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**Media Agenda Setting and its Electoral Consequences:  
A Study of Political Advertising, the News Media, and the Public  
in the 2002 Primary Election for Texas Governor**

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A Study of Political Advertising, the News Media, and the Public  
in the 2002 Primary Election for Texas Governor**

by

**Young Min, B.S., M.A.**

**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my parents,  
who gave me life and have nurtured me with endless love and support.

## Acknowledgements

There are many people to whom I should give credit for the completion of this project and for my being here today. It is almost impossible to mention all of the names I have to thank in this brief space, but I would like to acknowledge some of the most important people.

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**Media Agenda Setting and its Electoral Consequences:  
A Study of Political Advertising, the News Media, and the Public  
in the 2002 Primary Election for Texas Governor**

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Young Min, Ph. D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2003

Supervisor: Maxwell E. McCombs

The present study explores political advertising, the news media, and the public--the three principal components of campaign communication--and their interactions in terms of agenda formation, agenda setting, and salience effects in a gubernatorial primary. In doing so, this study aims at showing how the mass media influence the topics of public opinion and the direction of public behavior by manipulating the relative saliencies of candidate attributes.

First, this study investigated agenda formation, focusing on the role of political ad--an efficient surrogate of the whole campaign agenda. The data analyses provided partial support for the hypothesis positing campaign ads as a

significant agenda setter for the news media. Televised candidate commercials meaningfully influenced subsequent candidate coverage on television, yet showed a mutual relationship with the print news. The data, however, provided strong support for the print news's role as an agenda initiator for television news. It was also found that the tone of advertising could moderate the effects of campaign ads on subsequent news coverage. Specifically, there was a stronger correspondence of the news agenda with oppositional ads than with self-promoting ads.

Second, although both the paid and unpaid media were not stunningly successful overall in shaping candidate images among the public, there were especially interesting patterns about specific media and specific candidate attributes. Most notably, when the analysis focused on the issue and personal dimension of candidate attributes, the advertising media displayed consequential impacts on the voters' perception of the candidates' issue priorities whereas the news media, especially the local newspaper, showed statistically significant effects on how the public perceived the candidates in terms of their personal qualifications and character. Another interesting finding was that the attribute-setting effects of the news media were substantially higher for a brand-new candidate than for a long-time state politician. The moderating role of advertising tone in attribute agenda setting was also substantiated. Specifically, the data analyses suggested that attack strategies could be effective only when they dealt with the opponent's issue problems.

Third, concerning the consequences of attribute agenda setting, the study demonstrated a significant level of the news media's attribute-priming effects in

the personal dimension. This study also investigated the direct impacts of certain personal attributes salient as voting criteria in one's mind on his/her candidate favorability and voting choice. Specifically, the public saliencies of the personal attributes most frequently highlighted in the candidate coverage, such as experience, competence, and integrity, functioned as meaningful predictors of political preference. Among others, the salience of experience showed the most significant explanatory power for feelings about the candidates, advantaging the candidate having a long-time political career rather than the first-time candidate. The public salience of experience also functioned as a significant predictor of whom the voters would be likely to vote for.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Does campaign communication matter? This has long been investigated in the study of politics, yet still remains as one of the most controversial issues. For many years since the first significant election studies by Lazarsfeld and his Columbia colleagues (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1944), the mainstream studies have suggested that campaigns have little impact on converting voters' preexisting partisan dispositions. That is, campaigns have been regarded mainly as a means of reinforcing voter expectations, not as a significant source of original political outcomes.

This view of minimal campaign effects, however, has also continuously been contested during the years. Many scholars have submitted evidence of significant campaign effects especially in the cognitive dimension, although not in attitudinal changes. Such variables as political awareness, knowledge, images, etc., therefore, have become newer focuses of campaign effects research. The advances in survey techniques and other methodological approaches also have helped to challenge the limited effects thesis by capturing subtle changes caused by the input of campaign communication.

Based upon even more elaborated concepts and methods, recent research has more consistently indicated that campaign communication may play a

significant role even in determining whom an individual decides to vote for (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Bartels, 1988; Holbrook, 1996; Jamieson, 2000; Shaw, 1999, 2001). Some of the recent observations have demonstrated that the way voters decide substantially reflects the tendencies of all campaign communications, including candidate-controlled communication and mediated communication (Just, Crigler, Alger, Cook, and Kern, 1996). Shaw (2001) argues that, even in the classic model of the funnel of causality proposed by the Michigan scholars (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1960), political communication is considered to have the potential to persuade and mobilize voters. Although party identification at the top of the funnel acts as a perceptual screen limiting the volume and content of information, the inputs to the funnel are powerfully driven by political contexts.

The present dissertation is another attempt to investigate how campaigns--more specifically, campaign communications--matter to the electoral outcomes. Noting Jamieson's (2000) call for "scholarship that sheds light on the nuances of both media messages and voter reactions" (p. 17), the study attends to both discourses and decisions in an election campaign. Specifically, this study identifies and describes the variables essentially characterizing the content of campaign communication and analyzes how those variables eventually determine the direction of political behavior. Aiming at grasping a fuller process of campaign communication, this study examines candidate communication, news coverage, and voter responses, and the dynamic interplays among those three primary components of campaigns.

Among various outlets of candidate-controlled communication, political advertising accounts for the single biggest campaign expenditure. Ads function as a major strategic tool for candidates to frame the vote choice as a decision based upon the issues and images on which they think they are competitive. Candidate ads, therefore, are valuable lenses through which we can see “which considerations the candidates tried to get people to remember and which techniques they used to communicate these considerations” (Just, Crigler, Alger, Cook, and Kern, 1996, p. 66). As West (2001) claims, candidates reveal in their commercials crucial aspects of their vision, leadership, and substantive positions.

In their reporting on the campaign, meanwhile, journalists raise topics, analyze and interpret candidate messages, evaluate strategies, and construct their own narratives about candidates and the campaign (Just, Crigler, Alger, Cook, and Kern, 1996). As election campaigns have become more and more media-centered, more scholarly attention has been paid to the questions of how powerful the news media are in shaping American public opinion and voting behavior, and in what ways. Since news channels mediate candidates’ communicative acts in their own formats, the effects of candidate communications are often contextualized (i.e., either amplified or deflated) by how the news media present them.

Campaigns are designed to inform citizens, offer them clear and distinct policy choices to help them make correct decisions, and motivate them to participate in the electoral process. Campaign communications, therefore, occur in various forms, yet this dissertation attends primarily to the interplays of the

attributes characterizing political candidates among the advertising media, the news media, and the electorate, and the consequences of those interplays mainly in the behavioral dimension.

These inquiries will be theoretically contextualized in terms of agenda setting. The theory of agenda setting, established in the early 1970s, has provided a cogent model explaining cognitive effects of the news media on people's understanding of the environment around them (Protest and McCombs, 1991; Takeshita, 1997). Evidence of agenda-setting effects seriously challenged the then-prevailing view of minimal media effects. Although the primary focus of decades-long agenda-setting research has been the news media, the flows of information from political commercials to the citizens can also be examined from the agenda-setting perspective.

The traditional focus of agenda-setting theory has been on the transfer of object salience between the media and the public. The interplays of candidate attributes address the media's agenda-setting function at another level, showing that the media have the potential of planting the detailed pictures of an object in the citizens' minds, beyond telling them what is important and what is not. The consequences of the interplays of attribute salience will be scrutinized to explore the newest aspect of the theory.

The 2002 campaigns for Texas governor provide rich empirical data for this research. In the nomination stage, the current governor of Texas was the unopposed Republican candidate, while the Democratic primary was a close one, especially in the Austin area. The Democratic primary presented a particularly

rich opportunity to elaborate agenda-setting theory in the context of a state gubernatorial election, a political arena that has been virtually ignored relative to the presidential elections. The political context is further enriched by the historic competition of two Hispanic candidates for the Democratic nomination for governor in a southern, conservative, state largely dominated by Anglos.

The race actually involved a total of four candidates, yet the major contestants were only the two Hispanics: Dan Morales, former state Attorney General from San Antonio, Texas, and Tony Sanchez, billionaire oil and bank businessman from Laredo, Texas. Dan Morales had been expected to run for an open U.S. senatorial seat before he surprisingly announced that he would run for Texas Governor in early January 2002. Tony Sanchez, equipped with the support from the Democratic leadership, was initially expected to win the gubernatorial nomination very easily since there was no competitive contestant. After Morales entered the race, however, the Democratic primary developed into an extremely aggressive race, oftentimes involving personal attacks and mudslinging.

While Morales, as a long-time state politician, enjoyed relatively high name recognition, Sanchez's campaign was financially far better off because the candidate was willing to spend his personal fortunes almost unlimitedly to win the election. Since the election was competitive, it attracted considerable attention from the local news media, and it featured a large volume of political ads, especially from the well-funded Sanchez campaign. Although there were some controversies surrounding Sanchez's Democratic credentials and his support for President Bush in the 2000 presidential election, the two major contestants in the

Democratic primary did not reveal any substantial differences in their ideological orientations and positions on such core issues as education, health care, transportation, etc. The only visible differences between the two were found in their stands on affirmative action policies and tax cuts.

The banker from Laredo spent more than \$20 million, most of which was his own money, on the Democratic primary to defeat his fellow Mexican-American Dan Morales. Sanchez obtained 61 % of the vote, to become the first Hispanic nominated by a major party for Texas governor. Sanchez fared well across the state but won big in predominantly Hispanic counties in south Texas and the western city of El Paso. Overall, he received an estimated 70 % of the Hispanic vote.

