and class inequities that define women’s lives” (p. 2). For Eisenstein, Clinton should have addressed gender in a similar manner to Obama’s race speech. In stark contrast to Clinton’s somewhat conflicted approach to gender, Palin presented herself as equally tough, but far more feminine; a gendered campaign was, and still is, a Palin signature (McGinley, 2009). In spite of this difference in approach, both Clinton and Palin were criticized for their inconsistency:

Both clung to stereotypical portrayals of women when it appeared to suit their needs, and both demanded that they be considered “candidates who happen to be women” rather than women candidates when sexism surfaced (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009, p. 327).

In a study of how and to what effect cards are constructed in election coverage, strategy is important to mention insofar as it is inseparable in the discussion of coverage and stereotypes. Horse race or strategy coverage has become an inseparable part of narrating an election (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Patterson 1993; Jamieson 1992, to name a few); for women, this coverage has the potential to greatly

influence the perceived viability of a campaign (Kahn and Goldenberg, 1997; Kahn, 1994). Coupled with changes in news reporting, the strategic decisions of women candidates are highlighted more than ever; a reality of modern campaigns that could have very real consequences for women seeking elected office. For a woman candidate, being reported to have played the gender card could amount to something more obvious than just horse race coverage, or mentions of appearance. To be called out in coverage for playing the gender card could be perceived as equivalent to having your play-book exposed. That is, for a woman to subtly masculinize her campaign in an effort to challenge stereotypes is far afield from being called out for making a more overt strategic move connected to her gender. The consequence of this highlighting of this alleged gendered strategy through news coverage makes studying the coverage of the gender card necessary.

Candidate Race

Racial Stereotypes. Historically, stereotypes of African Americans have revolved around “two central attributes ... laziness and violence” (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997, p. 382). While these core stereotypes influence racism, on the part of voters, Black politicians also have to confront a set of political stereotypes. Like women candidate, black candidates are stereotyped as more liberal, more likely to be a Democrat, and more concerned with minority issues (McDermott, 1998). McDermott found that, like gender, candidate race acts as an important shortcut for those voters who are most concerned with those stereotyped issues. Abrajano, Nagler and Alvarez (2005) found evidence, however, that contradicts the claim that candidate race can act as powerful shortcut. In their analysis of the 2001 Los Angeles city election, they found that some white voters do not rely “exclusively on low-information cues like race, but also on more sophisticated predictors of vote choice such as ideology and issues” (Abrajano et al., 2005, p. 215).

Racism. Racism remains an important lens through which we can understand American politics (Dwyer, Stevens, Sullivan, and Allen, 2009; Bobo and Charles, 2009; Entman and Rojecki, 2000; Sniderman and Carmines, 1997). Overt forms of racism – old fashioned racism that relied on biological perspectives on race differences (McConahay and Hough, 1976) – have been gradually replaced by

“symbolic” racism (McConahay and Hough, 1976; Sears and McConahay, 1973; Sears and Kinder, 1971) as resistance to traditional beliefs on white superiority have waned (Sears, van Laar, Carillo and Kosterman, 1997; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; McConahay and Hough, 1976). And unlike other policy issues, Americans do have genuine attitudes in regards to race (Kinder and Sanders, 1996), attitudes that develop relatively early in life (McConahay, Hardee and Batts, 1981). These attitudes manifest themselves “by actions or attitudes toward policies that while not explicitly justified on a racial basis, result quite directly in preserving the status quo” (Dwyer et al., 2009). Knowing that racial considerations have such a pronounced impact, Henry and Sears (2009) turned their attention to the crystallization of these attitudes. By voting age, racial attitudes are set and continue to solidify; as one continues through adulthood, the crystallization of these attitudes declines. And yet, racism is alive and well, influencing social life and political decision making.

Several measures have been developed to tackle the identification of racial considerations. McConahay et al.’s (1981) modern racism scale focuses on changes that arose immediately following civil rights like what blacks deserve and how the influence of African Americans has changed. The symbolic racism scale (Henry and Sears, 2002, offer the most recent version) similarly addresses white’s views on work ethic, the excessive demands of blacks, denial of discrimination, and undeserved advantage. It is important to note that, while each has particular strengths, both of these scales tackle understanding racial considerations in terms of politics and policy.

In analyzing the 2008 election, Dwyer et al. (2009) found that racism increased positive feelings toward Sarah Palin, but decreased positive feelings toward Barack Obama. Though racism was a driving force behind evaluations, sexism had no impact on feelings toward either Obama or Palin. Similarly, Greenwald and colleagues (2009) found that implicit attitudes towards race predicted greater support for John McCain, a white candidate, as opposed to Barack Obama. Moss-Racusin, Phelan and Rudman (2010) also found support for implicit preference, but also observed that voters compensated for their preference by condemning prejudice. Interestingly, the authors only observed this “compensatory

egalitarianism” in nonprejudiced whites who wanted to defend their support of Clinton (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010).

Like sexism, latent racism has the potential to influence evaluations of candidates reported to have played the race card. As mentioned above, latent racism can exist simultaneously with the norm of racial equality. “Compensatory egalitarianism” (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010) and “aversive racism” (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986) both speak to the reality that while an individual may be not only aware of egalitarianism, but also willing to act upon and embrace it, there exists a potential for expression of an implicit preference, or inequalitarian action. Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) found that in situations where an egalitarian action is unclear, whites can behave in a manner that is discriminatory, and will look for reasons to explain their behavior. Even though voters are compelled by reasons other than race (like partisanship, for example), the negotiation of this dissonance could have an effect as it relates to reported race card play. In their research of source cue bias, White and Harkins (1994) postulate that racist individuals will not negotiate this conflict when the source of a message is Black because their racism trumps any pressure to be egalitarian. For a white candidate reported to have played the race card against a Black candidate, those with high levels of symbolic racism will support the white candidate, in part because the reported race card affirms the underlying racism, but mostly because the alternative is Black. Black candidates reported to have played the race card in some respects enhance the conflict. For those voters with low levels of racism, assuming that other factors like partisanship are non-factors, then the egalitarian action is uncertain, and support for the Black candidate could decline.

Appealing to, and Using Race. A substantial body of work on the strategic use of race concerns the integration of subtle appeals into campaign communication – commonly referred to as racial priming. The disintegration of Jim Crow and the civil rights movement led to a shift away from overt displays of racist rhetoric, and toward a more subtle integration of coded race language (Mendelberg, 2001). These racial codes are particularly effective because though outward support for egalitarian policies and norms have increased (Kinder and Sanders, 1996), latent racism may still motivate political decisions (Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005; Valentino, Hutchings and White, 2002; Valentino, 1999; Reeves, 1997; Gilens, 1996).

Politicians, then, may find incentive to appeal to these latencies in order to prime voters to use race in political decision making (Mendelberg, 2001); this priming is particularly effective through the invocation of issues relating to racial minorities (Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005; Gilens, 1996).

The strategic consequences of race outside of racial priming experience a very different treatment in scholarly research. Though only vaguely analogous research on gendered strategies, is a small but strong effort to unpack the decision – by an African American running for office – to ‘deracialize’ their campaign. Deracialization is characterized by a campaigns effort to promote grassroots mobilization while avoiding “racially divisive issues” and threatening minority images (Austin and Middleton, 2004, p. 284). But where a minority candidate runs for office may also inform the extent to which race is emphasized. In Congressional elections, black politicians may emphasize their race when competing in majority-minority districts against a black opponent; in mixed-race elections in majority-white districts, a black candidate may downplay their race in an effort to garner white support. McIlwain and Caliendo (2009) found that race is an important strategic component for black candidates in terms of ad construction. Specifically, when appealing to race, Black House and Senate candidates paired their image with substantive issue discussion. These racial appeals served to either “inoculate” themselves from racial attacks, or appeal to black voters; either way, African-American candidates think deliberately about their presentation of race in their public image (McIlwain and Caliendo, 2009, p. 741).

Much of the work on racial appeals adopts Mendelberg’s (2001) view that political actors will favor the use of implicit appeals over explicit ones. Implicit appeals “convey the same message as explicit racial appeals, but they replace the racial nouns and adjectives with more oblique references to race,” by not referencing race outright, implicit appeals are not recognized as racial language, but as “non racial content” that flies under the radar of the norm of equality (Mendelberg, 2001, p. 9). In her study of the 1988 presidential election, Mendleberg divided news coverage of the Horton advertisement into implicit and explicit phases. To test the impact of the news coverage, she used the National Election Study (NES) responses to catalog responses in each of the two phases. Mendleberg found clear support that racial priming occurred, and benefitted the Bush campaign in the implicit phase of the campaign (when the

Horton ad was still being framed in terms of crime by the media, rather than race). Racial resentment increased support for Bush and decreased support for Dukakis, irrespective of party in the implicit phase. The power of the Horton message decreased when the frame shifted to race in the explicit phase.

Similar implicit/explicit findings were affirmed in both the cueing literature (Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005; Valentino, 1999; Gilens, 1996) and in the strategy literature (McIlwain and Caliendo, 2009; Glaser, 1996). Huber and Lapinski (2008; 2006), however, fail to find any evidence that implicit appeals are more effective. They argue that while individuals are more likely to reject explicit appeals, education moderates the effect of implicit appeals. Specifically, low education individuals are susceptible to racial primes, but are less likely to distinguish between implicit and explicit appeals (Huber and Lapinski, 2008; 2006). While the implicitness of appeals is questioned, the explicitness of appeals is not. Interestingly, research discriminates against studying explicitness because of the universal assumption of its impact. This proposed study capitalizes on this gap, investigating the impact of explicit race conversation on voter's perception.

In the 2008 election, some scholars assert that Barack Obama had to address race during the course of the campaign. His presence and communication strategy seemed to promise “a version of race transcendent leadership that [was] independent of the black community” by reflecting a classic version of the American dream (Sinclair-Chapman and Price, 2008, p. 740). Discussion shifted from Obama being ‘black enough,’ to Obama representing the first step toward a post-racial America. Moreover, Obama’s calm demeanor and his passionate and compassionate delivery were said to ‘feminize’ him as a candidate, further confounding perceptions of a racialized campaign (Cooper, 2009; McGinley, 2009). Claims of racism and “race card” playing were present throughout the election narrative, so even with Obama’s post-racial glow, race was an inescapable force.

Many of these studies use specific cards as primary manipulations. That is, many treat a particular policy issue as a card, and study its effect on voters. What none have done, however, is look at how the coverage of race cards – for there are many different ones that can be reported in an election – in general influence voter evaluation. The phrase itself, as Saggar (2001) claims, could just be a trope, a tool of

campaigning and narrating an election. If that is the case, then the phrase has to be removed from particular instances in order to determine its effectiveness; in short, understanding whether it is the phrase or the alleged card itself that has an effect. Moreover, it is important to know if who is doing the playing, or the context, matters to how voters interpret the construction of cards by the media.

Clearly, the 2008 presidential election presents a simultaneously representative, yet extraordinary, case from which to build an analysis of how race and gender are invoked in political campaigns. Attitudes toward gender and race influenced all aspects of the 2008 election cycle. Existing views on race and gender informed voter perceptions and behaviors, race and gender found their way into coverage, and candidates struggled to negotiate the complex contexts of race and gender. In short, race and gender were used in the 2008 election. This is most readily apparent in the high volume of references to the race card and the gender card. These references not only reflected the perceptions, observations, and strategies, but they fueled the continuation of gender and race and important elements in the campaign narrative. The 2008 election cannot be discussed without talking about race, sex and gender, an important aspect of which played out in race cards and gender cards.

Cards are an important aspect of political communication that can reflect the presence of stereotypes, the strategic maneuvers surrounding women and minorities in politics, and the activation of identity-based orientations in voters. Until now, however, the connection between alleged card play and the oft-studied elements of American politics have not been made. This research seeks to bridge this gap by advancing the following research questions and hypotheses.

RQ3a: How does the “card” label influence the likelihood to vote for a candidate reported to have played the race card?

H5: Because the “card” label acts as a heuristic, pointing to a violation of the norm of equality (Mendelberg, 2001), participants will be less likely to vote for the candidate in those conditions where the race card was reportedly played.

H6: Participants who exhibit higher levels of symbolic racism will be more likely to vote for a race card candidate than those with lower level of symbolic racism because playing the race card is in line with their pre-existing racial views.

RQ3b: How does the “card” label influence voter evaluations of character traits for the candidate reported to have played the race card?

H7: Because the “card” label acts as a heuristic, pointing to a violation of the norm of equality (Mendelberg, 2001), participants will be less likely to see the candidate in those conditions where the race card label is present as possessing positive character traits.

H8: Participants who indicate higher levels of symbolic racism will be more likely ignore – thereby expressing ambivalence about the presence of positive character traits – race card play in candidates than those with lower level of symbolic racism because playing the race card is in line with their pre-existing racial views.

RQ3c: Do issue-based or character-based appeals have a greater influence on voter evaluations of character traits of a candidate reported to have played the race card?

RQ3d: Do issue-based or character-based appeals have a greater influence on the likelihood to vote for a candidate reported to have played the race card?

RQ3e: How do voters perceive – when unknown – the race of a candidate reported to have played the race card?

RQ4a: How does the card label influence the likelihood to vote for a candidate reported to have played the gender card?

RQ4b: How does the “card” label influence voter evaluations of character traits for the candidate reported to have played the gender card?

RQ4c: Do issue-based or character-based appeals have a greater influence on character trait evaluations of a candidate reported to have played the gender card?

RQ4d: Do issue-based or character-based appeals have a greater influence on the likelihood to vote for a candidate reported to have played the gender card?

RQ4e: How do voters perceive – when unknown – the sex of a candidate reported to have played the gender card?

RQ5a: How does the race of a candidate influence the likelihood to vote for a candidate reported to have played the race card?

RQ5b: How does the race of a candidate influence voter evaluations of character traits of a candidate reported to have played the race card?

RQ6a: How does the sex of a candidate influence the likelihood to vote for a candidate reported to have played the gender card?

RQ6b: How does the sex of a candidate influence voter evaluations of character traits of a candidate reported to have played the gender card?

CHAPTER III METHODS

As outlined above, the focus of this research is to understand how cards are constructed in news reporting and how that coverage matters to voters. This fundamental question – how the card label affects voters – requires knowing both how cards are engaged in existing campaign coverage and how that coverage influences voters. To understand these two dimensions, a mixed methods approach is best. First, I utilize content analysis of news stories during the 2008 presidential election to determine patterns and characteristics of card coverage. Second, to assess the impact of card coverage, I conduct a series of experiments testing the power of the card label itself and how a lack of parity in card coverage can disadvantage minority candidates.

Content Analysis

Data Set

In order to determine how the card label is engaged in news coverage, this study examined all mentions of the “race card” or the “gender card” in news coverage of the 2008 presidential election. As discussed above, those appeals that are labeled, or reported as, cards are the best way of learning about how cards operate in news coverage and the effect they have on voters. In theory, one could study coverage of the card label and reputed card play across implicit, explicit, and elevated implicit appeals; this, however, would be a foolhardy and endless pursuit. Purely implicit and explicit appeals are not appropriate for understanding how the label influences voters precisely because there is no way of knowing that the universe of cards is achieved. Elevated implicit appeals – those implicit appeals that are labeled cards – are the only thing to study because they are easily identifiable and cataloging the universe of cards is achievable.

The 2008 election provides a particularly abundant pool of card conversation to analyze; in fact, more cards were reported during the 2008 election than any election previous. To uncover the characteristics of gender and race cards during the 2008 election cycle, this study uses a quantitative content analysis of political coverage of three major daily newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *USA*

Today) and news programming from the three major television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC). Across all six sources, I used LexisNexis to archive all stories featuring the term “gender card” or “race card” published or broadcast between September 1, 2007 and November 5, 2008. These particular search terms guaranteed the coding of only those appeals labeled cards. Moreover, the 14 month period assured that the entirety of the primary and general election periods were analyzed.

The initial search pool included 255 articles and stories featuring a mention of the phrase “gender card” or “race card.” For the three newspapers, book reviews, international news, and letters to the editor were eliminated from the final pool. Among the news transcripts for ABC, CBS and NBC, only stories and packages from their respective morning shows, nightly news broadcasts, and primary weekend political shows (ABC’s *This Week*, CBS’s *Face the Nation*, and NBC’s *Meet the Press*) were coded. All other news programs were removed because of a lack of consistent programming between networks. The remaining 176 news stories – 81% (142) featuring a reference to the “race card” and 19% (34) containing the “gender card” – represent a concentrated population of card coverage during the 2008 presidential election.

Unit of Analysis

Cards – for the purposes of this paper, the race card and the gender card – are appeals by political actors that seek to prime attitudes in an attempt to elicit an electoral response that for some reason garner the card label. As outlined above, play involves breaking a norm in an attempt to advantage the candidate doing the playing, or disadvantage the opponent on the other side of the table. These components of play, however, have the potential to be highly variable between racial and gendered appeals given the political differences between race and gender. Moreover, it is difficult to determine the difference between play-in-reality, and play-as-portrayed or labeled. *Who* does the playing and *who* the card is played against – the fundamental actors of card play – provides a neutral platform for understanding the nuances of how gender and race cards are expressed in electoral discourse and its media coverage. While these actors serve as the primary foundation for the organization of the remaining conversation, the unit of analysis is the card itself. Cards represent a specific kind of appeal. And the labeling of a card reflects not only the

strategic aspect of card play, but also the negative perceptions associated with it. That is, when cards become a part of campaign discourse the violation becomes known and the acceptability of the candidate, campaign and election is called into question. Because the characteristics of cards are the focus of this content analysis, maintaining a narrow unit of analysis – individual mentions of the gender card or the race card – will facilitate understanding how, when, and to whom the card label is applied. A less specific unit of analysis would certainly provide a more general examination of gendered and racial coverage, but would fail to address cards with the specificity required for this study. As such, coders evaluated those reports of a race or gender card being “played” (or similar). Each reference in 2008 election coverage to the gender card or race card being played will be coded, and not the appeals themselves. With six news sources, a single appeal could receive multiple mentions; by focusing on the individual mentions we can evaluate the overall volume of card conversation, not just an examination of isolated incidences that someone labeled card play.

Coding Scheme

Story-level variables included the date of publication, news source, the number of mentions of the gender or the race card, and the presence of direct references to either “racism” or “sexism.” The card mention count assessed the volume of card coverage, something particularly interesting when comparing the relative conversations about gendered and raced coverage. For example, because the number of articles containing a race card mention (142) far outpaces gender card stories (34), having basic counts of raw references allows the comparison of ratios rather than simple counts. These ratios yield a more accurate picture of card talk. Similarly, coding those articles where racism and sexism were referenced is a way of attaching card play to a broader discussion of race, gender, and social norms. Additionally, it is interesting to see whether or not sexism is a heuristic cue being attached attached to the “gender card;” for example, coverage that consistently attaches (through proximity) the gender card to sexism might elicit support for a woman candidate from women who are sensitive to issues of sexism, or decrease support from men who perceive the connection as whining or complaining about an unfair electoral situation. Additional variables in the coding scheme fell into one of three categories: general framing, appeal

characteristics, and actor coverage.⁷

In communication, frames provide organization and meaning (Tuchman, 1978, Gamson and Modigliani, 1987), while promoting “a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004, p. 5). More generally, and for the purposes of this analysis, frames are particularly effective as “the key considerations emphasized in a speech act” (Chong and Druckman, 2007, p. 106). Recent race and gender research on the 2008 election has looked to framing to unpack the presence and influence of race and gender in campaign coverage (Lawrence and Rose, 2010; Carlin and Winfrey, 2009; McIlwain and Caliendo, 2008).

This analysis integrated framing measures from established systems of evaluating identity frames (Major and Coleman, 2008; Caliendo and McIlwain, 2006; Terkildsen and Damore, 1999). Caliendo and McIlwain (2006) used a simple three-item dichotomous variable to determine if an article is “racially framed” (p. 19); race framed articles contain “mentions [of] the race of either or both candidates, mentions [of] the race of the voters *and* [include] a photograph of one or both candidates along with the story” (Caliendo and McIlwain, 2006, p. 19-20). The first two items – mentions of candidate and voters’ race – were expanded to accommodate gender and added to the coding scheme. The third item, a picture, was not included because LexisNexis does not provide accompanying photo information across the three print sources. Both Terkildsen and Damore (1999) and Major and Coleman (2008) employed similar items to evaluate identity-laden coverage.

The labeled cards at the center of the coverage informed the remaining two sets of variables. First, were those items that assessed the characteristics of the appeal labeled a “card.” The type of appeal, whether it took the form of a campaign statement or more indirect campaign action, evaluated a strategic element of the card, namely, the manner in which the card was reportedly played. Coders also indicated the extent to which candidates directed their appeals (labeled cards) at an intergroup audience. That is, if the appeal was made to attract or rally the support of a like subgroup; for example, a woman candidate using gender-based appeals to appeal to women voters. In line with the qualitative analysis done by Lee

⁷ The complete coding schemes for gender card and race card coverage are in Appendix I.

and Morin (2009), coders also copied and pasted from the transcript the appeal that garnered the card label. Cataloging the cards themselves, rather than just their characteristics, allowed not only for a qualitative analysis of cards played in 2008, but also created a bank of cards from which to develop manipulations for the experiments.

The final appeal characteristic variable categorized the appeal based on the four categories outlined above. Coders evaluated the appeal from each story in relation to the actors involved, placing the reported card into one of the four categories: majority/majority, majority/minority, minority/majority, and minority/minority. In gender card articles, the “majority” actor represented men (who still represent a majority among candidates and political elites) while the “minority” designation applied to women. Similarly, for race card coding, “majority” applied to white actors while the “minority” designation applied to non-white actors. This item assessed the kinds of cards most commonly reported. This was a particularly important variable to include because it evaluated the strength of the categories, and allowed for a way of organizing the results of the content analysis.⁸

Finally, coders evaluated the characteristics and coverage of the actors – the reported player and the object of play – involved in each card exchange. The name, position (candidate, campaign operative, journalist, etc.), sex, race, and party identification are all important to understanding the characteristics of those commonly reported to be involved in card play. Additional items cataloging tone and whether or not the story assigned an electoral advantage were coded for each of the actors involved. These items are important in understanding how political elites and journalists narrate card play. The extent to which card play is reported negatively and/or electoral disadvantage is assigned illuminated if there were some instances when card play was not called out as being bad. If all reported cards are framed negatively, then the colloquial understanding of cards is present in political reporting; if only some, or none, of the reported card play is framed negatively, then some evidence exists that cards operate as tools of

⁸ A major weakness of this coding scheme is that it does not neatly accommodate intersectionality. In analyzing coverage of a Black woman seeking elected office, these majority/minority distinctions are severely limiting. To simply say that in either instance – whether the reported play is a race card or a gender card – that a Black woman will always be categorized as a minority in either coding scheme does not effectively capture the context of the alleged card play. Ideally, a separate scheme would be designed for intersectional candidates. Given the nature of the 2008 presidential election, however, this was not done.

campaigning.

Two trained coders examined the population of race card and gender card articles. Their coding overlapped by 10% in order to establish intercoder reliability. For story-level variables, coders achieved complete agreement. A Scott's pi of .89 and .77 were achieved across general framing variables and appeal-level variables, respectively.

Experiments

A series of experiments were designed to help determine why and in what context the card label matters. While the content analysis unpacked how cards were constructed in election coverage, these experiments addressed the impact of card coverage. The experimental part of this project was broken down into two phases: 1) assessing the impact of the card label on voters; and 2) assessing the impact of context on voters.

Phase 1

Research on the impact of racial and, to a lesser extent, gendered appeals has revealed robust effects. This evidence shows that although we may not agree on what a gender card or a race card is, we do know that identity shapes the way voters approach electoral decision making. What none have examined, however, is the extent to which the presence of the “card” label in election coverage affects voters evaluations of candidates. Other research on identity-based appeals simply uses an implicit appeal to test attitudes toward policies, for example. Subtle, coded, references to ‘inner city’ (Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005), affirmative action (Kinder and Sanders, 1996), and welfare (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman, 1997) are “more powerful” than other ways of examining racial prejudice (Huddy and Feldman, 2009, p. 438), but they are not focused on campaigns or elections. Approaching a candidate-centered study, Mendelberg (2001) found that the implicit phase of the 1988 presidential campaign – when the “Willie” Horton message was still relatively non-racial in the media – benefitted the Bush campaign, and activated feelings of racial resentment. The explicit phase quickly reduced this support. While Mendelberg’s (2001) work moves in the direction of understanding how implicit and explicit messages affect a candidate, she does not tackle how the actual “card” label influences these evaluations. The first phase of

experiments, then, spoke to what voters recognize when consuming election coverage, addressing research questions 3 and 4.

To answer these research questions, I conducted two, 2 (card label or no card label) x 2 (character appeal or issue appeal) between-subjects experiments, one for gender cards and one for race cards. The first factor evaluated the effect the presence of a card label has on voters; the second factor was designed to see if a card associated with an issue or character appeal was more effective. Participants completed a pretest, read an excerpt from an editorial (with an Editorial Board byline) about a recent election containing a racial or gendered appeal, then answered items on a posttest questionnaire. Because race and gender operate differently, designing truly equivalent manipulations for race and gender was difficult, which is why they were divided into two separate experiments. These parallel experiments accommodated the differences between race and gender and allowed the reported card play to be paramount. While the direct effects of gender and race could not be statistically compared, those instances in which race and gender cards are reported allow us to see under what conditions racial and gendered considerations are activated. Moreover, the candidates discussed in the Phase 1 manipulations were presented in a gender and race-neutral fashion, which allowed presence or absence of a reported card, not the identity of the politician, to drive evaluation. In short, in the absence of any other cues, does labeling an implicit appeal a “race card” or “gender card” matter to voters?

The first manipulated independent variable, the presence or absence of the card label, took the form of a headline. The card label conditions contained headline reading, “Fowler Plays the Gender/Race Card,” while conditions without a card label had the headline, “Candidates Spar Over Issues.” While the card label manipulation could have been contained in the text of the article, the presence of the manipulation in the headline assures that the label itself was more likely to be noticed by participants. The neutral (no card) headline assured that participants in the no-label conditions were not cued to expect card coverage, even though an implicit appeal was contained in the article text. Identical article text appeared in *both* the label and no-label conditions, but differed between the issue and character-appeal conditions (see Figure 3). The conditions without a label mimic those instances where a candidate

implicitly injects identity into their campaign, and that implicit use is not called out. The card label conditions call out – in the headline – the implicit appeal in an effort to determine how the card label affects evaluations. We know from existing research that implicit appeals can have an effect, particularly on individuals with latent resentments, and that these effects are muted when the appeal becomes explicit (Mendelberg, 2001). This experiment further tests the relationship between implicit appeals and implicit appeals-made-explicit by looking at how that process affects candidate evaluation.

Race Experiment			Gender Experiment		
	issue	character		issue	character
label	inner city crime	atypical candidate: not lazy or aggressive	label	single mothers and equal pay	atypical candidate: empathetic and compassionate
no label	inner city crime	atypical candidate: not lazy or aggressive	no label	single mothers and equal pay	atypical candidate: empathetic and compassionate

Figure 3: Conditions and Manipulations for Phase 1 Experiments

The other factor, issue or character-appeal, tested the impact of different kinds of appeals commonly engaged in political campaigns. What we know about the direct effects of appeals is limited largely to how issue-based racial appeals prime racial considerations. Hurwitz and Peffley (2005), for example, found that the phrase “inner city” was sufficient to activate racial judgments. A strong line of work shows that voters use stereotypes to evaluate female candidates when it comes to issue competency (Schaffner, 2005; Herrnson et al., 2003; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Kahn, 1996), but none evaluated the extent to which the issues themselves prime sexism. Similarly, while research has revealed consistent stereotyping of women (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a; & 1993b, for example) and minority candidates (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997, for example), none engaged these character stereotypes as primes. It is because of this gap in the literature that this phase of experimentation examined both issue and character appeals. Moreover, while what we know about priming latent prejudices is restricted to race and issues, the content analysis revealed that character cards almost exclusively defined the 2008 election. This

additional gap, the one between what is played out in actual political communication and what is studied by scholars, is also addressed in this experimental phase.

For the two race-issue conditions, the covered appeal referenced “inner city” crime, an implicit racial code shown to prime racial attitudes (Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005). The crime stimuli took special care to emphasize “inner city,” as this attached crime to race. The gender conditions contained an appeal that used equal pay as an issue to prime gendered attitudes. In the issue conditions, the phrase “single parents” strengthened the gendered aspect of the equal pay issue. Though it is hard to equate specific gender and race cards, both crime and equal pay are policy issues that evoke racial and gendered stereotypes, respectively, without being bogged down in intersectional stereotypes (like welfare, for example). For both race-issue appeals, the text of each article was identical. The exact same article text and appeals were used for both gender-issue treatments.

The character appeals were more true to those found 2008 election coverage. For these treatments, the cards reflected appeals that framed women and minority candidates as outsiders, and directly referenced stereotyped character traits. For both the race and gender treatments, participants read about a candidate who is “not your typical politician.” This frame tapped into a narrative from the 2008 race that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton represented historic firsts. It also connects directly to a body of literature that shows that women and minorities in politics are still being covered in terms of their extraordinariness, rather than their fitness. The two race conditions engaged the stereotype that blacks are lazy and aggressive (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997), while the two gender conditions referenced the stereotype that women are compassionate and empathetic (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a; 1993b; and many others). Like the issue articles, both race articles and both gender articles contained identical text except for the headline (which contains the presence or absence of the card label). Figure 3 outlines the conditions and treatments; the full manipulations are available in Appendix 2.

All participants completed a pretest consisting of racism and sexism measures, policy preference questions, and five political awareness questions, with sexism and racism as key independent variables. As outlined above, “there are social pressures to suppress old-fashioned prejudicial and stereotypical

statements” about both African Americans and women (Swim et al., 1995, p. 200). While many ways of measuring contemporary sexism and racism have been advanced, most focus either on measuring political and social dimensions. Of those that approach racism and sexism from a policy dimension, four-item symbolic racism (Henry and Sears, 2002) and modern sexism (Swim et al., 1995) scales were best. The racism items evaluate, on a four-point Likert scale, respondent beliefs about whether blacks have gotten less than they deserve, if blacks need to try harder, if blacks need to overcome prejudice like other minority groups, and if a history of discrimination has created a difficult situation for blacks (Henry and Sears, 2002; $\alpha=.74$). The four-item sexism scale asks if women miss out on opportunities because of discrimination, whether women have equal opportunities for achievement, whether it’s understandable that women’s groups are still concerned about sex discrimination, and if women’s issues are receiving too much attention (Swim et al., 1995; $\alpha=.84$). The sexism scale is also measured on a four-point agree/disagree scale. Higher values indicated that the respondent holds greater sexist or racist attitudes.

The policy preference questions and political awareness questions helped disguise the racism and sexism scales in the pretest. Policy preference questions were phrased in a similar manner to those Likert items in the racism and sexism measures. Issues ranged from immigration, habeas corpus, the war in Iraq, healthcare, and gay marriage, and used the same four-point measurement. The political awareness index functioned as an important control variable. Participants were asked to identify the current Secretary of State, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the length of a Senator’s term of office, the party currently in control of the House of Representatives, and the more conservative of the two political parties.

The posttest was designed to capture multiple evaluative dimensions as dependent variables, including stereotypes, likelihood to vote, and positive character traits. Using Huddy and Terkildsen’s (1993a) candidate items, three traits each were chosen from the “instrumentality” and “warmth and expressiveness” categories in order to create gender stereotype scales. The “instrumentality” scale ($\alpha=.83$) included questions about the candidate being assertive, rational, and confident. The “warmth and expressiveness” scale ($\alpha=.76$) asked about perceived sensitivity, cautiousness, and emotionality. These scales reflect trait stereotypes for men and women candidates respectively. Three racial stereotypes were

adapted from Hurwitz and Peffley's (1997) racial stereotype index ($\alpha=.76$) – hostile, aggressive (instead of “prone to violence”), and lazy. Respondents evaluated how well each stereotype item described the candidate in the article based on a 4-point scale ranging from “very well” (1) to “not well at all” (4). For each of the three stereotype scales, values were summed to create a single stereotype variable; reliability coefficients for each experiment are in the results section.

Respondents also shared their perceptions of the candidate's character traits through a six item scale assessing the extent to which the candidate fulfilled positive leadership traits. Measured on a 1 (“extremely well”) to 4 (“not well at all”) scale, participants were asked how well a phrase describes the candidate. Commonly used in ANES questionnaires, the six items are: moral, provides strong leadership, really cares about people like you, knowledgeable, intelligent, and dishonest (reverse coded). All scale coefficients are available in the experimental results section. Finally, respondents gave what they believe to be the candidate's race, sex, partisanship, and ideology. Control variables included sex, race, partisanship, ideology, media consumption and the five item political awareness index.