Previous studies have documented substantial agenda-setting effects of the news media or the paid advertising media in local election settings within or outside the U.S. (Bryan, 1997; King, 1997; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000; Roberts, 1991, 1992; Roberts and McCombs, 1994). Yet most of them examined only the general election campaigns. According to West (1994), the effects of campaigns can be stronger in the nominating stage than in the general election since the primaries involve no partisan competitions, relatively unknown candidates, and intensive media coverage. In this regard, this study concentrates its analysis primarily on the campaigns in the nominating stage of the 2002 election for Texas Governor. In summary, this study analyzes the content of the advertising media and the news media and explores how the two media independently or interdependently

influence the citizens' perceptions of candidate attributes and, eventually, their vote choice in a statewide primary election. This dissertation has three goals.

First, the study examines the process of campaign agenda formation, focusing on the role of campaign advertising in shaping the news coverage of political candidates. Investigating the origins of news agendas, some scholars have addressed the influence of candidate communication on subsequent campaign coverage (McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, and Weaver, 1991). The findings, however, have not been consistent, which justifies this study's inquiry into the paid-unpaid media relationship. Some have argued that the news media reflect elite preferences rather than functioning as a separate agenda setter that initiates new policy issues (e.g., Baer, 1995). Roberts and McCombs (1994) demonstrate that political candidates exert considerable effects on the formations of news agendas through advertising campaigns. In a Texas gubernatorial election, the researchers found that advertising agendas were significantly correlated with subsequent print and broadcast news agendas. Others do not agree. For instance, Buchanan (1996) reports that the content and tone of media coverage considerably diverged from the actual content and tone of candidate presentations in the 1992 U.S. presidential election.

Along with the impacts of political advertising on the news agendas of candidate attributes, this study will also examine the interrelationship between the print and broadcasting media. Many studies have documented that newspapers

initiate agendas and television follows. Whether this thesis can still be applied to a statewide election, especially its nominating phase, will be explored.

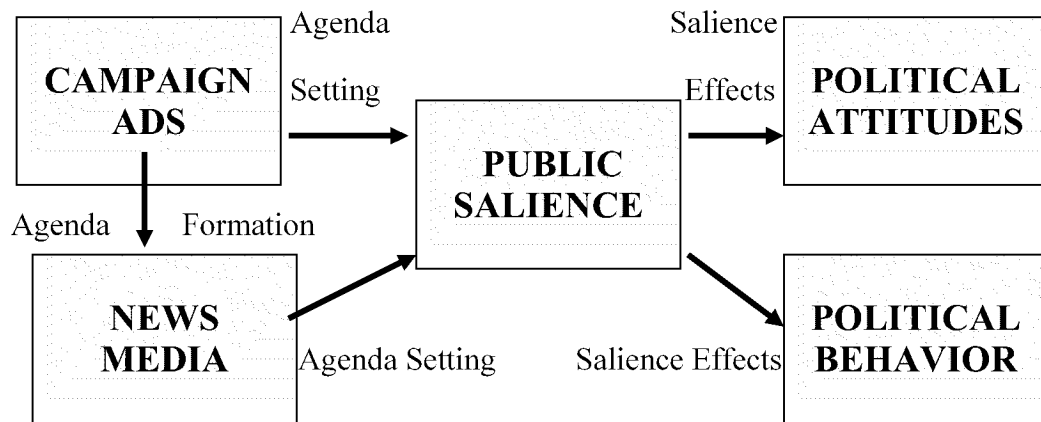
Second, the study investigates the agenda-setting function of advertising media. While most of the previous research on political advertising has focused on its persuasive function, this study explores a cognitive effect of advertising: the roles played by campaign ads in shaping the public's perception of political candidates. It will also examine whether attack and advocacy advertising differ in their effectiveness of attribute salience transfer. The present study also explores how candidate ads indirectly, as well as directly, influence the vote choice through manipulating public salience. More specifically, it scrutinizes how the salient elements in the voters' minds, as shaped by advertising campaigns, function as the bases for their decision-making. This line of research may help illuminate "exactly how, to what extent, and under what conditions advertising matters," questions that have provoked huge debates (Goldstein and Freedman, 2002, p. 24).

Third, the study explores the role of local news media, both the print and the broadcasting media, in formulating the voters' perceptions of political candidates. This is exactly what the second level of agenda-setting studies have addressed. Beyond probing the agenda-setting function of the news media at the attribute level, this study further investigates the consequences of news agenda setting: how the transmission of attribute salience from the news media to the voters relates to subsequent political attitudes and behavior. The consequences of agenda setting will be explored mainly in terms of direct salience effects, that is,



whether the salience of certain candidate attributes in one's mind directly influences political preference and behavior. Figure 1-1 outlines these analytical goals of this study.

Figure 1-1. Analytical Model of the Study



## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Background

#### THE THEORY OF AGENDA SETTING

Propaganda analysis during World Wars I and II defined political communication as a distinct academic field (Perloff, 1998), formulating the hypodermic model of mass media effects. The Columbia School's election studies, such as *The People's Choice* and *Voting*, however, moved theoretical attention from the media to stable individual predispositions and interpersonal processes. *The American Voter* by Campbell and his colleagues (1960) consolidated the Columbia perspective, positing partisan dispositions as a primary determinant of political behavior. Since these studies considered the media as "part of the environment but not necessarily a very important part" (Gamson, 1988, p. 163), mass media effects receded into the background. Chaffee (1975) points out that the Columbia paradigm dominated political communication research from the 1940s to the 1960s and culminated in the publication in 1960 of Klapper's major synthesis of previous election studies' findings of only limited effects of the mass media.

Dissatisfactions with the minimal-effects thesis, however, arose around the late 1960s and the early 1970s, and this expedited the development of new alternative perspectives. Most notably, scholars began to focus on the mass media's impacts on people's cognition, based upon the cognitive revolution in

psychology, and to submit evidence of not-so-minimal effects (see Becker, McCombs, and McLeod, 1975). Among these so-called moderate-effects models, the theory of agenda setting most successfully documented the process by which the news media influence people's construction of the images of reality (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Shaw and McCombs, 1977; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal, 1981).

Specifically, the theory of agenda setting challenged the minimal effects model by reconceptualizing media effects as the media's power to shape the topics of public opinion. The concept of agenda setting was coined in Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's paradigmatic study published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 1972. In this original research, called the Chapel Hill study, the two founders of agenda-setting theory demonstrated a significant relationship between what the news media most frequently covered and what people thought were the most important problems facing the country in the 1968 presidential election. Since then, a series of agenda-setting studies have compellingly demonstrated that, "although the media do not often succeed in telling people what people think, they are stunningly successful in telling them what they think about" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). In summary, as Takeshita (1997) puts it, the concept of agenda setting is an essential expression of the reality-definition function of the media and provides an alternative paradigm to that of directional media effects.

While hundreds of subsequent studies have replicated and expanded the original idea, two other early studies should be noted for their benchmarking importance. First, the Charlotte study (Shaw and McCombs, 1977), most notably,

used an even more sophisticated methodological frame in replicating their original research. They employed a cross-lagged correlation analysis to address the causality problem in the previous analysis. They also examined the roles of various intermediary variables in the agenda-setting process, particularly that of “need for orientation.”

The multi-sites study done by Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981), meanwhile, should be recognized for its extensive temporal and geographical scale. During the entire year of 1976, the researchers conducted panel interviews a total of nine times and analyzed extensive amounts of newspaper and television news stories in three different sites. Most importantly, they extended the concept of agenda into two news domains: the agenda of candidate attributes and the agenda of personal concerns (McCombs, 1993). In this respect, this multi-sites study can be deemed one of the earliest studies attending to the media’s agenda-setting function on the level of attributes, as well as of public issues.

Synthesizing a quarter century of agenda-setting research, Dearing and Rogers (1996) suggest that the agenda-setting process is composed of the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda, and the interrelationships among these three elements. Agenda-setting theory, according to them, may provide an analytical tool to investigate a comprehensive communication process by which media professionals, the public, and the political elites compete for the limited resources of media publicity and, ultimately, policy decision-making. The present study addresses all of these three components of agenda-setting process,

primarily exploring how political elites shape the news media agenda, a relatively unexplored relationship in previous research, how the media influence the topics of public opinion, a traditional focus of agenda-setting research, and ultimately how media agenda setting affects the direction of public behavior, the newest front of the theory.

### **Campaign Agenda Formation**

According to Dearing and Rogers (1996), the agenda-setting process begins with an issue climbing the news agenda. This initial process of agenda setting concerns the question about the origins of news agendas: “Who sets the agenda for the media?” (Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, and Weaver, 1991). Some scholars conceptualize this very initial process as “agenda formation” (Scheufele, 1999; Brandenburg, 2002).

Examining the antecedents of news agendas, previous research has suggested the U.S. President, government officials, business, etc. as powerful agenda setters (Beinhoff, 1995; Gilberg, Eyal, McCombs, and Nicholas, 1980; Wanta, 1991; Wanta and Foote, 1994; Wanta, Stephenson, Turk, and McCombs, 1989). In election campaigns, however, the process of agenda formation consists mainly of the candidate-media dynamic (Tedesco, 2001), or the interactions between the agendas of political parties and the news media (Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, and Weaver, 1991). Exploring campaign agenda formation, therefore, can well illuminate the “political-media complex,” a constantly evolving

relationship between politics and media and the ways in which both relate to the public (Swanson, 1997).