No study has previously addressed the extent to which the card label affects voter evaluations. Unlike similar priming studies, the prime does not come from the issue being presented – the raced or gendered issue is present in all conditions – but from the presence or absence of the card label. The two manipulated factors were important because they allowed the researcher to test the effect of the terms “race card” and “gender card” on attitudes. That is, simply using the term may activate some race or gender-based considerations used in subsequent candidate evaluation. Recent work has demonstrated that making racial appeals explicit reduces the effect of racial priming (Mendelberg, 2001; 1997). Explicitly using the card label tested whether this occurs in both race and gender based contexts. The second factor was particularly important to test whether coded language drawing on character and issues has the same effect in terms of activating predispositions *and* whether this effect varies in magnitude depending upon the explicitness of the appeal.

There is limited research from which to base hypotheses regarding how participants will evaluate candidates with or without the benefit of the card label. As previously mentioned, most of the

experimental research focuses on attitudes toward policy, rather than individuals; Mendelberg (2001) found that the implicit coverage increased support for Bush, though she used NES survey data in her study. In an experimental setting, Huber and Lapinski (2006) negated these findings. In both of these studies, however, the “card” label was not directly tested. In line with Mendelberg’s (2001) findings, the expectation would be that in all conditions without a card label – with just an implicit appeal present – that resentments will be activated, at least in the race card experiment. All of the participants in this experiment, however, have high school diplomas and at least some college education; the question is, then, will the education level of the participants in this study allow them to differentiate between implicit and explicit appeals? Without any existing research on implicit and explicit appeals to gender, similar conjectures about outcomes cannot be made.

Phase 2

The second phase built on the first by adding an additional dimension: candidate race or sex. Studies of racial and gendered appeals have failed to evaluate the differences in voter perceptions when cards are reportedly played in mixed race and gender elections. The focus of research questions 5 and 6 is still evaluative, but seeks to capture the positive or negative consequences of *different* candidates allegedly playing cards. The framework for categorizing cards discussed in Chapter 2 breaks all card play into four categories based on the player and the individual the card is played against. Preliminary content analysis results reveal that the most common kind of cards in the 2008 election were majority/minority and minority/majority cards. As such, the second experiment does not test manipulations on all four categories of play, just the two that are most common. In this phase, two experiments – one for racial appeals and one for gendered appeals – were organized into three (majority-minority card, minority-majority card, control) conditions. There are two differences between the experiments in Phase 1 and Phase 2. First, Phase 2 experiments do not compare the effects of issue-cards and character-cards. Instead, this phase used “cards” directly from the content analysis of the 2008 election. Second, in these experiments the race and/or gender of the candidate was identified in article text along with a picture of a dyad of debating candidates. In the race experiment, the photo was of a white man debating a black man.

In the gender experiment, the accompanying picture contained a white woman debating a white man. Each of these photographs was taken from lower-level races during the 2008 election to assure that photo quality was consistent with what could be found on a contemporary local news website.

Like the first phase, participants were exposed to editorial coverage of a debate between two candidates. Because the focus of this experiment was evaluations when candidate race and gender are known, participants read an editorial accompanied by a picture of two candidates debating. Beneath the photograph was a description containing the names of the candidates. The text of the editorial described a moment during the debate where one of the candidates reportedly plays a card. While choosing either an issue or character-based “card” makes comparison consistent (as it did in the first phase), it does not make it realistic. Since the conditions in Phase 2 reflect those cards played most often (majority/minority; minority/majority) then the appeals contained in the articles also reflect actual appeals from the 2008 election. Because the second phase of experiments was designed to be as close to real card coverage as possible, the “cards” contained in the manipulations were adapted directly from those culled during the content analysis of the 2008 coverage. To ensure that these references were not recognized as being from 2008, language and other contextual details were changed to assure that participants did not think of 2008 during the study. The manipulations for the second experimental phase are located in Figure 4.

	majority/minority	minority/majority	control
race	“support from hardworking, blue collar voters...looking for someone like them”	“I’m not your typical candidate for governor...they say I’m a risky choice”	same candidate statement, no card label from Editorial Board
gender	Candidate is “tough, tested;” opponent is just putting old ideas in a “pleasant package”	“there is no reason to pick on me...the old boys club” is bad for the state	same candidate statement, no card label from Editorial Board

Figure 4: Conditions and Manipulations for Phase 2 Experiments

As outlined in Figure 4 the race majority/minority condition contains an appeal made by the white candidate that champions his “support from hardworking, blue collar voters” who are looking to elect “someone like them.” This was taken almost directly from comments made by Hillary Clinton during the Democratic primary about her supporters. This comment was covered as an alleged race card. Conversely, the race minority/majority appeal advances an outsider status. Like the other condition, this is almost verbatim from a speech given by Barack Obama to Missouri voters, wherein he claimed that the Republic party wanted voters to be afraid of him because he didn’t look like other presidents. In the coverage following this incident, John McCain and his surrogates called out this comment for being a race card. The gender card manipulations are also adapted from 2008. The majority/minority gender card was designed to mimic a popular interpretation of Obama’s ‘lipstick on a pig’ reference in regard to Sarah Palin’s policy choices. Here, the male candidate doing the playing is tough and tested – stereotypically male qualities voters like – while his opponent is just a pretty package for the opposition. The minority/majority gender card invokes an alleged gender card played by the Clintons during the Democratic primary, wherein the claim was made that the male Democrats were ‘piling on’ Hillary Clinton for being a woman. This also invokes outsider status, by referencing “the old boys” club, another alleged gender card played by Hillary Clinton during the 2008 race. Admittedly, these manipulations are far from equivalent. In that regard, this experiment can be interpreted as not testing alleged gender and race card coverage in general, but the specific implicit appeals-made-explicit outlined above. While this is true, I would argue that, in absence of any existing research on card coverage, adapting cards known to have been reported on provides a suitable proxy. That is, while some of these seem like an invocation of positive stereotypes (the tough and tested stereotypes are taken directly from what we know works best for male candidates) and others more negative stereotypes (not wanting to be picked on can be perceived as being overly emotional and weak), the benefits of seeing if this is an effective way of beginning to understand how card coverage influences candidate evaluation far outweigh the problems with inequivalent manipulations. The manipulations selected represent strong, clear, cues that have been shown – in coverage of the 2008 presidential race – to evoke a “card” label.

The independent and dependent variables contained in the pretest and posttest were identical to the first experiment with the exception of those questions asking the participant to recall the race of the candidate, and guess the partisanship. A question was also added to determine whether or not the participant actually thought the candidate played a card.

CHAPTER IV

CONTENT ANALYSIS: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the first and second research questions, a content analysis of card coverage of the 2008 presidential election was conducted. Specifically, the analysis focused on understanding the characteristics and contexts of those appeals labeled “cards.” Across three major newspapers, and three television networks, all mentions of the “race card” or the “gender card” were analyzed. In the spirit of the second and third assumptions of cards outlined in the literature review, special attention was given to cataloging the reported player and the object of play in each instance of alleged card play. The results of this content analysis reveal that most card accusations occurred around a few particular campaign events (RQ1). An examination of the key characteristics of “cards” in the 2008 election show that the “race card” and “gender card” labels are applied very differently in campaign discourse (RQ2). All hypotheses were confirmed.

Results

Of the 176 articles coded, 81% (142) contained a reference to the race card and 19% (35) contained a reference to the gender card (one story contained mentions of both cards). Upon coding, however, 17 of the race card articles did not contain any substantive election coverage, leaving 125 total articles upon which to base the analysis of race card coverage. Table 1 outlines the story-level results for the race card and gender card coding. Across all stories, there were over three times as many references to the race card (193) compared to the gender card (54), confirming the first hypothesis. Among those stories containing a reference to the gender card (N=35) only 14% (5) contained a reference to sexism (though four of those stories also contained a reference to racism), while 19% (24) of race card articles (N=125) contained a reference to racism. Gender card articles contained higher percentages of *issue* and *consideration* framing than race card articles, but an equal amount of *strategy* frames. While 35 articles contained a reference to the gender card, only 60% (21) of those applied the “card” label to an actual appeal, while the remaining 40% (14) articles contained more general references to the gender card without attaching the label to a particular appeal. Similarly, 59% (74) of race card articles applied the

label to a specific appeal, while the remaining articles invoked the race card without reporting a specific instance of card play.

Table 1: Story-Level Results

	Gender Card	Race Card
Stories Featuring a “Card” Reference	35	125
References to a “Card”	54	193
Stories Containing Reference to ‘Ism	14% (5)	19% (24)
Stories Containing Identity Frame	37% (13)	26% (32)
Framed Respective Identity as a Campaign Issue	40% (14)	24% (30)
Framed Respective Identity as an Electoral Consideration	43% (15)	21% (26)
Framed Respective Identity as a Strategic Element of Campaigning	46% (16)	46% (57)
Stories Containing Codable Appeal	60% (21)	59% (74)

Coverage of the Gender Card

Using the typology advanced in Chapter 2 as a framework, appeals receiving the gender card label were coded into one of four locations in the typology of card play where “majority” designated male candidates (a political majority in terms of candidates and political elites), and women were coded as a campaign “minority.” Across 21 articles where the “gender card” label was attached to a codable appeal (as opposed to a more general reference to or invocation of the gender card) 21 mentions were coded, and applied to the typology. Of these 21 reported gender cards, 14% (3) were reported as a majority/majority appeal, 5% (1) as majority/minority appeal, and 81% (17) as minority/majority appeals. No minority/minority appeals were reported (Table 2).⁹

With so few alleged gender cards in the 2008 election, interpreting Table 2 in terms of actual people and events is fairly easy. Of the 3 times an alleged majority/majority card appeared in news coverage,

⁹ It is important to remember that the 21 coded mentions do not reflect 21 individual, unique, occurrences. Each of the appeals coded simply reference each time some appeal was rendered explicit in news coverage. As will be explained, there were actually very few unique appeals to which the label was applied.

Table 2: Characteristics of Appeals Labeled “Gender Cards” in 2008 Election Coverage

OBJECT	PLAYER			
	MAJORITY		MINORITY	
MAJORITY	Total in Category	3	Total in Category	17
	Player:	# out of category	Player:	# out of category
	candidate; surrogate	1; 2	candidate	17
	white	3	white	17
	Democrat; Republican	2; 1	Democrat	17
	negative tone	3	negative tone	9
	disadvantage	2	disadvantage	6
	Object:		Object:	
	candidate	3	candidate	17
	African-American	1	primary opponents	17
	Democrat	3	Democrat	17
	negative tone	0	negative tone	0
	disadvantage	0	disadvantage	0
MINORITY	Total in Category	1	Total in Category	0
	Player:	# out of category		
	candidate	1		
	African-American	1		
	Democrat	1		
	negative tone	0		
	disadvantage	1		
	Object:			
	candidate	1		
	white	1		
	Republican	1		
	negative tone	0		
	disadvantage	0		

One was ascribed to John McCain, and two belonged to Bill Clinton. John McCain reportedly played the race card in a *Washington Post* editorial for coming to the defense of Sarah Palin, after Barack Obama’s

“lipstick on a pig” comment. Here, an advisor for the Obama campaign called McCain’s rebuttal “a pathetic attempt to play the gender card” by gendering a common analogy (Kornblut and Shear, 2008). In two separate articles, Bill Clinton was labeled as playing the gender card after commenting that Hillary Clinton’s Democratic opponents were “getting kind of tough on her.” Similarly, in both mentions, Clinton was framed negatively for having allegedly played the card, with the play reportedly disadvantaging his wife’s campaign. As a campaign surrogate, however, it is completely reasonable to also see Bill Clinton’s majority/majority gender cards as minority/majority cards, since he was a representative of his wife’s campaign.

Of the 17 reported minority/majority gender cards, all of the mentions packaged Hillary Clinton as the player, and all but four of them focused on the same “piling on” incident. This single appeal – an accusation of being singled out by her opponents – received very negative coverage (H2). Moreover, the appeal itself had legs, with the allegation of card play appearing in 15 (including Bill Clinton’s 2 articles) of the 21 articles that contained coverage of a gender card. The other four mentions of Hillary Clinton playing the gender card occurred around the same time. Three separate articles referred to Clinton’s comments that her time as a Student at Wellesley prepared her to compete in the old boys club of politics. The final appeal-turned-gender card was Hillary Clinton’s invocation of Truman’s “if you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” Clinton’s claim that she was “very comfortable in the kitchen,” prompted strategist Frank Luntz to comment, “she plays the gender card as she’s not playing the gender card... It’s brilliant...because it made her seem human” (NBC, 31December, 2007). The lone majority/minority appeal accusation surrounded Barack Obama’s “lipstick on a pig” comment made regarding Sarah Palin’s policy positions, though the alleged appeal itself was not framed negatively.

Coverage of the Race Card

Labeled race cards were also coded for location within the typology, where the “majority” player was white, and the “minority” player was a racial minority (Table 3). As mentioned above, only 74 articles actually contained coverage where the race card label was applied to a specific appeal. Altogether, 75

reputed race cards were coded, meaning one article contained coverage of 2 different appeals labeled race cards. Of the appeals reported in race card articles, 2 (3%) were reported as majority/majority appeals,

Table 3: Characteristics of Appeals Labeled “Race Cards” in 2008 Election Coverage

		PLAYER			
		MAJORITY	MINORITY		
OBJECT	MAJORITY	Total Appeals	2	Total Appeals	51
		Player:	# out of category	Player:	# out of category
		candidate	2	candidate; campaign	38; 11
		male	2	male	49
		Democrat; Republican	1; 1	Democrat	51
		negative tone	1	negative tone	4
		disadvantage	0	disadvantage; advantage	1; 1
		Object:		Object	
		candidate	1	candidate; spouse	33; 9
		male	1	male	42
		Democrat	2	Democrat; Republican	10; 34
		negative tone	0	negative tone	23
		disadvantage	0	disadvantage; advantage	13; 2
			MINORITY	Total Appeals	21
Player:	# out of category			Player:	# out of category
candidate; spouse	11; 5			affiliated individual	1
male; female	9; 9			male	1
Democrat	18			Democrat	1
negative tone	9			negative tone	0
disadvantage	2			disadvantage	0
Object:				Object:	
candidate	20			candidate	1
male	20			male	1
Democrat	20			Democrat	1
negative tone	3			negative tone	0
disadvantage	3			disadvantage	0

21 (28%) as majority/minority appeals, 51 (68%) as minority/majority appeals, and just one as minority/minority appeal. John McCain, the Republican nominee, and John Edwards, a Democrat seeking the nomination, were the reported players of the two majority/majority cards. McCain was accused of playing the race card against Democrat John Murtha, when he invoked the “most patriotic, most god loving part of America,” the implication being that McCain’s patriotic America is white. While McCain was framed negatively for allegedly playing the card, it was not interpreted as disadvantaging his campaign. John Edwards reportedly played the race card when he claimed that he was the only Democrat capable of winning the general election because of his strong ties to the south, the implication being that “the country may be more willing to elect a white Southern man than a woman or an African American” (Kornblut, 2007, A10).

The only mention of a minority/minority card was reported between two Democrats, Barack Obama and Robert Johnson, a Black male affiliated with Hillary Clinton’s campaign. Mr. Johnson was denounced in a *Washington Post* editorial for calling Barack Obama’s drug use into question, as a form of race card play. Johnson and the Clinton campaign were both framed negatively: Mr. Johnson for bringing it up, and the Clinton campaign for not stopping it. Because Mr. Johnson was a Clinton supporter, however, this card could also be interpreted as a majority/minority card, with the white candidate’s campaign playing the race card against Barack Obama.

Of the 21 majority/minority race cards mentioned, in all but three instances the reported player was from the Clinton campaign. Those appeals labeled “cards” ranged from accusing Barack Obama of playing the race card, to Hillary Clinton’s invocation of hardworking, white Americans. Many of these cards occurred on or around the time of the South Carolina primary. Bill Clinton’s comment that Barack Obama’s win was comparable to Jesse Jackson’s victory in 1988 sparked a flurry of race card coverage. Just a few days after this comment, on May 9th Hillary Clinton commented about her broad base of ‘hardworking white Americans.’ In both of these instances, accusations of race card play came both from the Obama campaign, but also editorialists and pundits. By this point in the Democratic primary, the tone

of coverage for the Clinton campaign was highly negative, charging the organization with overt race-baiting.

Across the 51 minority/majority race cards, 75% were reportedly played by Barack Obama, and all but two were reported as being played by his campaign. He was framed negatively less than half of the time, and was reported as gaining an advantage from alleged race card play on two occasions. 71% (36) of these attributions focused on one appeal made at a Missouri campaign stop where Obama told a Missouri crowd that the opposition was saying, "you know, he's not patriotic enough, he's got a funny name ... he doesn't look like all those other presidents on those dollar bills." Interestingly, across all of the reports of this particular appeal, Obama was framed negatively only 4 times, while McCain, as the victim of play and accuser, was framed negatively 11 times. A similar pattern emerged with the other dominant appeal in this category: 13 (25%) of the mentions coded as minority/majority appeals involved a series of exchanges and accusations between Bill Clinton and the Obama Campaign. After being accused himself of playing the "race card" in South Carolina – majority/minority play – after invoking the memory of Jesse Jackson's run for president, Clinton deflected accusations, saying "I didn't play the race card, but [the Obama campaign] did." In each of these instances, Obama is still the player, though the coverage framed Clinton, as the object and accuser of play far more negatively. To clarify, these reported race cards occurred in pairs surrounding the South Carolina primary. Bill Clinton was accused of playing the race card, only to respond in kind with a matching accusation of race card play. So, with almost every accusation of minority/majority play at this time, there was a corresponding accusation of majority/minority play. In many of the articles that contained coverage of the South Carolina primary, both a majority/minority *and* a minority/majority appeal would be present. As previously mentioned, this abundance of coverage of these two particular appeals packaged Bill Clinton negatively, and his wife's campaign as being hurt by the exchange. Overall, H3 is confirmed in part, as white players were framed more negatively than minority players.

Discussion

In interpreting the results of the content analysis, it is important to remember that the goal of this

analysis is not to compare race and gender, but to get a greater understanding of how race cards and gender cards are constructed in news coverage. In fact, at the story level, the race card and gender card are constructed very similarly. In the broadest sense, this validates the identity-laden nature of the 2008 presidential election. The fact that approximately over one-third of all articles containing a reference to one of these two cards does not focus on particular implicit appeals elevated to explicit status, but cards in general, point to the fact that the use of race and gender as tools of campaigning and narrating an election were salient. Falk asserts that “when the public does not hear about a social problem, it believes it to no longer be a concern” (p. 24); in the absence of having particular appeal upon which to report, journalists chose to keep the identity narrative strong by making race and gender explicit. Editorial inquiries about whether Hillary Clinton *would* play a gender card or musings about Barack Obama’s refusal to engage in race card play were common tactics used to sustain the identity narrative. For example, more frequently than not, non-specific race card references were made in the context of Barack Obama’s strategic avoidance of race. In particular, that Barack Obama avoided race card play because of his position as a post-racial presidential candidate. Even though Obama was reported as having played the race card, in those moments where the campaign did not provide alleged play, journalists kept the race narrative going. In short, much of what is revealed through this particular finding is that in 2008 is that you do not necessarily have to have an appeal in order to talk about cards. While these types of appeal-less references do not carry the same weight as a direct accusation of play – making an implicit appeal explicit through the application of the label is a potentially powerful electoral tool – they maintain most of the benefits. That is, labeling an appeal a “card” and making more sweeping statements about the possibility of card play accomplish similar tasks: keeping race, gender, and candidate sex on the lips of the media, politicians, and voters.

In this regard, Mendelberg’s (2001) findings were special in part, because they affirmed that the Bush campaign purposively engaged in implicit race baiting, but also because the journalists that covered the election were complicit in maintaining the implicit phase following the airing of the Horton ad. While the aim of this content analysis was not to determine if the appeals made by candidates in the 2008 election

were purposefully implicit, it is clear that journalists covering the election created an environment where appeals were being rendered explicit left and right. There is no evidence that this represents a movement away from the media's habit of "aiding in the communication of implicit messages," just that in this particular election journalists were very quick to report and editorialize accusations of card play on the part of the candidates and campaigns involved (Mendelberg, 2001, p.137) . This willingness to aid candidates and campaigns in rendering their opponent's alleged implicit statements explicit supports my previous assertion that maintaining an environment rich in card talk is a way of keeping the playing field level without having to do any heavy lifting (in the form of editorializing). Moreover, cards are an exquisite narrative tool, engaging lots of potential possible meaning without having to waste column inches on elaborate explanations.

The results of the gender card content analysis point fairly clearly to the gender card being something that only women can play. While Bill Clinton was accused of playing the gender card, the narrative indicated that he was doing the playing on behalf of his wife. These results could definitely be explained as a Hillary effect; Clinton was a prominent woman candidate, with a very unique political history, and a very peculiar relationship with the press (Lawrence and Rose, 2010). And yet, the cards the Clinton's we accused of playing were not altogether Clinton-specific. Clinton's place as a frontrunner made her a clear target for attacks, though none of those attacks were packaged as cards. So while some of the gender card talk can be attributed to Clinton, it is also likely that there is some wider perception that only women can play gender cards. We know that whites play race cards because the majority of existing research assumes this kind of play. For women in politics, however, the same stereotypes that color how women are perceived as candidates and politicians, are the same stereotypes that make it very easy to only think that women are the ones that can play gender cards. Gender is complex and inescapable for women running for office, and a woman who must "demonstrate her ability to be dominant" can very easily be perceived as being aggressive or bitchy, and easily packaged as holding a deck of gender cards (Carroll, 2009, p. 5). Conversely, a woman who is not being tough enough could be accused of playing the gender card by being too feminine. Aside from Obama's accusation of gender card play with the "lipstick on a

pig comment,” a cursory search for other gender card play by men in elections turned up no results. It is improbable that men do not play the gender card – any mention of an opponent’s appearance, for example, is clearly a means of pulling voters toward stereotypical evaluations of a woman – and more likely that the accusation of card play is just not attached to the action. This, in and of itself, is a paramount conclusion from this content analysis: that the kind of bias previously demonstrated through other content analyses extends far beyond quantity of coverage and viability frames, and is connected to some kind of fundamental blind spot in the narrating of campaigns.

As with reported gender cards, race cards were overwhelmingly placed in the hand of Barack Obama. Over half of all of the coverage of Obama’s alleged play occurred following a single campaign event where Barack Obama commented that he did not look like any of the other presidents. Immediately, John McCain and McCain supporters jumped on this comment as race card play. These accusations, however, did not result in negative coverage for Obama; the negative framing and electoral disadvantage was heaped on the card’s object, the McCain campaign. The remainder of Obama’s alleged race cards represented half of a pair. That is, the remaining minority/majority cards also were covered alongside a majority/minority card. In 13 instances, an accusation of race card play on the part of Bill Clinton reported alongside a counter-accusation of card play on the part of the Obama campaign. These I-didn’t-play-but-you-did exchanges amounted to two accusations of card play per report. This connection between minority/majority and majority/minority race card is indicative of how confusing cards can be. Here, it appears that no one wanted to be a race card player, and accusations of card play were framed as a means of playing cards. This layering of card play is, in this content analysis, unique to race cards. The Obama campaign smoothly deflected Bill Clinton’s accusations and counter-accusations, while even more negative press was piled on Bill Clinton for his accusations. Coverage of Bill Clinton as the victim of race card play framed him as an angry crackpot – the bitter first black president – rather than someone having a card played against them. In reading these articles, the coverage was not only confusing, but hysterical. The claims and counter-claims made for some frenzied reporting, a reality that affirms my assertion that card coverage is as much a tool of good narration as regular reporting. Whereas Hillary

Clinton was covered negatively for her alleged gender card play, Barack Obama was covered fairly neutrally. The abundance of race card coverage, and the negativity with which the campaigns of white candidates were framed affirms a general sensitivity to race, if not an overall fondness for Barack Obama. Unlike some research that previously found that the race of minority candidates is suppressed in news coverage (Zilber and Niven, 2000), the overwhelming race card coverage points to race being front-and-center. The media kept the race narrative going, making it easy for accusations of race card play to be made, but also making it hard for the white candidates to benefit from Barack Obama allegedly playing the race card. In the 2008 election, the card play narrative overwhelmingly benefitted Obama. Like Hillary Clinton's gender card coverage, it remains to be seen whether this is an observation that can be applied to other minority campaigns, or if it has something to do with Obama himself. If it is a sign of a shift in coverage – that talking about race is something that the media supports in minority candidate, and suppresses in white candidates – then that may point to a leveling in elections coverage for mixed-race campaigns.

In an analysis of the 2008 presidential election, Bohm, Funke and Harth (2010) argue that neither “the ‘race card’ nor the ‘gender card’ [were played] overtly during the election campaign” (p. 257); this analysis would suggest otherwise. While it is unclear precisely what the authors meant by “overtly,” *the actual play mattered less than the accusations of play*. That is, it is irrelevant whether the reputed cards uncovered in this analysis are actually cards; it matters more that the application of the label created a narrative environment where cards were constantly being mentioned, even if there was no specific appeal to attach the label to. Moreover, the coverage of race cards and gender cards themselves reveal additional insights about how cards are constructed. Gender cards were overwhelmingly reported as having been played by the Clinton campaign. While this is, in part, due to Clinton's unique relationship with voters and the press, it is also indicative of a blind spot in how campaigns are narrated. The press, however, does not have a blind spot when it comes to race. The coverage of alleged race cards played during the 2008 elections point to overwhelming interest in Obama's minority status, and derision for his white opponent's use of race, a trend that, if continued, could favor minority candidates in future races.

CHAPTER V

EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All four experiments were conducted at LSU's Media Effects Lab located at the Manship Research Facility. Undergraduate students were recruited and self-selected into one of the four experiments. While they were able to select which phase of the experiment they participated in, they were not given any information about the nature of the experiment prior to their participation. In addition to this, the experiments were held at similar times in the same location as not to influence the self-selection process. Once students were placed within the experimental group, they were randomly assigned to an experimental condition using a random number table. There were no differences in the demographic characteristics of the participants between the four experiments. The overall (the four experiments combined) demographic attributes of the participants are described below.

Because the experiment took place on a college campus and students were recruited as participants, the demographic breakdown represents the demographics of the student body. Between the two phases, there were 446 total participants, 274 in the first phase, and 172 in the second. The majority of the participants (96.5 percent) were between the ages of 17 and 22. Thirty-three percent of the participants were male, while 66.9 percent were female. While the majority of the participants self-identified as "White" (78.4 percent), there were several minorities also represented in the sample. Slightly less than 11 percent (10.8) of participants self-identified as "Black," 3.8 percent self-identified as "Asian," and 3.1 percent self-identified as either "Native American" (.4 percent) or "Other" (2.7 percent). Forty-seven percent of participants identified their political party as Republican as compared to 17 percent as Democratic, and 22.6 percent as Independent. It is interesting to note that 12.8 percent of the sample said they either had no preference in terms of political party or responded with a "don't know" response. Political ideology was also determined using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "very liberal" to "very conservative." The majority of participants identified as having a moderate political ideology (24.5 percent). Less than 2 percent of participants were very liberal in ideology (1.6), 10.3 percent were liberal,

and 13.9 percent were slightly liberal. On the conservative side of the scale, 4.3 percent were very conservative, 23.4 percent were conservative, and 16.6 percent were slightly conservative.

As previously mentioned in the both sets of experiments, the posttest captured two evaluative dimensions of the candidate as dependent variables. The first, a six-item scale assessing overall candidate trait evaluation, was developed using ANES questionnaires. The six-item scale was reliable ($\alpha=.76$). The second dependent variable measures, on a 1 to 4 scale, how likely the respondent is to vote for the candidate they read about in the article. For both experimental phases, race and sex predispositions served as key moderating variables. Four-item scales were adapted from Henry and Sears (2002) and Swim et al. (1995) to measure symbolic racism ($\alpha=.54$) and modern sexism ($\alpha=.60$), respectively. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS.

The first experimental phase was designed to capture the impact of the “card” label and the type of appeal – either issue or character-based – on voter evaluations. Subjects were asked to read an article containing election coverage that either engaged an issue or character-based appeal, with either a neutral headline, or one containing the “card” label. The text of the article, while referencing the candidate making the appeal, did not contain any identifying information in regard to the race or sex of the candidate. The second experimental phase tested the impact of card coverage in different contexts. All treatment conditions contained alleged card play, but the player of that card varied by race or candidate sex. The article was accompanied by a picture of the candidate reportedly doing the playing.

Phase 1 Experiments

Gender Card Results

To determine the effect of the gender card label on candidate evaluation, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the experimental conditions influenced the dependent variables, likelihood to vote and trait evaluation. For trait evaluation, neither the main effects of label $F(1, 134) = .72, n.s.$, issue $F(1, 134) = .76, n.s.$, or their interaction label x issue, $F(1, 134) = .49, n.s.$ (to test for differences in means across conditions) was significant (RQ4b). In terms of means, the lowest evaluation occurred in the condition without a “card” label containing an issue appeal ($M = 2.02, SD$

= .91). All other conditions evaluated their candidates fairly comparably. Overall the conditions containing the “gender card” label garnered higher overall trait evaluations ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .75$) than those without the label ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .88$), but the differences were, as previously indicated, not significant (complete means and standard deviations for all independent and dependent variables can be found in Table 4).

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for Key Independent and Dependent Variables

Condition:	Likelihood to Vote		Trait Evaluations		Sexism	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Label & Issue Appeal	2.54	.81	2.24	.76	2.06	.81
Label & Character Appeal	2.37	.85	2.25	.74	2.17	.61
No Label & Issue Appeal	2.41	.89	2.02	.91	2.09	.67
No Label & Character Appeal	2.33	.73	2.24	.85	1.86	.73

Note: As a reminder, the likelihood to vote dependent variable was based on a four-point scale with 1 being “very unlikely” and 4 meaning “very likely.” Six trait evaluation questions were measured on a 1 (not well at all) to 4 (extremely well) scale assessing the degree to which respondents felt a trait described the candidate; these responses were averaged to create a single trait score. For this analysis, sexism scores were recoded into a low-medium-high variable; the mean in the table above represents this value. However, responses to the four sexism questions were averaged, and the means and standard deviations for their averaged sexism score are (from top to bottom, by condition): $M = 2.46$, $SD = .50$; $M = 2.44$, $SD = .34$; $M = 2.42$, $SD = .34$; $M = 2.34$, $SD = .39$. Finally, the Perceived Gender variable outlined in the regression table below is a dichotomous variable. In the Label/Issue condition, 62.5% of respondents believed the candidate in the article to be a man. Similar evaluations were present in the Label/Character condition (61.1%) Far greater perception percentages – though still favoring perceptions that the candidate is a man – were found in the No Label conditions for issue (80%), and character-based appeals (85.7%).

Similarly, no significance was found through a two-way ANOVA conducted testing the influence of condition on likelihood to vote. The label cue $F(1, 106) = .27$, issue/character conditions $F(1, 106) = .61$ and interaction $F(1, 106) = .09$ were all not significant (RQ4a). Looking at means, the condition with the highest likelihood to vote score was the “gender card” label condition with the issue appeal ($M = 2.54$, $SD = .81$); the lowest likelihood to vote score occurred in the condition without a “card” label containing a character appeal ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .73$). Overall, the means for the conditions containing a “gender card” label – irrespective of appeal type – were higher than the conditions without a label, though the differences between these means were not significant ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .83$, versus $M = 2.37$, $SD = .81$).

While the conditions themselves fail to influence likelihood to vote or candidate trait evaluation, these

results do not speak to the activation of preexisting attitudes toward sex and gender. To test for evidence that sexism is primed, I used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression estimates. Treatments were recoded as dummy variables, and then interacted with their sexism score. Similarly, a label x issue x sexism three-way interaction was conducted to see if the effects of sexism on evaluation in the presence of a label changes across they type – issue or character – of appeal. The same procedures were conducted to see if the perception of the candidate sex had any influence on evaluation. Results from the regression analysis are in Table 5.

Table 5: Models Predicting Candidate Evaluation and Vote Choice

	Likelihood to Vote			Trait Evaluation		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
Gender Card Label Cue	.23	.73	.14	-.74	.66	-.45
Issue Appeal Cue	.01	.73	.01	-.38	.64	-.23
Label x Issue	-.73	1.03	-.39	.26	.93	.14
Sexism	-.25	.24	-.22	-.25	.19	-.22
Perception that Candidate is a Woman	.63	.52	.36	.50	.40	.27
Label x Sexism	.02	.34	.03	.39	.30	.56
Issue x Sexism	.10	.34	.14	.15	.29	.22
Label x Perception	-.84	.61	-.43	-.40	.49	-.19
Issue x Perception	-.57	.65	-.25	-.69	.54	-.29
Label x Issue x Sexism	..25	.47	.29	-.17	.41	-.20
Label x Issue x Perception	.82	.80	.30	1.06	.68	.37
Constant	2.71*	.47		2.64	.40	
N	138			138		
R ²	.059			.071		

Note. None of the above relationships are significant below the .10 level, except for the Constant $p < .01$.