The roles of political parties or their candidates in formulating news agendas, however, still remain a controversial issue, as mentioned earlier. Lichter and Noyes (1996), for instance, emphasize the media's discretionary power in the formation of news agendas. As an example, they point out that the 1992 media set their own agenda through media-driven stories, rather than reflecting the candidate agendas. Similarly, Semetko and her colleagues (1991) suggest that the U.S. media function as an "agenda shaper," rather than as an "agenda amplifier" in election campaigns. That is, the U.S. media are closer to an independent agenda setter than to a speaker for the agendas initiated by political elites.

In contrast, Baer (1995) locates political parties as "a central part of the overall process of political agenda setting," especially in the post-reform party system (p. 57). The main task of candidates in campaigns, consequently, becomes to produce "a new and unique constellation of issues" (Baer, 1995, p. 60). Even further, Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen (2001) argue that the media can extend the reach of the candidates and, ultimately, help political parties dominate the agenda-building process by repeating the content of the campaigns. This process, according to Brandenburg (2002), enhances "the ability of a campaign to regulate the salience of issues, by way of that, the vote" (p. 35). To summarize, these studies suggest that the media connect campaign communications with vote choice by transplanting the changes in salience in the campaign agenda into the public's minds.

Among other techniques, political candidates rely on television advertising to set their own issues on the agenda of national conversation, so that they can frame “the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of the problems facing the country that they are better able to handle than their opponents” (Petrocik, 1996, p. 826). In many elections, therefore, candidates’ abilities to use political advertising in shaping the news agenda or the public agenda have a major consequence on the electoral outcomes.

According to Patterson and McClure (1976), political advertising delivers more substantive information about issues or candidates’ issue stands than does the news. Candidates also try to address their personal attributes through television commercials in order to construct their positive images or their rivals’ negative images. That is, candidates reveal in their paid ads almost every aspect about themselves. The messages in television commercials, therefore, represent comprehensive descriptions of the candidates, i.e., candidate attributes. While sound bites of candidate speeches and reports on campaign trails have significantly decreased (Lichter and Noyes, 1996), candidate ads have attracted considerable news coverage in recent elections. West (2001) even describes the increasing advertising coverage as one of the most important news trends in contemporary election campaigns. Increasing advertising coverage means that candidate attributes emphasized in campaigns ads may now be more often covered in news stories. Against this background, this study will investigate campaign agenda formation by probing the impacts of campaign ads on subsequent candidate coverage.

Comparing the agendas of candidate attributes emphasized in campaign commercials with the news agendas may help assess how successfully candidates shape the news coverage toward their own advantage, or whether the media shape their own agendas independently of the candidates' influence. Roberts and McCombs (1994), as noted earlier, report a significant impact of televised candidate ads on the subsequent print and broadcast media agendas in a Texas gubernatorial election. Bryan's (1997) study of a local election in Victoria, Texas, however, documents that newspaper ads follow the focuses of the preceding newspaper coverage. This inconsistency in previous findings even more justifies the inquiry into the roles of political advertising in news agenda formation.

Beyond addressing the interaction between the advertising media and the news media, some scholars have further noted the possibility of the effects of such interaction on public opinion (see Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). Roberts (1992), for instance, suggests the concept of a shared agenda-setting function of advertising and news. Bryan (1997) similarly points out that the distinction is unclear between the effects of advertising and those of the news media on people's issue priorities especially in high-involvement races. People usually get exposed to both news and political ads during the election campaigns. Subtle interactions between the two primary genres of campaign discourse, accordingly, now constitute more vital parts of the political contexts where people make behavioral decisions. Rather than isolating one media from the other, a study of campaign communication should address interactive qualities between different outlets and their joint electoral effects. In this respect, this study will explore how



the news media intervene in the candidate-public communication, or how campaign ads fit in the interaction between the news media and the public, by examining partial correlations of one media agenda with the public agenda, controlling for the other media.

The process of campaign agenda formation, meanwhile, also includes the interactional dynamic between different news outlets. That is, one news outlet may have significant impacts on the formulation of the news agenda in another outlet. Most of the previous studies have suggested that the print media lead the electronic media in making decisions about what are the most important problems of the day. Some studies even designate a specific newspaper, such as the *New York Times*, as the most influential agenda-setter for the other news media (Dearing and Rogers, 1996; Reese and Danielian, 1989). Whether this conventional knowledge also applies to the news agendas of a non-issue dimension (i.e., candidate attributes) in a local election setting will be examined.

## **Mass Media Agenda Setting**

### ***Attribute Agenda Setting: Evolution of the Theory***

The central axiom of agenda-setting theory is that “elements prominent in the media’s pictures become prominent in the audience’s picture” (McCombs and Ghanem, 2001, p. 67). In its early stages, the theory functioned mainly “as a description and explanation of the influence mass communication has on public opinion about the issues of the day” (McCombs, forthcoming). Theoretically, however, the agendas could consist of any set of elements beyond public issues

(McCombs, Llamas, and Lopez-Escobar, 1997). Attending to this theoretical potential, later studies have significantly expanded the conceptual scope of an agenda from a set of public issues to other objects such as topics, persons, etc., and, further, to attributes--“those characteristics and properties that fill out the picture of each object” (McCombs and Ghanem, 2001, p. 68). That is, agenda setting means much more than the transmission of issue salience from the news media to the public’s minds. Newer scholarship, in this sense, has further explored media agenda-setting in terms of the transaction of attribute salience, in other words, how the media influence the way the people perceive and think about public issues, political candidates, or other objects, beyond what to think about. This is the second level of agenda setting, or attribute agenda setting (McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver, 1997).

The idea of attribute agenda setting, however, actually was proposed as early as the Charlotte study in 1977. Shaw and McCombs suggested that, from the perspective of agenda setting, one could also investigate to what extent the public’s view of an object is influenced “by the picture sketched in the media, especially by those attributes which the media deem newsworthy” (p. 12). The thesis of second-level agenda setting indicates that the media may determine not only the topics of public opinion, but also the specific direction of public opinion. In this regard, Takeshita (1997) points out that exploring attribute agenda setting is indispensable to a full-fledged understanding of the media’s role in reality definition.

Evidence of attribute agenda setting has been solid and plentiful. Scholarship on this topic has documented significant correlations between the media and the public primarily in the dimensions of issue attributes and candidate attributes. Benton and Frazier (1976) was one of the earliest studies addressing issue attribute setting. The researchers investigated how the media's presentation of the issue of the economy influenced the public's view of the issue. They found strong correspondence for two sets of attributes: the specific problems, causes, and proposed solutions (Pearson's  $r = .81$ ); and the pro and the con rationales for economic solutions (Pearson's  $r = .68$ ). Other compelling evidence of issue attribute setting was documented in Takeshita and Mikami's (1995) study of the 1993 Japanese general election. Specifically, they demonstrated that the more people were exposed to the media, the more likely they were to think of the electoral reform issue in terms of structural reforms, which were the most salient aspect of the news coverage of the issue. A recent study by Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2002) demonstrated that prominent attributes in the local news coverage of a development issue were most accessible among the audience members with a high level of media exposure. In other words, the more people got exposed to the news, the more likely they were to evaluate the issue in terms of the aspects or the sub-issues that the news media most highlighted.

According to McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000), the idea of attribute agenda setting has been more straightforwardly substantiated in the research addressing the media's influence on the public images of political candidates. In this line of research, the objects are the candidates, and the

attributes are “the various traits that define the images of the candidates in the media and among the voters” (p. 81). As mentioned earlier, Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal’s (1981) panel study of the 1976 presidential election explored the media’s function in shaping candidate images among the voters. Specifically, they demonstrated that the *Chicago Tribune*’s descriptions of Jimmy Carter and Jerry Ford significantly influenced Illinois voters’ perceptions of the candidates. Another early study conducted by Becker and McCombs (1978) reported that the *Newsweek*’s coverage of presidential hopefuls substantially affected the conceptual components of candidate images among New York Democrats in the 1976 primaries.

More recent studies on this topic consist mainly of several international replications. Most notably, McCombs and his colleagues (1997, 2000) explored candidate attribute setting in the regional and general elections in Pamplona, Spain. The researchers examined candidate images in the media and among the voters in terms of two key sets of attributes: substantive and affective. Substantive attributes mainly included candidates’ ideology and issue positions, qualifications, personality, and biographical information. The affective aspects of candidate images referred to the tone of candidate descriptions (i.e., negative, positive, or neutral). By employing these two sets of attributes separately or compositely, the researchers demonstrated that the voters’ perceived images of candidates significantly followed prior media portrayals of the candidates. In another international application, King (1997) also showed a high degree of

correspondence between three major dailies and the voters in Taipei City in terms of their descriptions of each of the three mayoral candidates.

The agenda-setting functions of the mass media on both the object and attribute levels are even more important in the electoral settings. The patterns of campaign coverage, more specifically, the frequencies with which the candidates, issues, and candidate traits appear in the media, can significantly influence name recognition, issue priorities, and the images of political candidates among the public; and this may ultimately affect the public's appraisals of the candidates and vote choice. Otherwise stated, changes in media saliencies of important objects or attributes portraying those objects may indirectly influence the electoral outcomes through transforming public saliencies of that kind.

As Perloff (1998) points out, today's campaigns are candidate-centered, rather than party- or policy-oriented. As political campaigning gets more and more personalized, the candidates become more central objects of campaign communication. In electoral settings, therefore, the media's reality-definition function may be more important in the realm of candidate images, than that of public issues.