As evidenced in Table 5, neither sexism nor the perception that the candidate is a female influence

candidate evaluation across label, issue, or the interaction of the two. The only interaction that even approached significance at the $p < .01$ level is the three-way interaction label x issue x perception for the trait dependent variable. In short, no priming effect was present. Plotting the simple slopes, however, reveals evidence of priming. Figure 5 shows trait evaluation in the label and no label conditions at differing levels of sexism. For those respondents with higher levels of sexism, the presence of the card label increases positive candidate evaluations. Conversely, low levels of sexism predicted more positive evaluations for those candidates not accused of playing the gender card. To put it another way, as you move from low to high levels of sexism, the likelihood one will feel good about a candidate who reportedly plays the gender card increases.

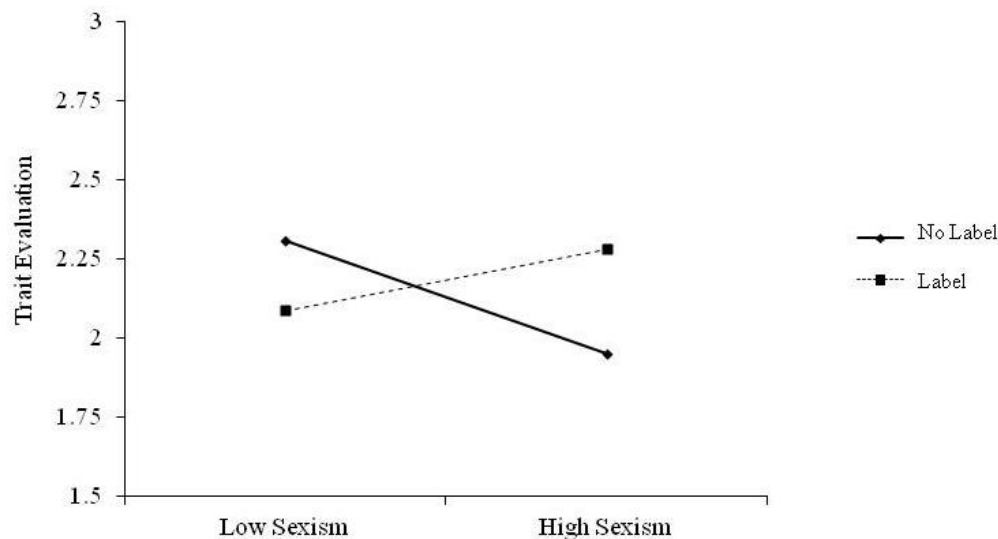


Figure 5: Priming and Label on Likelihood to Vote

Gender Card Discussion

Neither likelihood to vote nor trait evaluations were significantly affected by the presence of the “gender card” label, though a comparison of means points to a greater likelihood to vote and more positive evaluations for a candidate who is reported to have played the gender card. There was a negligible difference between evaluative means for the issue and character conditions (RQ4c, d). Participants perceived the candidate at the center of coverage as male approximately 70% of the time (RQ4e). While priming effects were not revealed in the regression, plotting the simple slopes of vote choice across the label and no label conditions, in the presence of high and low levels of sexism, revealed

an effect: those respondents with high levels of sexism were more likely to vote for a candidate reportedly playing the gender card. No such relationship was seen for trait evaluation. It is important to remember, however, that even though plotted slopes points to an interaction between the label and sexism, the statistical relationships is weak.

Coupled with the overwhelming perception that the candidate in the article was male, the results of the slope plot make some intuitive sense. A respondent with higher levels of sexism, who perceives that the candidate reportedly doing the playing is male, is more likely to support reputed gender card play. It is the explicitness of the appeal that is attractive to those with sexist views. The reported gender card play is in line with sexist predispositions that seek to marginalize women and women's issues, thereby eliciting a potential vote. Interestingly, the implicit no label conditions were successful in influencing those with low levels of sexism to evaluate the candidate more positively. The driving force, then, behind those observations we can make from the statistically weak findings, seems to be this perception that the candidate doing the playing is male. If positive evaluations and vote choice are higher in those conditions with a gender card label, and the candidate perceived to be playing is a male, then there is some endorsement – however insignificant – of gender card play on the part of male candidate. This is particularly curious, considering the construction of the manipulations. Because the appeals were taken from coverage of the 2008 campaign, as we learned in the previous chapter, the gender cards employed in this experiment were ones adapted from cards allegedly played by a woman. Contrary to the findings from the content analysis (where almost all of the gender cards were played by a woman), the perception that this play (even though the reported play in the manipulation was conceived in a woman's voice) originates from a male candidate is very puzzling. While a more detailed discussion of the limitations of the experimental portion of this study will be detailed at the end of this section, this particular (and quite dissonant) finding might be explained as a function of the design. Without a hint to the sex of the candidate in the article, participants might have deferred to a vision of a 'typical' politician, one who is a man. And because coverage of gender cards is so minimal, it is possible that prior exposure to gender card coverage has not influenced how the participants understand alleged gender card play. So even

though gender card coverage tells us that men do not play gender cards, in the absence of a cue about the sex of a candidate the vision of men-as-politicians prevails; and for those individuals with higher levels of sexism, that perception of men in politics opens the door to endorsing the use of gender as a campaign tool.

Race Card Results

As in the gender card experiment, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the experimental conditions influenced the dependent variables. For trait evaluation, neither the main effects of *Label* $F(1, 132) = 1.09$, *Issue* $F(1, 132) = .88$, or their interaction, *Label x Issue*, $F(1, 132) = .00$ was significant. Hypothesis 7 was disconfirmed. In terms of means, the condition yielding the highest overall candidate evaluation was the condition without the “race card” label and with the issue appeal ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .58$). The lowest evaluation occurred in the condition with a “card” label containing a character appeal ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .78$). Overall the conditions containing a “race card” label garnered lower overall trait evaluations ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .68$) than those without the label ($M = 2.27$, $SD = .63$), but the differences were, as previously indicated, not significant (complete means and standard deviations can be found in Table 6).

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for Key Independent and Dependent Variables

Condition:	Likelihood to Vote		Trait Evaluations		Racism	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Label & Issue Appeal	.88	.82	2.21	.58	2.67	.54
Label & Character Appeal	1.03	.74	2.10	.78	1.97	.79
No Label & Issue Appeal	1.25	.81	2.33	.58	1.89	.79
No Label & Character Appeal	1.0	.97	2.22	.69	1.82	.86

Note: Means and standard deviations for the averaged responses to the four racism questions (from top to bottom, by condition): $M = 3.69$, $SD = .59$; $M = 2.94$, $SD = .66$; $M = 2.86$, $SD = .68$; $M = 2.79$, $SD = .73$. Finally, the Perceived Gender variable outlined in the regression table below is a dichotomous variable. In the Label/Issue condition, 78.8% of respondents believed the candidate in the article to be a white. In the Label/Character condition, 53.1% of respondents perceived the candidate in the article to be white and 37.5% perceived the candidate to be Black. 75% of participants viewed the candidate in the No Label/ Issue condition to be white. 28.6% of respondents in the No Label/Character condition thought the reported candidate was Black, and only 60% thought they were white (RQ3e).

In a two-way ANOVA testing the influence of condition on likelihood to vote, the differences in

means between the label ($M = 1.41$, $SD = .50$) and no label conditions ($M = 1.63$, $SD = .57$) was significant, $F(1, 89) = 3.95$, $p = .05$. The issue/character conditions $F(1, 89) = .01$, and interaction $F(1, 89) = .36$, however, were not significant (RQ3a). Significantly higher means in the no label condition indicate that those respondents confronted with a “card” label are less likely to vote for the candidate reportedly playing the race card, confirming H5.

Table 7: Models Predicting Candidate Evaluation and Vote Choice

	Likelihood to Vote			Trait Evaluation		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
Race Card Label Cue	-.11	.60	-.09	.47	.56	.36
Issue Appeal Cue	-.14	.65	-.13	.48	.61	.37
Label x Issue	-.24	1.10	-.18	-.56	1.07	-.37
Racism	.15	.134	.23	.15	.14	.18
Perception that Candidate is Black	.03	.07	.10	.06	.08	.16
Label x Racism	-.01	.22	-.03	-.22	.21	-.43
Issue x Racism	.02	.21	.05	-.14	.21	-.27
Label x Perception	-.03	.09	-.15	-.04	.09	-.13
Issue x Perception	.00	.09	.00	-.04	.09	-.16
Label x Issue x Racism	-.13	.35	-.28	.36	.35	.64
Label x Issue x Perception	.14	.15	.49	-.05	.14	-.15
Constant	1.25	.47		1.75	.41	
N	136			136		
R ²	.10			.037		

Note: None of the above relationships are significant below the .10 level except for the Constant, $p < .01$.

As in the gender card experiment, OLS estimates were used to determine the presence of a priming effect in the race card experiment. The label and issue conditions were coded into dummy variables, then

interacted with racism (as a predisposition to be primed) and perception of candidate race as moderating variables. The results of this regression are in Table 7. Here, we see no evidence of priming across label or issue. Racism does not appear to influence either vote or trait evaluations in the presence of the “race card” label or an issue appeal. Because priming in the presence or absence of a label is key to confirming H6, plotting the slopes will clarify the results of the regression in Table 7. As with the gender card experiments, no evidence of a priming effect was seen in regard to likelihood to vote; there is evidence of priming, however, when we plot simple slopes for candidate trait evaluation. As seen below in Figure 6, the presence of a race card allegation predicts more negative evaluation in those with higher levels of racism. Respondents with low levels of racism respond more positively to candidates who are reported as playing the race card. That is, candidates who reportedly played the race card received more favorable evaluations from respondents with low levels of racism compared to high levels of racism.

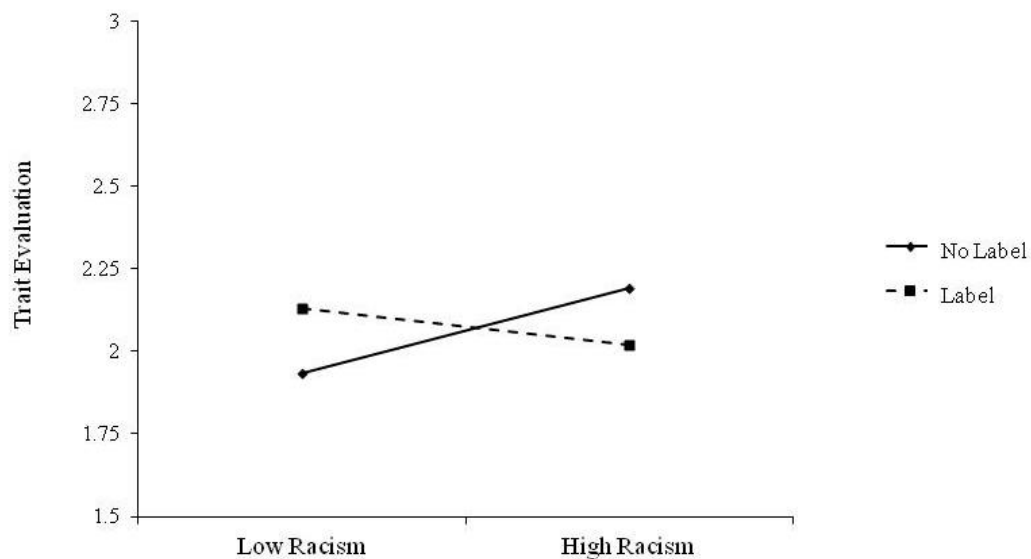


Figure 6: Priming and Label on Likelihood to Vote

Race Card Discussion

Results from the Phase 1 race card experiment reveals that the presence of the “card” label significantly affects likelihood to vote (RQ3a), though it does not affect trait evaluation (RQ3b). Respondents in conditions without a label were more likely to vote for the candidate, as opposed to those respondents exposed to race card coverage. There is evidence here, then, that candidates accused of

playing the race card in news coverage do not benefit from this coverage – quite the opposite. The nature of the appeal – either issue or character-based – did not influence likelihood to vote or trait evaluation, though the issue appeals elicited slightly more positive responses (RQ3c, d). When examining how racial resentment fits into how respondents felt about race card coverage, a regression analysis did not reveal a priming effect for racism. Plotting simple slopes did reveal a non-significant priming effect for candidate trait evaluation. Respondents with higher levels of racism felt more positively about a candidate who did not reportedly playing the race card. These findings disconfirm H6. The sixth hypothesis predicted the opposite relationship, and it was surprising to see that racial resentments actually decreased warmth toward the candidate accused of playing the race card. H8 was also disconfirmed. Participants perceived the candidates they were reading about to be white about seven out of every ten times. These perceptions do not vary significantly across conditions.

That race card coverage negatively impacts vote choice largely confirms what we understand about explicit appeals. Mendelberg (2001) observed that the implicit power of the Horton advertisement lost its effectiveness after it was rendered explicit. Similarly, in this experiment, the rendering of the appeal explicit made the candidate unappealing. The fact that respondents were more likely to view the candidate as white seems to support conclusions from the content analysis that, for white candidates, allegations of race card play rarely benefit a campaign. In the gender card experiment above, respondents consistently thought the candidate being covered in the article was a man, even though the appeals were constructed with a female voice in mind. Here, however, the character appeals were the ones constructed in a minority voice (again, as a nod to the 2008 election). Interestingly, there were higher percentages of respondents who viewed the candidate as black in the character conditions. To wit: over 75% of respondents thought the candidate was white in the issue conditions; that number drops to less than 60% for the character appeal conditions. This points to a kind of sensitivity for reported race card play. This more nuanced interpretation of race card coverage, viewed through the lens of the results of the content analysis, makes sense. There is a greater volume of race card coverage to be exposed to, thereby potentially increasing one's ability to identify different kinds of cards.

As tidy as the label effect and perceived race results are, the results of the slope analysis are messy. Given the literature, I predicted that racial resentment would increase support for the candidate accused of playing the race card because a candidate who plays the race card is appealing to racist predispositions through the race card play. The results here show the opposite. It is doubtful that the increased racial perceptions from the label effect influenced this interaction, though it is possible that the variance in the resentment scores could have some effect (the distribution was bi-modal, rather than a normal). One possible explanation is that rendering the race card explicit managed to even dissuade those respondents with latencies. If that is the case, then race card coverage offers a potentially powerful tool against implicit appeals. Figure 6 also shows that the implicit appeal was particularly effective in eliciting warm responses in those with high levels of racism, a result that is consistent with existing findings on implicit appeals.

Discussion of the “Card” Label

The first experimental phase tests the impact of the “card” label on voters. Essentially, understanding how the same appeal affects voters in an implicit and explicit state. Only in the case of the race card did explicitness significantly affect vote choice, with the explicit appeal decreasing likelihood to vote. Also in the race card experiment, the explicit (labeled) conditions decreased positive evaluations for individuals with high racial resentment while the implicit appeal was very effective in priming racism. In the gender card experiment, however, those with high levels of sexism were more motivated by the explicit appeal than the implicit appeal when it came to trait evaluation. The implicit appeal was more effective on those with low levels of gendered predispositions. Though statistically insignificant, these slope findings point to potentially interesting conclusions regarding the effectiveness of implicit and explicit appeals. Consistent with existing research, implicit racial appeals are effective in motivating those with racial predispositions, this means that, for candidate who can get away with it, continuing to use implicit racial appeals is effective. Once that appeal is made explicit, however, even those who would be most likely to maintain support in the face of an accusation of race card play, are likely to be turned-off by the explicit appeal. Candidates who choose to engage implicit gendered appeals will find that

those with lower levels of sexism respond more positively than those with sexist predispositions. For a candidate who seeks to motivate like-minded sexists, they should hope that their appeal is called out and made explicit.

For race, this points to not only a maintenance of the status quo (implicit appeals are effective), but also support for the assertion that explicit appeals are ineffective for motivating voters. For candidate sex and gender, however, the outlook is not so positive: gender card coverage seems to motivate those individuals that would not readily support women candidates or issues (assuming that the gender card player is a man). These findings though – aside from their lack of robust statistical support – do not necessarily reflect possible outcomes in real world situations. The manipulations were free of cues about candidate sex and race, two relevant cues voters use when evaluating candidates (McDermott, 1997, 1998). These results just speak to the power of the “card” label itself, in what amounts to the most complete of information vacuums.

It is of some note that there was no statistical difference between issue and character appeals for either dependent measure. From the literature and the results of the content analysis we know that the academic literature has largely focused on issue appeals, while the card narration in the 2008 election was comprised almost exclusively of character-based appeals. While the results of this experiment are in no way definitive, is notable that the gap between the appeals we study and the appeals that are reported is not necessarily as egregious as previously thought. Still, however, a thoughtful, direct, exclusive examination of character-based appeals is necessary to begin to build a body of research that understands how (or if) these appeals influence voter behavior. Character appeals are an important part of constructing cards in the campaign narrative, because they more directly invoke existing stereotypes in their content.

At least a portion of the null findings from the first set of experiments is related to effect and sample size. When calculated, the effect sizes for the race card and gender card experiments outlined above were weak (between .1 and .3). In order to produce true explanatory results, given a weak effect size and an alpha of .05, the total sample size would have to be over 450 participants, almost double the number of participants in the first Phase. Even reducing the significance level to .10, the sample would still have to

be just over 380 participants.¹⁰ Phase 1 only had 274 participants, far below what is required to assure statistical power. While the small sample size could, then, account for some of the null findings, the manipulations and the fact that this study was conducted using college students could be factors as well. While college students make for a good pool from which to draw participants, their cognitive abilities, senses of self, and still-developing attitudes make them far from a representative sample (Sears, 1986). Without a similar study upon which to base the construction of these experiments, the construction of the manipulations and questionnaires were largely a process of trial and error. In that regard, this project has proven to be a fruitful pilot study. A more vigorous examination of which appeals might elicit the greatest response could influence future findings. Moreover, in this experimental phase, the participants were not given any cues to the race or sex of the candidates involved. In that regard, it might have been very difficult for the respondents to formulate strong opinions about the candidates without those cues present. While these cues are included in the second phase, the actual construction of the cue-free manipulation may have been confusing.

It is quite possible, however, that the null findings are a result of there not being a difference between how individuals respond to implicit and explicit appeals. It is possible that these null findings actually point to the card label not making a difference in evaluation. Huber and Lapinski (2006) concluded that education mitigates the effect of an explicit appeal. Everyone in the sample has at least some college, and even though their study manifested the explicit cue as a direct mention of race and not the race card or the gender card, it is possible that the education of the respondents is preventing at least some of them from being affected by the explicit appeal. While this is certainly a possibility, I contend that it is unlikely for several reasons. First, there is at least a little evidence that something is happening to participants interacting with card coverage. The label effect in the race card experiment and the evidence of priming sexism in the gender card experiment provide a compelling argument that the effect of the “card” label on voters is worthwhile to study. In particular, the sexism effect in the gender card experiment is particularly

¹⁰ A power analysis was conducted using G*Power. For a review of G*Power, see Erdfelder, F. F., Buchner, A., & Lang, A. G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41, 1149-1160

compelling given the near-normal distribution of the sexism scores. Because of the variance, it is unlikely that whatever small findings there were in the simple slopes analysis was a result of predisposition measure. Second, the design and measures here were more conservative, and the decisions was made early on to use card coverage from the 2008 election to form the manipulations. Other appeals might have elicited stronger responses, and expanded measures (for racism, sexism, and the dependent measures) may have produced a more refined, complete picture of results. Moreover, it is difficult to compare the results here to others – notably Mendelberg (2001) and Huber and Lapinski (2006) because while they are testing the effectiveness of implicit and explicit appeals, they are not looking at that through the lens of the “card” label. It is possible that overtly referencing race (as in the Huber and Lapinski study) and an explicit mention of the race card are not equivalent manipulations. In short, the methodological limitations for the first experimental phase are such that a second look at the effect of the card label is necessary.

Phase 2 Experiments

Gender Card Results

Phase two research questions tackled the impact of card context on candidate evaluation. In the gender card experiment, the “card” label was present and the sex of the candidate reportedly doing the playing was varied. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine the effect of this manipulation on likelihood to vote and candidate trait evaluation. While trait evaluation was not significant, $F(2, 87) = .72$, vote choice was influenced by the sex of the player, $F(2, 36) = 3.95, p = .05$.

Table 8: Means and Standard Deviations for Key Independent and Dependent Variables

Condition:	Likelihood to Vote		Trait Evaluations		Sexism	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Player is Man	.57	.73	1.99	.76	1.9	.71
Player is a Woman	.97	1.05	1.76	.92	1.69	.60
Control	.52	.79	1.78	.83	1.79	.68

Note: In the first condition, where the alleged gender card player is a man, the average (not recoded) sexism mean is 2.47 ($SD=.56$). Respondents in the Woman Player condition had an average sexism score of 2.35 ($SD=.41$), while the control group had a mean sexism score of 2.39 ($SD=.49$).

Comparing likelihood to vote means, the condition with the female player garnered the highest overall vote evaluation ($M = .97$, $SD = 1.05$), followed by condition where a man played the gender card ($M = .57$, $SD = .73$). A full list of descriptive for the Phase 2 gender card experiment can be seen in Table 8.

As with the first phase, the extent to which sexism was primed by the manipulation is not revealed in the one-way ANOVA. OLS regression estimates for the gender card experiment were used to determine if sexist predispositions were primed. Conditions were recoded to reflect a male player (male player = 1, female player and control = 0) and a female player (female player = 1, male player and control = 0) dichotomous variables, and interacted with sexism (recoded to reflect high, medium, and low values). The results of the regression are below in Table 9.

Table 9: Models Predicting Candidate Evaluation and Vote Choice

	Likelihood to Vote			Trait Evaluation		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
Player is a Man	-.54	.81	-.44	-.79	.62	-.46
Player is a Woman	.77	.67	.65	-.09	.63	-.05
Sexism	.12	.28	.14	-.17	.23	-.14
Man x Sexism	.13	.39	.24	.56*	.31	.69
Woman x Sexism	-.24	.37	-.37	.08	.34	.08
Constant	1.29**	.51		2.08***	.43	
N	90			90		
R ²	.21			.067		

Note: * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. The adjusted R^2 is .09, which seems a more likely representation of the explanatory power of the model.

OLS regression estimates reveal a slight priming effect only in the male player condition for trait evaluation. Here, higher levels of sexism predict more positive evaluations for a man reported as having played the gender card. Simple slopes were plotted for all interactions to determine if priming was present in spite of non-significant regression estimates. Simple slope analysis revealed no priming effects other than the male player/sexism interaction seen in the regression. Figure 7 depicts that relationship.

Participants with higher levels of sexism in this group were more likely to evaluate the man playing the gender card positively than those in the control. Those with low levels of sexism were less likely to feel warmth for a man who reportedly played the gender card. No evidence of priming is seen in simple slope plots for either dependent variable in the woman player conditions.

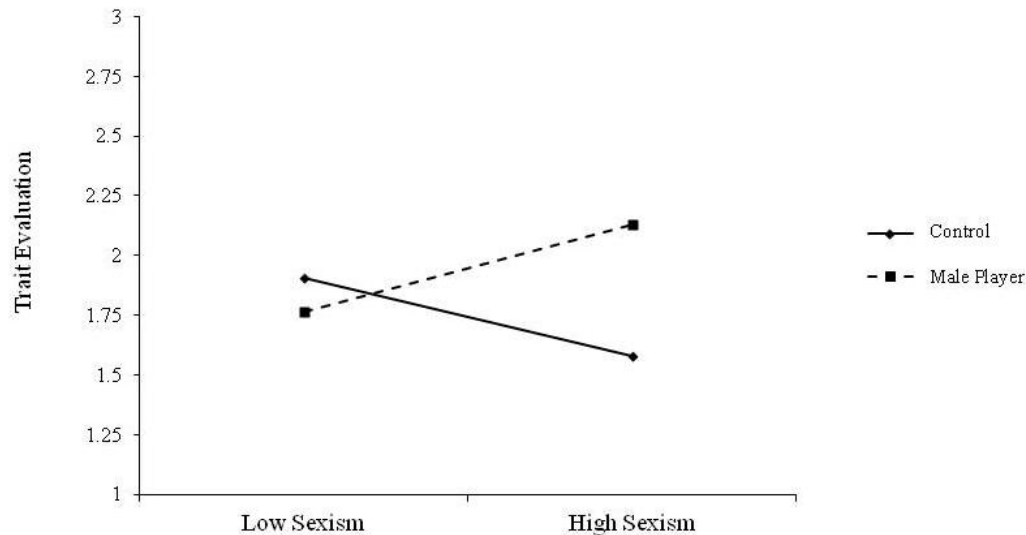


Figure 7: Priming and Male Player on Trait Evaluation

Gender Card Discussion

In the gender card experiment, the sex of the player influenced vote choice (RQ6a), but not trait evaluation (RQ6b). The woman reportedly playing the gender card was significantly more likely to receive votes than a man who reportedly plays a card. Both OLS estimates and simple slope plots reveal that higher levels of sexism predicts more positive attitudes towards a man who plays the gender card. This second finding confirms simple slope results from the Phase 1 gender card experiment. In both experiments there is evidence that men who play the gender card are more likely to receive support from those with higher levels of sexism.

The first finding, that a woman reportedly playing the gender card is a good thing, contradicts conclusions gleaned from the content analysis. Coverage of Hillary Clinton in 2008 was overwhelmingly negative. Moreover, the manipulation used in this experiment was taken almost verbatim from coverage of the 2008 election: an outsider frame that invoked “an all boys club” and that questioned why the

woman in the article was being picked on by her male opponent. These reputed cards were not effective for Clinton, and she received overwhelmingly negative coverage. So what is the cause of the positive evaluations for the woman in this experiment? It could be as simple as, she's not Hillary. Perhaps the lack of background information – the low information environment – allowed real support for a woman playing the gender card to come through. Respondents may actually support a woman calling out inequities in the campaign. This bolsters Falk's (2008) recommendation that women running for office should take a more proactive role in policing news coverage and campaign rhetoric. By avoiding implicit gendered appeals altogether, these results provide evidence that women running for office should not be afraid to invoke gender.

As previously discussed, those with higher levels of sexism supporting a man playing the gender makes sense; an individual who is sexist will respond positively to messages (gender cards) that speak to marginalize women or women's issues. In this experiment, the male candidate touted his toughness, and charged his female opponent with being a "pretty package" without any substance. This appeal is effective on two levels. First, it invokes masculine stereotypes understood to be commonly associated with positive leadership traits (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a). Second, by negating his opponent's viability, he is appealing to a set of beliefs about the roles of women and the demands that modern women are making both economically and politically (Swim et al., 1995). In this experiment, then, the man in this manipulation is enhancing his leadership capital, while negating his opponent's – a strategy that is very appealing to those with high levels of sexism.

In the context of a mixed-gender election, these findings have the potential to actually play out. Evidence suggests that a woman could benefit from reportedly playing the gender card; a man, however, only receives support from those with sexist predispositions. But in the 2008 presidential race, this did not happen. Hillary Clinton did not benefit from accusations of card play, and her male counterparts were not really ever accused of playing the gender card (with the exception of Barack Obama, although the McCain's accusation of his "lipstick" comment being a gender card was quickly dismissed). The

extraordinary-ness of the 2008 presidential election has already been discussed, but only time – and future research – will tell if these results reflect an actual political scenario.

Race Card

Neither likelihood to vote, $F(2, 64) = .54$, nor trait evaluation, $F(2, 79) = .80$, were significant in the phase 2 race card experiment. That is, varying the race of the candidate reportedly playing the race card did not reveal significant differences in evaluative measures. A look at the means reveals that the white player ($M = 1.71$ $SD = 1.24$) received the highest vote evaluation, followed by the Black player ($M = 1.42$, $SD = 1.01$) (Table 10). In terms of trait evaluation, the Black player received more positive evaluations ($M = 1.92$, $SD = .88$) than the white player ($M = 1.83$, $SD = .89$).

Table 10: Means and Standard Deviations for Key Independent and Dependent Variables

Condition:	Likelihood to Vote		Trait Evaluations		Racism	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Player is White	1.71	1.24	1.83	.89	2.17	.72
Player is a Black	1.42	1.01	1.92	.88	1.92	.92
Control	1.40	1.01	2.09	.61	2.20	.71

Note: The average racism scores (as opposed to the recoded scores listed above) are: Player is White ($M = 3.57$, $SD = .71$); Player is Black ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .72$); Control ($M = 3.57$, $SD = .52$)

Regression estimates were used to evaluate priming effects across the race card conditions, the results of which are in Table 11. In neither the Black or white card player conditions does racism influence candidate evaluation. When the slopes are plotted, however, Figure 9 reveals priming effects. Here, respondents with low levels of racism are less likely to vote for a white candidate who reportedly plays the race card than their more racist counterparts. This is similarly intuited from the regression output (Table 11); when looking at the slope coefficients for the interactions between condition and racism, only the interaction between racism and the condition where respondents were exposed to race card play by a white candidate was above .50. Interestingly, the racism and Black player x sexism interaction slopes are almost flat. When plotted (not shown), these interactions do not affect likelihood to vote or trait evaluations. That is, respondents with both high and low levels of racism felt almost the same about the

Black candidate reportedly playing the race card. This might reflect an preexisting attitude towards Black candidates.

Table 11: Models Predicting Candidate Evaluation and Vote Choice

	Likelihood to Vote			Trait Evaluation		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
Player is White	-1.06	.89	-.54	-.78	.68	-.47
Player is Black	-.40	.79	-.19	-.46	.62	-.27
Racism	-.08	.29	-.06	-.09	.21	-.09
White x Racism	.56	.39	.68	.24	.30	.33
Black x Racism	.14	.38	.15	.14	.28	.17
Constant	1.98*	.51		2.303*	.49	
N	82			82		
R ²	.066			.029		

Note. * $p < .01$.

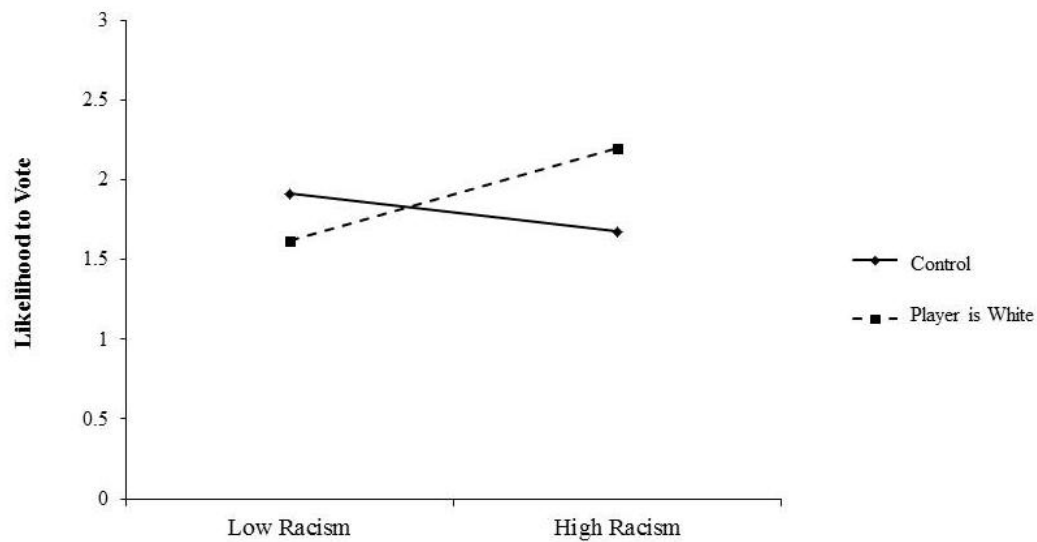


Figure 8: Priming and White Player on Likelihood to Vote

Race Card Discussion

Neither the likelihood to vote for a candidate (RQ5a), nor trait evaluations (RQ5b), were influenced by the race of the candidate reported to have played the race card. While the differences in means were not significant, the white player received more positive vote evaluations, while the Black candidate was viewed as having more positive character traits. Priming effects were not evident in regression estimates, but high levels of racism did predict vote choice for the white race card player when slopes were plotted. It makes sense that those with high levels of racism would support a white candidate who reportedly plays the race card. The card played in white player manipulation was one of white solidarity – “hardworking white Americans” looking for a candidate who is like them – plays nicely with racist predispositions that couch African Americans as wanting too much too fast (Henry and Sears, 2002). Like the sexist voters discussed above, the value sharing aspect is more powerful than the accusation of card play. This finding contradicts the result of the slope analysis in the Phase 1 race card experiment where the rendering the race card explicit managed to dissuade those respondents with latencies.

In their study of source cue bias, White and Harkins (1994) argue that racist individuals do not experience egalitarian conflict when the source of a message is Black. In this experiment, for racist individuals in the white player group – where the alternative is clearly Black – support automatically shifts to the white candidate, regardless of alleged card play. This negotiation of bias by individuals with resentments is a possible explanation of the difference between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 race card findings. In the first race card experiment, no source cue is present, leaving respondents to negotiate the uncertainty. With the presence of visual confirmation of the race of the candidates in Phase 2, however, respondents are more likely to express racial predispositions.