According to Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, and Sullivan (1990), image-based voting is cognitively less demanding than is issue-based voting. Candidate-attribute agenda setting, in this regard, could be deemed even more important regarding the direction of political behavior, especially in the nominating stage. Political ads facilitate impression formation by emphasizing particular candidate qualities, such as leadership and integrity, more than others (Rahn, Aldrich,

Borgida, and Sullivan, 1990). So do the news media's descriptions of candidates. Through this process, the mass media in electoral campaigns could prime the voters to rely on certain candidate traits in their evaluations of the candidates. Kendall (2000) particularly notes that the voters in the primary election are more likely to rely on candidates' personal attributes, than in the general election, given their relative ignorance of the running candidates and the relatively short-term periods of the campaigns.

Intuitively, candidate images are often considered to consist mainly of personal attributes. People, however, do not exclude issue-relevant information when constructing their own images of political candidates, as Hacker (1995) indicates. Patterson and McClure (1976) also point out that public images of candidates reflect what the candidates represent to voters, including their party, actions they have taken, and policies they support. While there is a multitude of definitions of candidate images in the literature (Hellweg, 1995), this study views candidate images as composed of various attributes in the political, issue, and personal dimensions, specifically projected by a politician or the media, or given to a politician by the electorate. Becker and McCombs (1978), for instance, examined candidate images in terms of campaign approach, ideology and issue stands, geographic origin, previous campaign experience, personality factors, occupation, other biographic details, physical characteristics, age, and so on. More recent studies have analyzed the substantive attributes constituting candidate images in terms of ideology and issue positions, qualifications, personal

characteristics, etc. (King, 1997; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000).

According to Fiske (1986), people employ some preexisting categories to effectively process a large amount of political knowledge. Those categories mainly include ideological, partisan, social-class (or group-affiliation), and personality schemas. Candidate images are one type of political images and, in this regard, those political schemas might be applicable to identifying specific dimensions of the attributes constituting candidate images. Synthesizing these theoretical and empirical discussions, this study will scrutinize candidate images in terms of partisan/ideological, issue-relevant, personal, biographic, campaign, and endorsement attributes. More justifications for this categorization will be discussed in Chapter 3.

### ***Political Advertising and its Agenda-Setting Function***

One of the classic studies on advertising is Patterson and McClure's 1976 book, *The Unseeing Eye*. Their central claim was that presidential television advertising is more effective than the news media in increasing the public's knowledge and, in so doing, helps the voters make an informed decision. That is, political advertising is an effective booster of political education, especially for the less informed electorate or the voters less attentive to newspapers. Political ads, therefore, embody substantive campaigns and influence the electoral outcomes through information persuasion. Information persuasion, here, refers to "the process of altering people's views of a candidate by providing them with

information that changes their perceptions of the candidate rather than trying to change their own stands on the issues” (Patterson and McClure, 1976, p. 154).

In another early study, Atkin and Heald (1976) conducted a comprehensive analysis of political advertising effects. They investigated the impacts of advertising exposure on various cognitive and affective variables including political knowledge, issue priorities, interest in a campaign, liking for a candidate, and polarization of affective orientations toward candidates. The researchers found consistent positive relationships between advertising exposure and all the variables considered, although the strength of the relationships varied.

According to Iyengar and Valentino (2000), campaign advertising is considered an even stronger force in contemporary elections, so that “political analysts habitually attribute electoral outcomes directly to some facet of the candidates’ advertising tactics” (p. 108). Consistent with previous findings, Briens and Wattenberg (1996) demonstrate that political advertising contributes to a well-informed electorate, compared to other news media. Recalling political ads is more significantly associated with knowledge of candidates’ issue positions than is reading the newspaper or watching political news on television, especially in the final stages of the campaign. Remembering televised political ads is also significantly related to the number of issue-oriented reasons for voting for or against Bush and Clinton in 1992. Volunteering comments on negative ads is significantly associated with greater issue knowledge and being more likely to make issue-based candidate evaluations during the campaign’s closing stages.



West (2001), in contrast, emphasizes the ability of political advertising to shape the public's images of political candidates, more than its impact on issue knowledge. He points out that exposure to television ads is critical for citizens to form a variety of impressions, ranging from candidate recognition to candidate favorability and to candidate electability. Campaign commercials sometimes directly influence voting preference, but more often indirectly affect the vote choice through impressions about candidates.

All these studies suggest that the paid advertising media be considered another important facet of the agenda-setting function on both the object and attribute levels although most traditional agenda-setting research has focused on the news media. The paid advertising media may have even larger impacts on people's issue priorities or their perceptions of political candidates than the news media since ads can more easily be remembered through their "novelty, entertainment value, and distinctiveness" (West, 1994, p. 1060). Bryan (1997), for instance, observed that newspaper ads exerted stronger impacts on people's perception of candidate attributes than any other media in a mayoral election in Victoria, Texas.

The present dissertation focuses on the attribute-setting function of political advertising in a statewide election, noting the greater potential of attribute salience transfer to influence the electoral outcomes. The local setting provides the best environment for political advertising research in that it is relatively easy to obtain the comprehensive list of the ads actually aired during the

campaigns. Goldstein and Freedman (2002), in this regard, suggest that the effects of political advertising should be studied at the market level.

### ***Campaign Journalism and its Agenda-Setting Function***

Election campaigning has become increasingly complicated. Norris and her colleagues (1999) call this new, complex style of campaigning “postmodern campaigns,” which are characterized by “more autonomous and fragmented media, more professionalized strategic communications by parties, and a more de-aligned electorate” (p. 186). The researchers also point out that post-modern campaigns create new challenges for politicians to construct effective communications with voters. Calling journalism in the era of postmodern politics “post journalism,” Esser and D’Angelo (2003) maintain that news becomes more and more an integral part of the political process. Although the strategy frame is still the most prominent news frame, it becomes increasingly supplanted by a meta-communication frame where reporters focus on the media’s own involvement in the electoral contests and behind-the-scenes observations on the work of media consultants and communication strategists.

Barnhurst and Mutz (1997), somewhat differently, suggest that the contemporary political journalism, which they call the “new long journalism,” has been shaped through more gradual and continuous transformations over the century. Through the analysis of news coverage over 100 years, the researchers found highly consistent evidence of an increasing tendency for journalists to insert themselves into stories. This long-term shift from “descriptive to

interpretive reporting, or from episodic to thematic coverage” (Barnhurst and Mutz, 1997, p. 28) is also addressed by Swanson (1997). According to Swanson, a longer, more explanatory and interpretive form of reporting is a result of journalists’ efforts to demonstrate their independence from politicians’ manipulation. West (2001) suggests the Vietnam War and the Watergate affair as the important watershed for the development of interpretive and investigative news reporting. Since then, “rather than sticking to hard news, journalists...see a responsibility to put the facts in broader context” (West, 2001, p. 73).

These overviews of political journalism indicate that the news media may have more independent power than ever before in organizing various political objects, such as issues, candidates, campaigns, etc., within a hierarchy of salience, or in portraying those objects in certain ways. Otherwise put, the role of the news media in agenda setting can be deemed more important in contemporary elections than before since the media now place more emphasis on initiating an agenda than on reflecting the priorities of other political forces. This might be one of the reasons why the agenda-setting function of the news media still remains as an intriguing and important topic, even after the three decades of research focusing on the medium. According to Just and her colleagues (1996), newspapers better embody an interpretive journalism than does television news by “giving far less room to stories about the campaign trail than to journalist-initiated stories” (p. 99). In other words, newspapers may play a larger role as an independent agenda setter, compared to the electronic news media.

### ***Intermediary Variables of Agenda Setting***

#### The Nominating Stage of an Election as a Context Variable

The rise of an open electoral structure, that is, the primary system, has fundamentally altered the dynamics of elite competition. It has brought unknown candidates to the forefront and given them powerful tools for communicating with voters. In this stage, not only are ads the major strategic battleground between the candidates, they increasingly are used to attract news coverage and dictate the overall campaign discourse (West, 1994).

According to Patterson and McClure (1976), the effects of advertising are highest among so-called late deciders, who make up their minds about whom to vote for later in the election. West (1994), however, contends that ads have their strongest impact in the nominating stage because there is no partisan competition, candidates are relatively less well known, the campaign is often volatile, and the news media devote a higher percentage of coverage to candidate ads. That is, in the nominating stage, both political advertising and campaign journalism may have more of an opportunity to strongly shape public perceptions. Popkin (1991) similarly contends that campaign effects may be larger in the primary election because “voters in primaries have little or no information about many of the candidates when the primaries start” (p. 115). That is, prospective voters’ uncertainty may be high in the primaries and this enhances their need for information and, possibly, the media effects among them.

Kendall (2000) specifically points out that primaries create a unique rhetorical situation since the contests are strictly intra-party and the candidates

seeking nominations tend to emphasize their personal traits more than their partisan issue positions. Her observations enable us to assume that agenda-setting effects might be greater in the realm of candidate personal images than of issue priorities in the primary election.

In general election campaigns, in contrast, partisan competitions and ideological and political differences become central. Partisan predispositions, therefore, play a critical role in shaping individuals' decisions, and this means that the inputs of campaign communication may constitute smaller parts of those decisions than they do in the primaries. In the general election, the mass media's agenda-setting function may also be greater in the realm of candidates' issue priorities than of their personal traits. In summary, the process and effects of mass media agenda setting may have different patterns in these two different stages of an election since the patterns of media contents and the public's needs for information are driven by two different political contexts.

As Pfau and his colleagues (1997) point out, much less research has addressed campaign communication effects in primary campaigns although media effects can be much larger during the early phase, "a time of indecision for voters" (p. 7). In this respect, the present study focuses on the nominating stage of an election campaign to address the mass media's effects on the public's perceptions of candidates.

### Tone of Presentation as a Message Variable

Previous studies have made various suggestions about the intermediary variables that meaningfully intervene in the agenda-setting process. Those variables may concern either audience characteristics or message attributes. Need for orientation and issue obtrusiveness are particularly prominent among those intervening factors in agenda setting. Specifically, Zucker (1978) maintains that the media's agenda-setting effects tend to be larger regarding the matters that people may not have direct experience with than regarding those matters that people can often directly experience. The former type of issue is called "unobtrusive," while the latter type is termed "obtrusive."

The concept of need for orientation, coined by Weaver (1977), meanwhile, refers to a psychological factor explaining individuals' exposure patterns to mass media messages. The relevance of and uncertainty about the subject of the media content together constitute one's need for orientation. The media's agenda-setting effects tend to be greater among those who have a high level of need for orientation (i.e., high relevance and high or moderate uncertainty) toward the problems being covered and, consequently, are more likely to be exposed to the media messages.

While calling for research addressing the joint effects of message and psychological attributes in contextualizing one's agenda-setting susceptibility, this dissertation concentrates primarily on a content-relevant factor. This is because previous scholarship on campaign effects has found little evidence of the media's strong impact by focusing on "individual attributes as the primary determinants of

viewer responses” (West, 1994, p. 1071). Political communication research, however, should consider how the supply-side variables moderate the strength of media effects as much as the roles of audience characteristics.

Among various content-related factors, this study attends to the affective tone (i.e., negative versus positive) in media messages, more specifically, in the media’s descriptions of political candidates. While negativity has increasingly been a commanding attribute of both political advertising and electoral coverage (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993, 2000), Brody (1991) points out that media scholars have had little success demonstrating the effects of the media’s emphasis on negative information. The role of the tone of presentation in moderating advertising effects has particularly been controversial. Previous findings of the effects of negative advertising on voting choice or political participation have been quite inconsistent (For the summaries of previous research on this subject, see Lau and Sigelman, 2000).

The role of the tone of presentation, indeed, has rarely been explored in agenda-setting research. Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) point out that agenda-setting studies have long been interested in the ways that news formats influence the effectiveness of agenda setting. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the conditioning role of the tone of the messages although some of the recent studies have addressed the tone of candidate descriptions as an affective dimension of attributes (King, 1997; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000).

Since many studies have shown that negative information stands out more than comparable positive information in various cognitive processing tasks (Lau, 1985), it can be assumed that negativity may positively contribute to the transfer of object/attribute salience from the mass media to the public's minds. That is, people may be more sensitive to the salience of negative information than to that of non-negative information in the mass media. In this regard, Schoenbach and Semetko's (1992) study on public opinion in the 1990 German national election is noteworthy. The researchers suggest that the tone of issue coverage, as well as its frequency, is important in shaping people's perception of the issue importance. Specifically, their study showed that positive tone in covering the issues of the former GDR decreased the salience of the issues among the German public.

This thesis of negativity-effectiveness might or might not be applicable in candidate attribute setting, which is the focus of the present research. Unlike issue coverage, candidate coverage deals with both issue-relevant and personal information. Several studies have documented that people react more favorably to issue negativity than to personal negativity. Johnson and Copeland, for instance, contend that political attack is more effective than personal attack since the former is perceived as fairer than the latter (cited in Roddy and Garramone, 1988). That is, negativity may expedite the transfer of issue-relevant candidate attributes, but not of personal attributes. To summarize, it is unclear how the media's tone in describing various candidate attributes affects the public saliencies of those attributes. Against this backdrop, this study will investigate the moderating function of the tone of presentation in attribute agenda setting. This



inquiry will be applied only to the advertising media, primarily due to the difficulties in measuring the tone of news coverage in objective and reliable ways. The tone of presentation in advertising agendas will be analyzed in terms of negative versus positive, i.e., attack versus advocacy.

Previous studies of campaign ad coverage, meanwhile, have suggested that negative advertising attracts more free coverage than does its positive counterpart (Jamieson, 1992; Kendall, 2000; West, 2001). For instance, Jamieson found that the ads appearing in network news were nearly twelve times more often oppositional than self-promotional. The print media were six times more likely to mention a negative ad than a positive spot. Negative approaches in political advertising, compared to positive appeals, therefore, may be more effective for the sponsoring candidate to get free coverage about him/herself. In other words, negative strategies in campaign ads may enhance their influence on news agenda formation. The present study will test this hypothesis with the regional media in a lower ballot contest. This inquiry can be deemed even more valuable given that most of the previous findings on this topic concern the elite media in the presidential elections.

#### Agenda-Setting Time Lag

Agenda setting is by definition a time-related process. In other words, the magnitude of agenda-setting effects may vary, depending on the time lag between media and public agendas. A researcher, therefore, should determine and rationalize the time frame by which s/he would test the media's effects on the

audience's perceived salience. As Roberts, Wanta, and Dzwo (2002) point out, it is one of the most critical issues in agenda-setting research to determine how long an object or attribute remains salient in people's minds.

Previous research, however, has not been consistent regarding when agenda-setting effects can be maximized. Research dealing with single issues, what is described in the Acapulco typology as the Natural History perspective (McCombs, forthcoming), has suggested a relatively short time frame for agenda setting. Winter and Eyal (1981), for instance, proposed four to eight weeks as the "optimal effect span" for the civil rights issue. Research addressing the entire agenda of a full array of issues, studies of the Competition perspective in the Acapulco typology, has documented a longer time span. Stone and McCombs (1981), for instance, reported that it takes two to six months for the correspondence of the public agenda with the media agenda to be maximized.

Wanta and Hu (1994), meanwhile, showed that the time frame for agenda-setting effects could be media-dependent. Based upon an agenda of 11 public issues and five different news media, the researchers showed that the optimal span ranged from one to eight weeks. With an average time lag being three weeks, they reported optimal time lags of 4 weeks for a local newspaper and 2 weeks for local newscasts.

As such, the optimal effect span may be issue- and/or media-dependent. It can also be political context-dependent. In election campaigns, particularly, a researcher should consider how long the official campaign period is, when deciding the time frame. McCombs and his colleagues (1997, 2000), for instance,

employed a two-week period, only during which campaign activities were lawfully allowed in Spain, as the time span for their research on the Spain elections.

### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF AGENDA SETTING**

As O'Guinn and Faber (1998) put it, the central axiom of agenda setting is that the frequency of media exposure functions "as a cue that influences viewers' perception of the salience of issues" (p. 367). The second level of agenda-setting research has further applied the thesis in the realm of attributes, showing that the media's agenda-setting ability is as strong for attributes as it is for issues (Takeshita and Mikami, 1995; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal, 1981).

The availability of certain attributes portraying an object (i.e., a political candidate in this study) in the media enhances the prominence of the elements, that is, their accessibility in an individual's mind. In other words, the more frequently the media cover an issue or an attribute, the more that element is updated in an audience member's memory and thus made more accessible at some judgmental moments (O'Guinn and Faber, 1998). This indicates that the media may influence the audiences' attitudes and behavioral decisions, as well as their perceptions, by elevating the accessibility of certain objects or object attributes in their minds. Except for the priming research, however, there are few theoretical accounts or empirical investigations addressing these consequences of media agenda setting.

Noting this as a lacuna of the past scholarship, McCombs (forthcoming) points out that of newest interest are the consequences of the agenda-setting process. One of the major objectives of the present study, in this respect, is to expound theoretically whether and how the salience transfer from the media to the public has consequential impacts on subsequent attitudes and behavior, and to investigate empirically those extended functions of media agenda setting, employing valid analytic strategies.

### **Heuristics and Political Reasoning**

Average citizens know little about politics. Most of the time they show inconsistencies in their attitudes toward different issues. This is why Converse (1964) claimed that most citizens do not possess any coherent political beliefs. Because of the abundance of evidence showing citizens profoundly lacking in political knowledge, students of public opinion have taken a skeptical view of a public's capabilities to make intelligent political decisions. Some leading scholars, however, have recently offered a much more positive view of citizens' reasoning competence, noting the roles of heuristics.

According to Kuklinski and Quirk (2000), heuristics refer to "mental shortcuts that require hardly any information" (p. 153). A more specific definition for this term is found in Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991):

Heuristics are judgmental shortcuts, efficient ways to organize and simplify political choices, efficient in the double sense of requiring relatively little information to execute, yet yielding dependable answers even to complex problems of choice. (p. 19)

That is, individuals can make fairly reliable decisions by employing some judgmental heuristics without necessarily storing and processing a large amount of political knowledge. This is what Popkin (1991) calls “low-information” or “gut-level” reasoning. According to him, there are a variety of political heuristics by which people can compensate for their limited knowledge. For instance, people may attribute a candidate’s issue positions simply to her or his demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, and region. People may use evidence about personal character to make inferences about political orientations.

People may also rely on some endorsement statements in judging a candidate. Kuklinski and Quirk (2000), for instance, suggest the likability of certain political groups (e.g., whites versus blacks or liberals versus conservatives) as one of the most provocative heuristics. The most common and frequently employed heuristic, however, might be party identification, which many scholars have considered the most important voting determinant in American politics (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1960).

Political heuristics may come from a person’s inherited or learned knowledge throughout a long-term period. These kinds of heuristics can well be explained by the concept of a schema. According to Fiske (1986), a schema is “a cognitive structure that contains a concept’s attributes and the links among those attributes” (p. 41). Similarly, Lau (1986) defines a schema as “a knowledge structure, based on experience that organizes people’s perceptions of the world.” Fiske (1986) suggests that individuals draw on schemata, most commonly an ideological, partisan, social-class, or personality schema in political reasoning, to

aid the understanding of new information, such as a person, event, or issue. Fiske also claims that the concept of schema has heuristic value because people can efficiently manage the inputs of extensive amounts of information by adopting just a small number of schemas. For instance, voters tend to concentrate on schema-relevant information and discard irrelevant information in forming their impressions of a political candidate.