Discussion of Card Context

Unlike the manipulations from Phase 1, these experiments more closely mimic the kind of information you receive in news coverage of cards. Here, the manipulations featured a picture of the candidates involved in the contest, and candidate sex and race cues in the text of article. While participants were not familiar with these races, it could be argued that the Phase 2 experiments represent

card coverage for low-information voters. The results of the second experimental phase reveal some interesting results regarding context and card play. That is, there is at least some evidence that *who* does the playing matters, especially for those individuals holding stronger racist or sexist predispositions. In the gender card experiment, women reportedly playing the gender card benefitted from coverage in the form of increased likelihood to vote, while men who played the race card received more favorable trait evaluations from respondents with higher levels of sexism. The race card experiments did not reveal any significant findings, only a simple slopes analysis revealed that respondents with high levels of racism were more likely to vote for a white candidate who plays the race card.

In regards to the race card, the results from the two phases contradict. While Phase 1 showed evidence that race card coverage demotivates those with racist predispositions, this phase pointed to support for white candidates who play the race card. As discussed above, this discrepancy is likely due to a negotiation of source cue bias and egalitarian attitudes (White and Harkins, 1994). Without a cue, the egalitarian attitudes motivate respondents to reject race card play – even if a respondent has high levels of racial resentment. With the cue, however, racism drives evaluation even in the presence of an alleged race card. These findings are important in affirming that racial resentments are still a powerful influence on voters.

Between the two gender card experiments, support for the candidate who plays the gender card is a consistent finding. The first experiment found evidence that those with high levels of sexism support candidates who play the race card. The second experiment clarified these findings, by revealing that this support is for men who are accused of playing the race card. That individuals with sexist predispositions would support men who play the gender card makes intuitive sense. Like the race card experiment, the predisposition and the card play are working in the same direction, against women in politics. The one anomalous finding, that votes increased for women who reportedly play the gender card, is challenging to understand, especially considering the results of the content analysis. If women can defy stereotype bias by using gender traits and stereotypes (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a), and if voters perceive reported gender card play by a woman candidate as assertive, or strong within the campaign context, then they

may be more likely to accept her as a viable candidate. But the opposite may also be true; to be called out in coverage for playing a gender card might actually be exposing a woman to gendered evaluations through an even more distorted lens. So while from a stereotype perspective a woman reportedly playing a gender card may make her more attractive to some voters, for those with high levels of modern sexism, a woman playing the gender card may be viewed as making an inappropriate demand (Swim et al., 1995). This careful negotiation is even more relevant given the fact that so many gender cards are placed in the hands of women, not men.

The methodological issues in the second phase are almost identical to the first. The sample size was only 172 participants, far below what is necessary to assure statistical power. Identical measures were used in both phases, so the problems with weak measures remain. Similarly, the same pool of undergraduates was used for these experiments. But while methodological explanations are more likely to explain null findings in the first experimental phase, these explanations are less explanatory in the second. In the first phase, without the traditional cues to help assist in making sense of an unknown campaign occurrence between unknown candidates, respondents would have relied heavily on the manipulations. While this does achieve the effect of isolating the effect of the manipulations, it also makes their construction and subsequent measures that much more important. In the second phase these cues were present, and even though there were some methodological problems – the effect sizes were small, the sample size too small to achieve power, and the independent and dependent measures too conservative, and a non-representative sample – the increased context could have compensated for some of those problems. Because the appeals were adapted from actual card coverage and placed in articles containing not only written but visual cues about the identity of the candidate, it is reasonable to believe that the abundance of null findings in the Phase 2 experiments might actually represent the impact of card coverage on voters. It is fully possible that the card label does not have an overwhelming impact on voters. The label that is so pervasive in news coverage might just be the kind of trope that most voters have the ability to ignore. For some – those with predispositions – the coverage of alleged card play just affirms their predisposition, giving them an easy reason to pick one candidate over another. A lack of

evidence to the contrary suggests that even though there is some evidence that the context of card coverage matters, it might just be more likely that it is the context and not the card driving the voters. That is to say, the cues of candidate sex and race that we already know to be effective, are more effective than card coverage in motivating voters. That cards may not make a difference raises an interesting question: if card coverage does not matter to voters, then why is it so pervasive? This question might be difficult to answer with just this study. 2008 could prove to be an outlier in elections – a rare moment where card talk dominated. And the experiments outlined above could benefit from revision, and re-testing.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

This study examined the “card” label in political communication. In particular, how accusations of race and gender card play are constructed in news coverage, and what impact that card coverage has on voters’ evaluations of candidates. To determine how and to what effect cards are covered, I conducted a content analysis of news coverage of the 2008 presidential election and a series of experiments. Guiding these analyses, were three broad questions: how are race and gender cards constructed in news coverage of the 2008 presidential election? How does labeling an appeal a “card” matter? And, under what conditions does reported card play matter?

Card Construction in the 2008 Presidential Election

A content analysis of card coverage during the 2008 presidential election revealed some very interesting patterns in the construction of race cards and gender cards. Though the volume of race card reporting was far greater than for the gender card, both race cards and gender cards benefitted from similar patterns of narration. Perhaps most important was the finding that approximately 40% of the time mentions of the gender card and the race card did not correspond to a direct allegation of play. That is, there was no unique appeal attached to the card accusation, just general talk of the race card or the gender card. In the absence of any reportable accusations of card play, the media chose to promote an identity narrative by talking about cards in general. Unlike the 1988 presidential election, where Mendelberg (2001) cataloged identifiable implicit and explicit phases surrounding the Horton ad, coverage from 2008 points to an election full of explicitness, with alleged implicit appeals being called out as card play consistently throughout the election cycle. To be sure, the presence of both a viable woman in Hillary Clinton and a Black Democratic nominee, Barack Obama, made identity inescapable, but the sheer volume of cards are more than coincidence. The media were accomplices in the process of making alleged implicit appeals, explicit, by consistently reporting on accusations of card play. By extension, the media was able to maintain the presence of a juicy narrative while keeping identity relevant. While perhaps not traditional game or strategy framing, card coverage of the 2008 presidential election did

bolster talk of competition and conflict; alleged race cards and gender cards were good for the business of election reporting.

Even though this study of how cards were constructed makes for interesting conclusions about the process of narrating elections, it also fits nicely into the existing bodies of literature on the coverage of candidate sex, gender, and race. Overwhelmingly, gender cards in the 2008 election were reportedly played by Hillary Clinton. Moreover, that coverage was largely negative, a finding consistent with other studies from the 2008 race (Lawrence and Rose, 2010; Miller, Peake and Boulton, 2010). While Clinton represents a unique case the gender cards she was accused of playing were not necessarily *Clinton cards*. Moreover, attacks against Hillary Clinton were not categorized as gender cards, pointing to something beyond a Hillary effect. I contend that women are more likely to be reported as playing the gender card than men because the same stereotypes that color evaluations of women running for office are the same stereotypes that make it easy to interpret a woman running for office as having a deck of gender cards ready to play. Accusations of gender card play by men are rare because the same stereotypes we associate with leaders, we associate with men (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a; 1993b). Even though men running for office invoke gender and gender stereotypes, the accusation of card play is rarely made because there are no existing parameters with which to develop this particular kind of gender card play. So the kind of bias found in other content analyses extends to the coverage of gender card play, reflecting a blind spot in the narration of campaigns when it comes to candidate sex and gender.

Though to a lesser extent, Barack Obama also received more race card coverage than his white counterparts; this coverage, however, was largely neutral in tone, with the accusers receiving the negative frame. As this primary accusers, John McCain and Bill Clinton were frequently portrayed as bitter and cranky. Beyond the framing and volume of card play, the content analysis of race card coverage revealed an interesting phenomenon: the accusation of race card play as a form of card play itself. Though accusations and counter-accusations succeeded in making it difficult to follow the timeline of card play in the 2008 race, it also made for really good storytelling. Making an accusation of card play (making explicit something implicit) was a form of card play itself – no one wants to be the person playing the

race card, and yet everyone ends up playing the race card. In the framing, we see the consequence of this: Barack Obama was encouraged to talk about race (because he did not receive any negative coverage as a result of being accused of play), while his white counterparts were vilified for it. Race is still a tender issue, then.

Overall, the coverage of cards in the 2008 Presidential election points to three important conclusions: 1) card coverage does not have to be directly related to appeals, and that in absence of the appeal card coverage keeps the identity narrative salient while making for compelling coverage; 2) gender cards are predominantly played by women because it is difficult to understand how a man could play the gender card; and 3) race card coverage may actually benefit Black candidates doing the playing, but disadvantage their white opponents, either way reporting is very sensitive to issues of race in major elections.

The “Card” Label, Card Context, and Why it Matters

The first set of experiments examines the impact of the “card” label on voters when no other cues (like candidate sex or race) are present. In these experiments, the implicit and explicit effects of the label are paramount. Race card coverage negatively influenced vote choice, though the implicit appeal was still effective at priming racism. In the gender card experiment, the explicit gender card mention was effective at priming sexism, and the implicit more effective on eliciting positive evaluations from those with low levels of sexism. For race, this confirms what we already know about implicit appeals: that they are particularly effective in priming existing attitudes towards race. For candidate sex and gender, though, this priming effect appears to move in the direction of support for candidates who would marginalize women’s issues. What effects can be observed are a direct result of the lack of candidate sex and race cues. Without these important cues, respondents had to make an assumption in order to make sense of the reported implicit or explicit appeal. In the race card conditions, respondents overwhelmingly viewed the candidate as white. Higher levels of perceptions that a Black candidate was at the center of character card coverage points to a sensitivity toward different kinds of race cards even though no statistical difference between issue and character cards was found. Given the finding that the implicit appeal primes race, this

makes sense. In the gender card conditions, the perceived player was generally a man – a result that makes similar intuitive sense.

Phase 2 examined candidate evaluations after exposure to more real world card coverage. These experiments more closely mimicked exposure in low-information elections where other cues (like candidate sex and race) are present. The gender card experiment revealed that that women who reportedly played the gender card received more positive evaluations, but men who played the gender card received more positive trait evaluations from individuals with high levels of sexism. No significant findings were found in the race card experiment; only one non-significant slope plot showed that respondents with higher levels of racism were more likely to vote for the candidate who allegedly plays the race card.

Results from the two race card experiments contradict. Phase 1 indicated that race card coverage demotivates those with racist predispositions, but the second experiment points to support for a white candidate accused of playing the race card. This discrepancy perfectly illustrates the source bias cue effects cataloged by White and Harkins (1994). In the absence of a cue, internalized egalitarian attitudes push respondents to reject race card play – even if the respondent has high levels of racial resentment. With the cue, however, racism motivates positive evaluation even in the presence of an alleged race card.

Support for a candidate reported to play the gender card is a finding consistent across both gender card experiments. The first experiment found evidence that those with high levels of sexism support candidates who play the race card. The second experiment clarified these findings, by revealing that this support is for men accused of playing the race card. Like the race card experiment, the predisposition and the card play work in the same direction, against women in politics. That women can benefit from card coverage (Phase 1) while at the same time being at the receiving end of a gender card/sexism interaction (Phase 2) crisply illustrated the complex negotiation women running for office have to maintain. From a stereotype perspective, a woman who reportedly plays a gender card may be more attractive to some voters; for those with high levels of modern sexism, a woman playing the gender card may be viewed as making an inappropriate demand (Swim et al., 1995). This careful negotiation is even more relevant given the fact that so many gender cards are placed in the hands of women, not men.

Largely, however, the findings across the two sets of experiments are null. As such, there is little evidence that labeling an appeal a “card” matters beyond what we already know: that implicit appeals prime racial attitudes. When contextual cues about the candidate are included in coverage, there is some evidence that who does the playing matters. In particular, that who does the playing matters most to those with high levels of racism and sexism.

From these two experiments – and in light of the findings from the content analysis – three primary observations can be drawn: 1) while there is some indication that there is a sensitivity toward race in both how the card is narrated and how the card is interpreted, the effect of the card coverage is largely dependent on how and individual reconciles racial resentment and internalized egalitarian norms; 2) gender cards are still an unknown commodity, but stereotypes drive the coverage and interpretation of reported gender cards; 3) it is possible that the context and not the card driving evaluations.

Limitations and Next Steps

Like all research, this project suffers from several limitations. For the content analysis, aside from the small sample size, two other limitations are of particular importance. The first is that 2008 presidential race represents a unique election cycle. Hillary Clinton’s was a candidate with a unique relationship with the press and public, and Barack Obama’s charismatic entrance into presidential politics has the press and the public in a frenzy. Second, the coding scheme used could not quantitatively examine the (equally important) non-labeled appeals. Clearly, other racial and gendered appeals were made in the 2008 election than failed to be labeled “cards” by political actors and the news media. Correcting this limitation, however, extends beyond the scope of any project on the “card” label to the study of cards themselves. That is, this limitation is a function of a lack of consistent means of identifying cards, not a weakness in the coding scheme.

The experimental component of this study also suffers from limitations. As previously discussed, effect size and sample size were far below what is necessary to ensure statistical power. Similarly, college students can pose a problem when it comes to not only attentiveness in an experimental setting, but also external validity (Sears, 1986). The manipulations and questionnaires represent very

conservative design, and more robust measures and manipulations might elicit greater response. To this end, the experimental components represent more of a pilot study – an attempt to develop a new way of approaching the study of cards – rather than definitive evidence that the “card” label and card context has no effect.

In spite of these limitations, however, there are several things this study does well. First, this study does a good job of simply organizing what is known and not known about cards. Cards have been discussed in research, but a focused effort has not been taken to understand cards in general until now (research generally talks about specific cards – the card of white oppression – or cards played by minorities). The player/object framework does a remarkable job structuring the card conversation. The framework effectively streamlined not only the coding of complex card coverage, but also provided a value-neutral way to approach analyzing the results. The framework also allowed for the provision of examples for the experimental phase of this study. The experimental results discussed above, with further pilot study and revision, could prove fruitful – or, at minimum, resolve the concerns regarding null findings. If, after revision and a more representative sample, if similar null findings are present, then we know that race cards and gender cards are not tools of manipulation, but narration; and that the narrative power of cards is actually relatively small. Even null findings as a potential resolution to the fundamental questions posed in this paper, are important. Understanding the limits of cards might actually succeed in taking away the mythical power of the term, thereby redirecting the narrative toward more pointed and powerful discussions on identity in politics.

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APPENDIX A

CODING SCHEME

* if more than one appeal is present – like, for example, two separate racial appeals in a single article, code the article twice using the SAME STORY NUMBER, and flag the article in the notes section.¹¹¹²

story.num: assign sequential numbers starting at 1

source: indicate story source

1 – NYT 2 – WP 3 – USA 4 – NBC 5 – ABC 6 – CBS

headline: copy and paste the first few words of the headline directly from digital nexis document

d.o.p: list publication date (format: 09.17.09)

election: is the story about the 2008 election season? * if **yes**, continue. If **no**, stop coding here.

0 – no 1 – yes

editorial: PRINT ONLY. does the article come from the editorial section of the news paper?

0 – no 1 – yes

mention: is the term “gender card” or the “race card” mentioned?

1 – gender card 2 – race card 3 – both are mentioned

isms: is the term “racism” or “sexism” mentioned?

1 – sexism 2 – racism 3 – both are mentioned

number: total number of mentions of “race card” in the body of the story

issue: does the story frame race and a broader campaign issue? That is, is the issue of race framed as an issue important to a politically significant voting bloc? In these instances, the discussion of race would mirror discussions on other issues like the economy or healthcare.

0 – race is not framed as a campaign issue

1 – race is framed as a campaign issue

88 – race is not mentioned in this article

candidate: does the article mention one or both candidates race?

1 – the white candidate’s race is mentioned

2 – the non-white candidate’s race is mentioned

3 – the race of both candidates is mentioned

88 – race is not mentioned in this article

voter: does the article mention the race of voters?

¹¹ the following stories will be eliminated from the pool prior to coding at the story level

- newspapers: book reviews, news briefs, letters to the editor, articles that only contain a mention in the headline, international news, duplicate articles

- broadcast: anything except full news packages from the morning news broadcast, nightly news, or principal weekend news program.

¹² articles are pulled using the Lexis Nexis database. Across the sources, search dates were limited from September 1, 2007-November 5, 2008.

- 0 – race of voters is not mentioned
- 1 – race of voters is mentioned
- 88 – race is not mentioned in this article

consider: does the story frame the race of a candidate as something that voters **are using, or should use**, to make a vote choice?

- 0 – race is not framed as a consideration
- 1 – race is framed as a consideration
- 88 – race is not mentioned in this article

strategy: does the story frame race as something that a campaign or candidate is using strategically?

- 0 – race is not framed as a strategy
- 1 – race is framed as a strategy
- 88 – race is not mentioned in this article

For the following variables, just code the appeal being reported as a “card.” Remember: if a single article contains two *different* appeals of the same type (two different gendered appeals, for example) then code the article twice using the same story number and flag the article in the notes section.

appealtype: is the appeal (that which is reported to use race in a strategic manner) a statement or campaign action?

- 1 – statement: these include *verbal* statements made by candidates, surrogates, or similar; this also includes formal “campaign” statements such as press releases or advertisements
- 2 – action: these includes non-verbal appeals, including body language, or strategic campaign decisions such as where to speak, what to wear, etc.
- 99 – unsure of appeal type/neither a statement or action
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

****** in the space provided on the code sheet please include either the statement itself, or a description of the appeal that is the subject of the story. If there are multiple appeals, flag the article in the notes section.

intergroup: is the appeal an *explicit* appeal made to attract or rally the support of a like subgroup; for example, a minority candidate using race-based appeals to attract to minority voters.

- 0 – the appeal is *not* an intergroup appeal
- 1 – the appeal is an intergroup appeal
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

category: which of the following best describes the *relationship* between the player and the object regarding the appeal that is the focus of the story. For each of the following, **outgroup** refers to the candidate (or representative campaign) that is a racial minority, while **ingroup** refers to the candidate (or representative campaign) that is a racial majority.

- 1 – ingroup candidate plays the race card against another ingroup candidate
- 2 – ingroup candidate plays the race card against an outgroup candidate
- 3 – outgroup candidate plays the race card against an ingroup candidate
- 4 – outgroup candidate plays the race card against another outgroup candidate
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playername: please indicate the name of the person(s) reported as making the appeal. This will be an explicit report of someone playing or using the race card. If no player is indicated, put NONE; if there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card, put 88.

objectname: please indicate the name of the person(s) reported as being the victim of race card play. These individuals are likely reported as having the “card played against” them or similar. If there is no object or victim reported, put NONE; If there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card, put 88.

playtitle: which of the following best describes the individual(s) reported as playing the card?

- 1 – candidate: must be candidate in race that is the focus of the story
- 2 – campaign surrogate: works for, or closely affiliated with, the campaign
- 3 – candidate or surrogate spouse or family member
- 4 – campaign: mentions the campaign itself as political actor
- 5 – affiliated individual: includes supporters/endorsers, but not part of campaign machine
- 6 – affiliated group
- 7 – non-affiliated individual
- 8 – non-affiliated group
- 9 – journalist/pundit: pundits must be distinguishable from affiliated and non-affiliated
- 99 – no player is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playsex: is the player male or female

- 0 – sex is unknown
- 1 – male
- 2 – female
- 77 – player is not an individual
- 99 – no player is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playrace: what is the race/ethnicity of the player? (NOTE: this applies to individuals only)

- 0 – race/ethnicity unknown
- 1 – caucasian/white
- 2 – African American
- 3 – Asian
- 4 – Hispanic/Latino
- 5 – other
- 77 – player is not an individual
- 99 – no player is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playadvocate: for all non-candidate titles with affiliation (that is, if you code #2-6 for “playtitle”), is the candidate for whom they advocate a member of an outgroup?

- 0 – unknown affiliation
- 1 – affiliated with candidate who is a woman
- 2 – affiliated with candidate who is a racial/ethnic minority
- 3 – affiliated with candidate who is both a woman and a minority
- 4 – affiliated with candidate who is a white male
- 9 – person is a candidate
- 99 – no player is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playpartyid: what is the party identification of the player(s) mentioned?

- 0 – unknown
- 1 – Democrat
- 2 – Republican
- 3 – other
- 99 – no player is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objecttitle: which of the following best describes the individual(s) reported as having the card played against them?

- 1 – candidate: must be candidate in race that is the focus of the story
- 2 – campaign surrogate: works for, or closely affiliated with, the campaign
- 3 – candidate or surrogate spouse or family member
- 4 – campaign: mentions the campaign itself as political actor
- 5 – affiliated individual: includes supporters/endorsers, but not part of campaign machine
- 6 – affiliated group
- 7 – non-affiliated individual
- 8 – non-affiliated group
- 9 – journalist/pundit: pundits must be distinguishable from affiliated and non-affiliated
- 99 – no object is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objectsex: is the victim of play male or female (NOTE: this applies to individuals only)

- 0 – sex is unknown
- 1 – male
- 2 – female
- 77 – object is not an individual
- 99 – no object is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objectrace: what is the race/ethnicity of the object of play? (NOTE: this applies to individuals only)

- 0 – race/ethnicity unknown
- 1 – caucasian/white
- 2 – African American
- 3 – Asian
- 4 – Hispanic/Latino
- 5 – other
- 77 – object is not an individual
- 99 – no object is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objectadvocate: for all non-candidate titles with affiliation (that is, if your code for “objecttitle” is #2-6), is the candidate for whom they advocate a member of an outgroup?

- 0 – unknown affiliation
- 1 – affiliated with candidate who is a woman
- 2 – affiliated with candidate who is a racial/ethnic minority
- 3 – affiliated with candidate who is both a woman and a minority
- 4 – affiliated with candidate who is a white male
- 9 – person is a candidate
- 99 – no object is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objectpartyid: what is the party identification of the victim mentioned?

0 – unknown

1 – Democrat

2 – Republican

3 – other

99 – no object is reported

88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

accuser: is the object of play – the individual or campaign the card is being played against – also the person/campaign making the accusation of play?

0 – no, the person making the accusation of play is not the object of play

1 – yes, the object and the accuser are the same person/campaign

99 – no object is reported

88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

response: is the player responding to an accusation of play? For example, if Barack Obama says, “I did not play the race card,” he is still coded as the player, but he is also responding to an accusation of play.

0 – no, the player is not responding to an accusation

1 – yes, the player is responding to an accusation

99 – no player is reported

88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playertone: what is the overall tone of the coverage of the player?

0 – coverage is neutral

1 – coverage is negative: the card player is framed in a negative light; signs of negative framing must extend beyond the anecdotal understanding that all card play is bad.

2 – coverage is positive: the player is framed in a positive light; this includes signs that the play is justified or supported.

99 – no player is reported

88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objecttone: what is the overall tone of the coverage of the object of race card play (playee)?

0 – coverage is neutral

1 – coverage is negative: the person the card is played against is framed negatively; this could include reports that they are trying to take advantage of being the victim of card play

2 – coverage is positive: the playee is framed positively; this could include mentions of the playee responding graciously to card play

99 – no object is reported

88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

playadvantage: in your opinion, is there any advantage assigned to the individual(s) involved? That is, does the news report indicate that the player receives an electoral or strategic advantage from playing the race or the gender card?

0 – no advantage or disadvantage reported

1 – disadvantage is assigned

2 – advantage is assigned

99 – no player is reported

88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

objectadvantage: in your opinion is there any advantage assigned to the individual(s) involved?

- 0 – no advantage or disadvantage reported
- 1 – disadvantage is assigned
- 2 – advantage is assigned
- 99 – no object is reported
- 88 – there is no racial appeal attached to this invocation of the race card

other: in your opinion are there any other racial appeals mentioned that aren't labeled a "race card?"
That is, are there any other statements, events, or occurrences that could be interpreted to be raced? If so, please copy or describe the other appeal in the space provided.

APPENDIX B

EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATIONS

Phase 1

FOWLER PLAYS RACE CARD/CANDIDATES SPAR OVER ISSUES (issue treatment)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

CAPITOL CITY – Thursday’s gubernatorial debate had some highs and lows.

First, the highlights. Moderator Sam Shields was finally able to get the challengers to talk about their specific plans regarding budget shortfalls. Both Pat Fowler and Taylor Billings pledged to do everything possible to save the state’s colleges and universities from further cuts, and offered plans to finally get the highway project back on track.

Those, however, were the only highlights. The candidates came out swinging on the issues, trying to pull in votes just one month before Election Day. Tax cuts, highway safety, and insurance reform were all on the agenda.

Pat Fowler focused a lot of attention on growing crime rates. “Inner city crime is crippling our efforts to rejuvenate our downtown communities,” Fowler said. “In both of our major cities, inner city violence is making it hard for businesses to move in, and people to visit.”

Citing a recent report from the state police, Fowler doesn’t think that current policies are doing the job. “The inner city has expanded. Nowhere is safe.”

FOWLER PLAYS GENDER CARD/CANDIDATES SPAR OVER ISSUES (issue treatment)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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Those, however, were the only highlights. The candidates came out swinging on the issues, trying to pull in votes just one month before election day. Tax cuts, highway safety, and insurance reform were all on the agenda.

Pat Fowler focused a lot of attention on the state’s equal pay laws. “Our state is dead last in ensuring equal pay for our hard workers,” Fowler said. “We need to offer incentives to businesses that ensure that even single parents can support their families.”

Citing a recent report, Fowler doesn’t think that current efforts are doing the job. “The traditional ways of hiring, paying and promoting workers are unfair.” For Fowler, “it’s time to make sure that everyone, not just a select few have a chance to get ahead.

FOWLER PLAYS RACE CARD/CANDIDATES SPAR OVER ISSUES (character treatment)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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Those, however, were the only highlights. The candidates came out swinging on the issues, trying to pull in votes just one month before Election Day. Tax cuts, highway safety, and insurance reform were all on the agenda. The most heated exchange occurred when the conversation shifted to character.

In response to a series of negative ads paid for by Billings’ supporters, Pat Fowler shifted the conversation to “good leadership.” “I’m not your typical politician,” Fowler said, “and this isn’t your typical election.”

“Growing up in a community like mine, too many of my friends were too lazy to get involved.” For Pat Fowler, good leaders “stay calm, even when everyone else loses control, “and “work hard, even when everyone else is takes the easy way out.”

FOWLER PLAYS GENDER CARD/CANDIDATES SPAR OVER ISSUES (character treatment)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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First, the highlights. Moderator Sam Shields was finally able to get the challengers to talk about their specific plans regarding budget shortfalls. Both Pat Fowler and Taylor Billings pledged to do everything possible to save the state’s colleges and universities from further cuts, and offered plans to finally get the highway project back on track.

Those, however, were the only highlights. The candidates came out swinging on the issues, trying to pull in votes just one month before Election Day. Tax cuts, highway safety, and insurance reform were all on the agenda. The most heated exchange occurred when the conversation shifted to character.

In response to a series of negative ads paid for by Billings’ supporters, Pat Fowler shifted the conversation to “good leadership.” “I’m not your typical politician,” Fowler said, “and this isn’t your typical election.”

“When I was growing up, being involved in politics wasn’t nearly as important as being polite.” For Pat Fowler, good leaders “are compassionate and empathetic, even when it’s easier to be cold, “and “listen, even when everyone else is shouting to be heard.”

Phase 2

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (GROVES)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

CAPITOL CITY – So much for a civil, substantive debate.

Thursday's debate was a hot one, with both candidates reaching out to undecided voters. Ben Thompson, the first African American running for governor in the state's history, and Steve Groves both brought their years of experience in office to the table. With almost identical professional and political resumes, Groves and Thompson used Thursday's debate to push the issues.

While the discussions over education, tax incentives, and transportation all heated up the room, some of the most tense moments came when Groves brought up candidate qualification.

"You know, a recent poll just revealed that I have more support from hardworking, blue collar voters in this state than my opponent," Groves said. "Voters in unions, with mortgages, who are looking for someone like them who can lead the way. Bottom line: I have a much broader base to build a winning coalition on."

Thompson responded, saying "I think all of the voters in this state are looking for someone who can do the job, not just someone 'like them.'"

This exchange left those of us on the Editorial Board with a bad taste in our mouths. Did Groves play the race card?

Undoubtedly, he did. We report on this election every day and see that the problems facing this state spread from the smallest towns to our biggest cities. When Steve Groves talks about "hardworking, blue collar" voters, we know he is talking about white voters. This is one of the most diverse states in the country, and to bring up his "broader base" during this debate was clearly pandering.

The race card hasn't been played until now, and for Groves to play it, marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (THOMPSON)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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Thursday's debate was a hot one, with both candidates reaching out to undecided voters. Ben Thompson, the first African American running for governor in the state's history, and Steve Groves both brought their years of experience in office to the table. With almost identical professional and political resumes, Groves and Thompson used Thursday's debate to push the issues.

While the discussions over education, tax incentives, and transportation all heated up the room, some of the most tense moments came when Thompson brought up candidate qualification.

“You know, there’s been a lot of talk about how I’m not your typical candidate for Governor,” Thompson said. “Critics are going to say that I’m a risky choice. They’re going to say that I’m not like any of the governors that came before and that you shouldn’t trust me.”

Groves responded, saying “I don’t think that’s why you’re a risky choice.”

This exchange left those of us on the Editorial Board with a bad taste in our mouths. Did Thompson play the race card?

Undoubtedly, he did. We report on this election every day and see that the problems facing this state spread from the smallest towns to our biggest cities. When Ben Thompson talks about how he is different from our past governors, he is really talking about his race. This is one of the most diverse states in the country, and we believe voters here know that the issues are more important.

The race card hasn’t been played until now, and for Ben Thompson to play it, marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (GROVES CONTROL)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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“You know, a recent poll just revealed that I have more support from hardworking, blue collar voters in this state than my opponent,” Groves said. “Voters in unions, with mortgages, who are looking for someone like them who can lead the way. Bottom line: I have a much broader base to build a winning coalition on.”

Thompson responded, saying “I think all of the voters in this state are looking for someone who can do the job, not just someone ‘like them.’”

This exchange left those of us on the Editorial Board with a bad taste in our mouths. We report on this election every day and see that the problems facing this state spread from the smallest towns to our biggest cities. Steve Groves needs to be thinking less about his “winning coalition” and more about how he is going to fix the budget crisis.

This tough talk marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (THOMPSON CONTROL)

Editorial Board

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Groves responded, saying "I don't think that's why you're a risky choice."

This exchange left those of us on the Editorial Board with a bad taste in our mouths. We report on this election every day and see that the problems facing this state spread from the smallest towns to our biggest cities. Ben Thompson needs to be thinking less about his differences and more about how he is going to fix the budget crisis.

This tough talk marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (FREDERICK)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

CAPITOL CITY – So much for a civil, substantive debate.

Thursday's debate was a hot one, with both candidates reaching out to undecided voters. Sarah Walters, the first woman running for governor in the state's history, and John Frederick both brought their years of experience in office to the table. With almost identical professional and political resumes, Walters and Frederick used Thursday's debate to push the issues.

While the discussions over education, tax incentives, and transportation all heated up the room, some of the most tense moments came when Frederick brought up candidate qualification.

"This campaign is about electing a candidate who is tough, tested, and has new ideas," Frederick said. "You can put it in a pleasant package, but I've heard these suggestions before."

Walters responded, saying "I don't know what being 'pleasant' has to do with this election."

This exchange left those of us on the Editorial Board with a bad taste in our mouths. Did Frederick play the gender card?

Undoubtedly, he did. We report on this election every day and see that the problems facing this state spread from the smallest towns to our biggest cities. When John Frederick talks about "a pleasant package," we know he's trying to put focus on the looks of his opponent, rather than the issues facing our state. In a state with a budget shortfall like ours, appearance is not nearly as important as substance.

The gender card hasn't been played until now, and for Frederick to play it, marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (WALTERS)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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While the discussions over education, tax incentives, and transportation all heated up the room, some of the most tense moments came when Frederick brought up candidate qualification.

"My critics will tell you that I'm the wrong choice for Governor, but they're criticisms are unfair," Walters said. "There is no reason to pick on me ... I think all voters can see that the old boys club is running this state into the ground."

Frederick responded, saying "I don't think I ever got a membership card for this 'old boys club.'"

This exchange left those of us on the Editorial Board with a bad taste in our mouths. Did Walters play the gender card?

Undoubtedly, she did. We report on this election every day and see that the problems facing this state spread from the smallest towns to our biggest cities. When Sarah Walters talks about being picked on, she makes herself out to be the damsel in distress. In a state with a budget shortfall like ours, we don't care if it's old boys or old girls as long as the problems get fixed.

The gender card hasn't been played until now, and for Walters to play it, marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (FREDERICK CONTROL)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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Walters responded, saying “I don’t know what being ‘pleasant’ has to do with this election.”

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This tough talk marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

CONTEST HEATS UP AFTER SECOND DEBATE (WALTERS CONTROL)

Editorial Board

October 1, 2010

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This tough talk marks a big shift as we head into the last month of campaigning.

VITA

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Amy Ladley completed her undergraduate studies in political science and anthropology at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. She pursued her master's degree in political science at the University of Arkansas, then moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 2006 to attend theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University for her doctoral studies. Amy's research focuses broadly on political communication, with a special emphasis on the portrayal of women and minorities in news coverage, political appeals, and political psychology.