People, meanwhile, may also obtain some judgmental heuristics from external sources, most markedly, the mass media in contemporary mediatized elections, for a relatively short time (e.g., the campaign period in an election). As Downs (1957) points out, people often delegate part or all of their voting decision-making to others, especially the mass media, as a strategy to reduce the costs involved in their decision-making tasks. What is most frequently appearing in media messages, in other words, may function as easily accessible cues for the audience members. Simple prominence of certain elements, such as public issues or candidate attributes, in this sense, can be deemed one of those heuristics that people easily learn and adopt in their political reasoning.

To summarize, the availability of those elements in the media translates into the most accessible cues in an individual's memory (agenda setting) which, in turn, easily can be retrieved at the time of judgments, most notably at the moments of policy or candidate evaluation and voting (consequences of agenda setting). As such, theories of political heuristics and low-information reasoning contextualize well why we can assume that agenda-setting processes may have further attitudinal and behavioral consequences.

### **The Strategy of Analysis: Investigating Direct Salience Effects**

Then, the remaining, but essential, question is how to empirically examine the consequences of agenda setting. Here, the key is considering the saliencies of certain elements as the heuristics that people resort to in making their political choices. According to Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991), identifying the factors that people may take into account in their reasoning process is the first task that a conventional analysis of political choice aims to fulfill. More emphasis in this study will be placed on the second task: estimating the weight and importance that people attach to those factors (i.e., saliencies of certain elements). This analysis, thus, aims to examine to what extent the saliencies of certain candidate attributes in people's minds can explain their candidate preference and voting choice (i.e., the direct impacts of saliencies per se).

As noted earlier, priming research has provided a theoretical and empirical framework to address a consequence of agenda setting. McCombs (forthcoming), in this regard, suggests priming as a useful starting point in the discussions of further implications of agenda-setting effects beyond cognitive and perceptual changes. What the priming literature has documented, however, is that the media, especially television news, can sway the way people evaluate a public figure by manipulating the relative saliencies of issues. That is, media's emphases on certain issues temporarily heighten the salience of the issues as attitude objects and, consequently, enhance the accessibility of the relevant attitudes toward those issues in a public's minds. These primed attitudes, in turn, play a critical role in the evaluation of political figures and, possibly, in the formation of political

choices.<sup>1</sup> Upon this theoretical reasoning, priming researchers have empirically demonstrated that the public's ratings of the overall performance of a political figure are significantly related to their ratings of his/her performance on the issue which the news media have most frequently covered (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Iyengar and Simon, 1993). As such, this mechanism of priming effects indirectly, rather than directly, captures an outcome of agenda setting (i.e., a consequence of issue salience transfer).

Studies of agenda setting are different from traditional public opinion research in that they are concerned with the salience of issues rather than the distribution of pro and con opinions (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997). Average citizens, indeed, are most of the time incapable of judging political actors in terms of their positions or performance on specific policy issues. When the political actors under consideration are relatively unknown, people tend to have "flimsy and remote data" about them (Popkin, 1995, p. 367). Evaluating political figures, in this case, might not exactly follow the ways that priming research has illustrated. Such evaluations could be done in an even more heuristic way. Specifically, issue salience per se, not issue attitudes, may function more explicitly as a judgmental cue, often combined with other political heuristics. For instance, when issues of health care are most prominent in campaign discourse, people may prefer a Democratic candidate to a Republican simply because Democrats traditionally have better reputations in handling these issues (Petrocik, 1996). That is, issue salience can more directly shape a citizen's

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the electoral contexts, the media influence the public's evaluations of political candidates and this, in turn, may significantly affect voting behavior since candidate evaluation is one of the strongest determinants of the vote choice (Erikson, 1989; Markus and Converse, 1979).



attitude toward a political figure, combined with their traditional conceptions of political parties.

In exploring the outcomes of salience transfer, therefore, one alternative strategy to the priming analysis might be to examine whether and how issue salience in one's mind directly influences her or his attitudes toward other objects, such as political candidates. This strategy of analysis can be deemed even more valid in the study of a local primary election, where ordinary citizens are not highly involved and motivated or well informed, and running candidates are relatively unknown. As pointed out earlier, the principal objects of election campaign communication may be candidates, rather than public issues, particularly in the nominating stage. In this respect, the consequences of agenda setting in the primaries should also be investigated at the second level. How the discussions so far can apply to delving into the outcomes of attribute agenda setting will be addressed in what follows.

## **Consequences of Attribute Agenda Setting**

### ***Attribute Priming***

According to Iyengar and his colleagues (1982, 1987, 1993), who have actively applied the concept *priming* into investigating media effects, the news media influence “the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public offices are judged” by emphasizing some matters while ignoring others (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, p. 63). As Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2002) point out, previous priming research focuses on the domain of

public issues, specifically, the “competing influences of various, differentially salient issues” on public evaluations (p. 11). The researchers, however, applied the concept of priming to the domain of attributes especially regarding the public’s evaluation of issues. Specifically, the researchers hypothesized that certain attributes prominent in the news coverage of an issue would function as the standards by which the audience members evaluate the given issue. Their data well supported this hypothesis addressing an outcome of attribute agenda setting, which they termed “attribute priming.” Otherwise put, attribute priming refers to the process by which the media influence a public’s evaluation of an object through emphasizing certain attributes related to the object, not through the saliencies of other objects, in their coverage. In summary, attribute accessibility, as does issue accessibility, might play as an important basis for the public’s evaluations toward some attitude objects (O’Guinn and Faber, 1998).

This concept of attribute priming may also be applicable to the dimension of candidate appraisal. As many of the attribute-setting studies have demonstrated, candidate attributes emphasized in the media are also prominent in the voters’ descriptions of the candidates (King, 1997; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs, and Lennon, 1998; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000). People can further draw upon this elevated accessibility of certain attributes in their minds at the moments of candidate judgments. For instance, as Brosius and Kepplinger (1992) demonstrate, if a politician is frequently portrayed with regard to high or low

competence, her or his general evaluation will improve or worsen as a result of the public's using this specific aspect as a reasoning heuristic.

Against this background, the present study will explore attribute priming primarily as an attitudinal outcome of candidate attribute setting. While previous priming studies have dealt mainly with television news, this study will address political advertising, as well as the news media, as an effective tool of priming for political candidates, as West (2001) claims. Since televised campaign commercials deliver condensed information often in visually impressive formats, what obtrudes in political spots may be even more effectively transferred as judgmental cues in the audience's minds.

This study will address attribute priming in two different ways. It will first investigate how the media agendas of candidate attribute influenced the public agendas of voting criteria. It will also examine a direct attitudinal consequence of candidate attribute saliencies transmitted from the media to the public, specifically, whether or not the salience of certain attributes in one's perceived images of political candidates affected her or his preference toward the candidates.

### ***Behavioral Consequences of Attribute Agenda Setting***

How the agenda-setting process bears on one's behavioral decisions is another thinly explored spot in the literature. There are several recent attempts, most of which investigate the behavioral consequences of issue salience transfer. For instance, Herrnson and Patterson (2000) examined the impact of issue

agreement on congressional voting decisions. Controlling for party identification, a voter's agreement with a candidate on what was the most important problem significantly increased her or his likelihood to vote for the candidate. Lewis-Beck and Rice (1992) indicated that the saliencies of economic concerns and a wide array of social issues, such as education, health care, social security, etc., could sway the direction of voting, while King (2001) emphasized the importance of economic issue salience in voting decision-making. Brosius and Kepplinger (1992) more clearly showed how issue-agenda balance in the news media influenced party preference among the audience. Specifically, when there was intensive reporting on environmental issues, people's preference for the Green Party increased. When a considerable amount of news coverage reported on defense and national security, on the other hand, the public support for the conservative party grew.

However, there is little research addressing the behavioral outcomes of attribute salience transfer. Kensicki (2001), for instance, contended that the upper/middle-class-oriented attributes of the 29-year environmental coverage could have dissuaded involvement by lower socioeconomic groups, but it was not actually empirically tested. Kiouisis (2000) examined the consequences of candidate attribute agenda setting, yet his empirical findings mainly concerned its attitudinal effects.

In this regard, the present study attempts to explore a consequence of attribute salience transfer particularly in the dimension of voting behavior: the direct behavioral effects of the public salience of certain candidate attributes,

which has been transferred from the media. This analysis, therefore, should consider “a two-step process from transfer of mass media salience to the public mind, then from public salience to behavioral outcome,” as Roberts (1992, p. 878) suggests. Since this study conceptualizes candidate attributes as having a variety of dimensions, such as partisan, issue-relevant, personal, and campaign items, it will probe how the saliencies of attributes of different dimensions function in shaping individuals’ political choice, especially focusing on issue-relevant and personal attributes. These inquiries are worth pursuing in that they could illuminate the newest front of the agenda-setting theory and demonstrate a significant level of media effects in election campaigns.

#### Issue-Relevant Attributes and Voting Choice

According to the resonance model of campaigns, political campaigns can be most effective when the citizens perceive their agendas to be consistent with certain attributes of their candidates, such as gender, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, and so on. Iyengar and his colleagues’ experiments (1997), for instance, demonstrate that such issues as sexual harassment and education can be more effective campaign items for female candidates than for male candidates.

Along this line of thought, Iyengar and Valentino (2000) maintain that candidates’ electoral prospects can be enhanced when the issue agenda of their campaign advertisements fits to their party affiliation. Petrocik (1996) and his colleagues (2001) have explained this phenomenon as a result of the public’s long-standing perceptions regarding political parties’ issue-handling abilities,

which they call “partisan issue ownership.” According to Petrocik (1996), although there are noticeable differences among elections as to the problem concerns of voters, the public perceptions of the problem-solving abilities of political parties are quite constant. Specifically, the Democratic Party enjoys a better reputation in dealing with social welfare issues, while the Republican Party has been expected to carry out better policies regarding such issues as national security and law and order.

This thesis of partisan issue ownership indicates that which problems are perceived to need to be addressed (i.e., simple saliencies of issues) can more directly affect an individual’s electoral choice than which policies the candidates promise to pursue concerning the problems and how the individual evaluate those policies. That is, people tend to choose the candidate who is believed to provide better means of dealing with what they perceive are the most important issues. In summary, by processing the information about candidates’ issue considerations based upon partisan issue ownership, people can make a reliable political choice in a cost-efficient way. This might especially be so in inter-party competitions where ideological and political differences between candidates are important.

Several empirical studies have provided support for this argument. RePass (1971), for instance, demonstrated that people’s awareness of certain issues could have a considerable impact on electoral choice, not because they developed their own specific attitudes toward the issues, but because they had a strong tendency to name a particular political party or a candidate as the best handler of the issues. Budge and Farlie (1983) similarly claimed that the party that owns more of the

salient issues could win over more floating voters in a two-party system with evenly distributed partisans. Simply put, when Democratic issues are more salient in the public's minds, the Democratic candidate will be likely to be the winner. Conversely, the public salience of Republican issues tends to enhance the Republican candidate's electoral prospects.

The resonance model of campaigns and the thesis of partisan issue ownership altogether may cogently explain how attribute salience transfer from the media to the public relates to subsequent political behavior, especially when the attributes concern candidates' issue considerations. For instance, a Democratic candidate should be better off when she is described in terms of her intent to solve the problems in social security, whereas a Republican candidate can enjoy an electoral advantage when he is portrayed in terms of his intent to reform the criminal justice system. In which terms the media portray the candidates, as such, can make a difference in the audience members' decisions about whom to vote for, as well as their perceived images of the candidates. Again, candidates' issue-priorities may play a more important role in the general elections, especially the races involving severe partisan competitions, than in strictly intraparty primaries.

#### Personal Attributes and Vote Choice

Does how citizens perceive a political candidate's persona matter? According to Kinder (1986), the answer is yes. He suggests that the public's thinking about an important political figure is organized in terms of four key demands: competence, leadership, integrity, and empathy, with competence

functioning as the most consequential aspect of personal character. He continues to argue that images of personal character can contribute independently to citizens' judgments of the person's overall performance.

When it comes to nationally well-known figures, such as the President, Congressional leaders, etc., people tend to have relatively well-structured and stable perceptions of the individuals. Citizens, however, may not have any preexisting knowledge of new faces, like unknown challengers, and often rely on external sources for information about them. Especially in the nominating phase of an election, voters may consider the candidates' personal attributes such as qualifications and personal character as more relevant voting criteria, than their political and policy positions.

Until recently, according to Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, and Sullivan (1990), scholars have not provided theoretical accounts or rigorous empirical analyses of the roles of candidate personal images in the vote choice, although research on political cognition has suggested that candidates' personal attributes actually function as the preeminent factor in the voters' world (Kinder and Sears, 1985). For less involved and sophisticated people, personal information might function as more accessible cues in their political reasoning.

In this regard, the present analysis will specifically inquire how the saliencies of certain personal attributes in one's mind, constructed as a result of media exposure, can further influence behavioral decision. Otherwise put, it will examine which components of candidates' personal images most or least affect individuals' electoral choice.



## **STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES**

As discussed so far, the study investigates the three major components of campaign communication: agenda formation, agenda setting, and the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of agenda setting at the attribute level. Otherwise put, this study explores the interplays of the attributes portraying political candidates among the advertising media, the news media, and the public, and how those interactions relate to the electoral outcomes.

### **Attribute Agenda Formation**

Campaigns strive to increase the media saliencies of the agendas advantageous for their electoral prospects since changes in media saliencies often significantly influence which elements will be prominent in the public's mind at the moment of judgment. Campaigns, therefore, often use their commercials as a tool for attracting news coverage, as well as public attention. Although recent developments in journalism theories emphasize the increasing independence of the news media from other political forces (Barnhurst and Mutz, 1997; Swanson, 1997), many of the agenda-setting studies also have documented meaningful relationships between political advertising and news agendas (Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs, and Lennon, 1998; Roberts and McCombs, 1994).

Against this backdrop, this study aims to examine the roles played by political advertisements in the formation of news agendas. As Holbrook (1996) points out, one way that contemporary election campaigns differ from forty years ago lies in television ads, which now represent the single biggest campaign

expenditure. Candidates reveal in their paid ads almost every aspect about themselves. Televised ads, in this respect, can be regarded as a strong surrogate of the whole campaign agenda. Specifically, it is hypothesized that candidates can successfully shape the news coverage about themselves or their opponents by emphasizing certain image elements advantageous for them, or those disadvantageous for their rivals through their commercials (H1). This study will also examine whether the tone of advertising functions as a moderator of its agenda-formation power. Specifically, it is expected that negative advertising will be more effective in transferring its agendas of candidate attributes to subsequent news coverage, than will its positive counterpart (H3). Another hypothesis regarding the formation of news agendas concerns the conventional wisdom that the print media lead the electronic media in deciding what to cover about political candidates (H2).

**H1.** Candidate ads significantly influence subsequent patterns of candidate coverage, rather than vice versa. That is, the more frequently a certain attribute of a candidate is presented in campaign ads, the more likely that the news media portray the candidate in terms of the attribute.

**H2.** Newspapers significantly shape subsequent patterns of candidate coverage in television news, rather than vice versa. That is, the more frequently a certain attribute of a candidate is emphasized in the print news, the more likely that the broadcast news reports on the candidate in terms of the attribute.

**H3.** Candidate attributes emphasized in negative advertising will be more likely to appear in subsequent news coverage than those in positive advertising.

### **Attribute Agenda Setting**

The hypotheses concerning attribute agenda setting address the media's function in changing the hierarchy of attribute salencies within the public's candidate perceptions. Specifically, the study examines how the advertising media (H4) and the news media (H5) interdependently and independently shape candidates' overall images among the viewers. The moderating roles of the political contexts (H6) and the tone of presentation (H7) in attribute agenda setting will also be explored. H7 will be tested only for the advertising media.

**H4.** Candidate advertising significantly influences the public's perceptions of candidate overall images. That is, the more frequently a certain attribute of a candidate is presented in campaign ads, the more likely people are to think of the candidate in terms of the attribute.

**H5.** The news media significantly affect the public's perceptions of candidate images. That is, the more salient an image attribute is in the news coverage of a candidate, the more likely people are to describe the candidate in terms of the attribute.

Some of the previous studies indicate that the paid advertising media may have greater effectiveness in salience transfer since ads can more easily be remembered through their "novelty, entertainment value, and distinctiveness"

(West, 1994, p. 1060). Whether this was the case in the Texas gubernatorial primary will be examined by comparing the results of H4 and H5. Specifically, the median zero-order and partial correlations across candidates will be calculated per media to make the comparison.

**H6.** The media's agenda-setting effects will be greater in the dimension of candidates' personal attributes than of their issue-relevant attributes in the nominating stage of an election.

**H7.** The candidate attributes emphasized in negative advertising will be more salient in the public's candidate perceptions than those delivered in positive commercials. That is, people will describe the candidates more often in terms of the attributes emphasized in their opponent's attack ads than those promoted in their own advocacy ads.

### **Attitudinal and Behavioral Consequences of Attribute Agenda Setting**

The consequences of attribute agenda setting (H8) will be tested through investigating attribute priming effects and direct salience effects of certain candidate attributes. Concerning direct salience effects, the study will examine how the public saliencies of certain attributes, which are significantly accounted for by the saliencies of those elements in the media contents, further influence political preference and behavior in an election setting.

**H8.** Candidate attributes most frequently emphasized by campaign ads or the news media will prime voters to use those attributes as the criteria for their decision-making. That is, the more frequently an attribute appears in the media content, the more likely people are to use it as a reasoning heuristic for their political choice.

Again, this hypothesis will be tested using two different strategies. First, it will be examined how the media emphases of candidate attributes correlate with the criteria that people cite as what is most important for their decision-making. This analysis will help substantiate the thesis of attribute priming. Second, the hypothesis will also be tested through investigating the direct effects of public saliencies on the indicators of important political outcomes (i.e., candidate preference and vote choice). To examine the consequences of attribute agenda setting with the latter strategy, two regression models have been formulated as follows:

$$Y_1 = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \alpha_2 X_2 + \alpha_3 X_3 + \text{control variables} + E \text{ --- EQ (1)}$$

$$Y_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \text{control variables} + E \text{ --- EQ (2)}$$

Where,

$Y_1$ : Interval variable indicating one's net candidate preference

$Y_2$ : Dummy variable indicating one's likely vote choice between the Democratic candidates

$X_1$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives attribute A, the most salient in candidate ads or candidate coverage, as the most important voting criterion

$X_2$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives attribute B, the second most salient in candidate ads or candidate coverage, as the most important voting criterion

$X_3$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives attribute C, the third most salient in candidate ads or candidate coverage, as the most important voting criterion

Control variables: news media use variables, attention to campaigns, and such demographic variables as age, gender, level of education, income, and race/ethnicity

E: Disturbance term

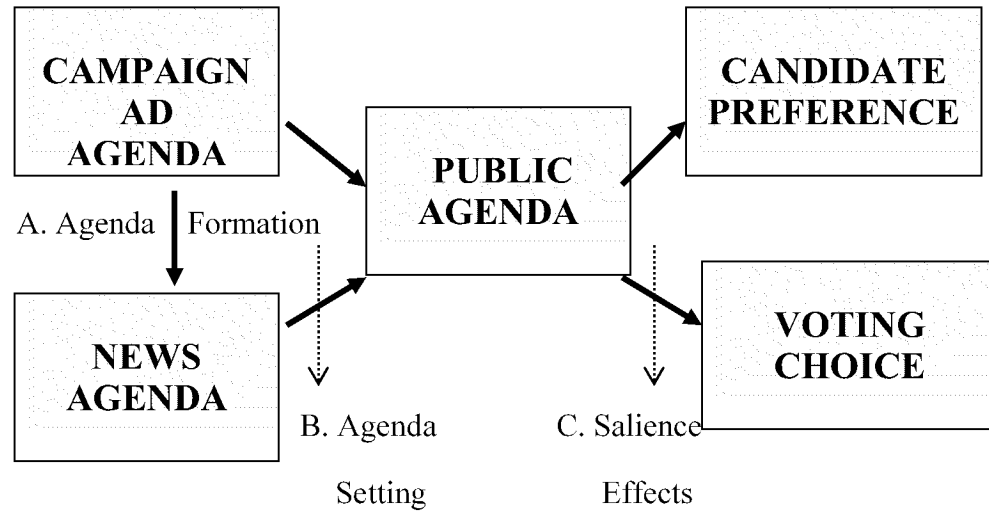
Again, these equations are aimed at empirically determining whether the saliencies of the attribute components most prominent on the advertising agenda or the news agenda in one's mind further affect political preference and choice. Each independent variable, therefore, represents a dummy variable indicating whether a given respondent has been primed to consider the attribute most frequently mentioned by the media to be important.

Although the public agendas are constructed as a result of the transactions with total media exposure (Shaw and McCombs, 1972; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen, 2001), the regression equations above need to be applied separately for

advertising agenda setting and for news agenda setting. This is mainly because the two media agendas may not be in perfect agreement about which candidate attributes are most important and deserve more attention, although they may possibly be significantly correlated.

It should also be noted that these regression models are subject to some minor or even major modifications, depending on the specific results of the analyses of the media contents and public survey responses. That is, it could be more correctly decided which and how many variables indicating attribute salience should be included in the regression formulas, only after carefully examining the patterns of salience hierarchies on the media and public agendas and the correlations between the two. Figure 2-1 illustrates how these hypotheses formulated above relate to the analytical framework of this study.

Figure 2-1. Model of Mass Media Agenda Setting and its Electoral Consequences



1. Process A will be examined through Hypotheses 1, 2, & 3.
2. Process B will be examined through Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, & 7.
3. Process C will be examined through Hypothesis 8.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The study follows the traditional methodological scheme in agenda-setting research that compares a content analysis of the media agenda with survey data assessing the public agenda. The temporal frame of this study was the main 6-week campaign period for the primary election from 1 February to 11 March. The geographical scope of the study was limited to the greater Austin area, mainly due to cost and efficiency considerations. For the content of mass media, televised candidate commercials and print and television news were examined. For the data on public opinion, a survey was conducted, with the population being the adults living in the greater Austin, Texas, area (i.e., mainly Travis County plus Williamson County). This study focuses primarily on the Democratic primary for Texas Governor, noting its contextual and theoretical importance as explained in Chapter 1.

#### **THE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

##### **Content Selection**

##### ***Candidate Advertisements***

Goldstein and Freedman (2002) argue that scholars have been able to say relatively little about the impact of television ads because of the difficulty in

getting comprehensive data. In a local election, however, it is relatively easier to obtain a comprehensive list of the ads actually aired during the campaign. Although data from the candidates are often incomplete, they can easily be supplemented by the data from the advertising logs of local television stations. This is one of the strongest advantages of political advertising research conducted at the market level.

To collect political advertisements sponsored by Tony Sanchez and Dan Morales, their web sites and local newscasts were monitored during the study period (1 February to 11 March). Most of their ads were available from their campaign web sites. Some of them, however, were not released to the public through the web sites, especially when their tone was negative. What was available and what was not from the web sites among the actually aired commercials could be identified by inspecting the advertising logs obtained from Austin television stations. Specifically, the television stations included FOX7 (channel 7 noncable or 2 on cable), the ABC affiliate station KVUE (channel 24 noncable or 3 on cable), and the NBC affiliate station KXAN (channel 36 noncable or 4 on cable). The logs of the CBS affiliate station KEYE (channel 45 noncable or 5 on cable) were not available for this analysis. The three stations included in the analysis, however, showed a high level of uniformity in terms of the broadcasting frequencies of each of the candidate ads; the mean rank-order correlation was .913. The people whose primary news channel was KEYE of which logs were not available, indeed, account for the smallest percentage (8.9 %) of the valid responses (N = 248) among the four stations, while the audience for

KVUE represented the largest group (33.1 %), followed by those for KXAN (19.4 %) and FOX7 (14.9 %)

The three stations' political files contained comprehensive information regarding the "who," "when," "what," and "how frequently aired" of the ads, thereby determining how much each individual ad should be weighed. That is, by weighing each ad according to its broadcasting frequency, the advertising agenda could be constructed as closely as possible to what the public had actually been exposed to. Those commercials found only in the logs but not in the web sites, were finally captured by examining the video clips of evening television newscasts, the single greatest target for ad time buyers, as Goldstein and Freedman (2002) note.

Sanchez aired a total of nine different commercials in the Austin market, while Morales broadcast none during February and March. Morales aired two ads at the end of January, which is not included in the six-week study period. The present study, therefore, had to examine advertising agenda setting only with the Sanchez ads. This may restrict the generalizability of this project, but it was an unavoidable limitation in the context of this particular primary. There were no ads paid for by political action committees.

Most of the Sanchez ads dovetailed his issue considerations with his personal attributes. While his plans to solve the problems in education and health care were most emphasized, his experience as a businessman and his compassion for the ordinary people in Texas constituted the major part of his personal image. More detailed descriptions of candidate attribute agendas in the televised ads will

be provided in Chapter 4. At the very end of the campaign, Sanchez purchased airtime for two negative spots criticizing his opponent, yet the substantial majority of his ads focused on promoting his own positive images. This study will consider only the textual contents of the political ads. Although the audiovisual features in television ads play a critical role in communicating the messages (Thorson, Christ, and Caywood, 1991), they are beyond the scope of this analysis. The scripts of the ads are available in Appendix A.

### ***The News Media***

To determine the agendas of candidate coverage, one local newspaper and four local television stations were examined. First, for the 6-week period between 1 February and 11 March, all campaign-related stories published in the *Austin-American Statesman*, the only generally-circulated daily newspaper in Austin, were collected. During the same period, weekday late evening newscasts were taped off the air from four television stations--FOX7, KVUE, KXAN, and KEYE. For the stations KVUE, KXAN and KEYE, the evening newscast from 6 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. was recorded, and for the station FOX7, the one-hour news show from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. was taped each weekday. From these initially retrieved campaign-related stories, only the stories reporting on Dan Morales and/or Tony Sanchez in some way were considered for the content analysis. This process ended up with a total of 46 articles from the *Statesman* and a total of 48 news stories from the television stations.

## **The Operationalizations of Coding Categories**

The study focuses its level of analysis on the attributes of objects, here, political candidates. Therefore, its unit of analysis on each agenda is an attribute describing a candidate. Following McCombs and Ghanem's (2001) definition of attributes, the study operationalized candidate attributes as those characteristics and properties used to describe a candidate running for an election.

### ***Macro-Level Attributes***

As discussed in Chapter 2, this study assessed each candidate's attributes in terms of the following six macro-level attributes: Political ideology, specific policy issues, personal qualifications and character, biographical background, campaign conduct, and endorsements. The first four categories followed the coding scheme employed in previous studies of candidate attribute setting (King, 1997; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000) while also reflecting Fiske's (1986) classifications of political schemas. The category of endorsements, meanwhile, is parallel to the political schema of social class or group affiliation (Fiske, 1986) or the group likability heuristic (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000). The category of campaign conduct was based upon a preliminary analysis of the media content showing that a substantial portion of electoral coverage was devoted to the campaign activities of the candidates. The campaign-conduct category also reflects previous election studies documenting that campaign news focuses primarily on horse races between candidates (Patterson, 1980, 1993).

### ***Micro-Level Attributes***

Each of the macro-level attributes further consists of various micro-level attributes. First, the category of political ideology includes those attributes relevant to party affiliation (Democrat, Republican, etc.), ideological orientation or political philosophy (liberal, conservative, etc.), and general visions and governing plans that the candidates have proposed.

Second, issue-relevant attributes refer to those descriptions concerning the candidates' positions on or their interest in specific policy issues. Those issues mainly include the economy, education, health care, insurance, immigration, racial issues, taxes and spending, and transportation.

Third, the macro category of personal attributes mainly encompasses personal qualifications and character. Kinder (1986) identifies four key dimensions of personal character of a political figure as follows: leadership, competence, integrity, and empathy. In addition to these four, this study also considers information related to the candidates' experience and their unique styles and personalities as belonging to this category.

Fourth, biographical backgrounds include those assertions describing the candidates' hometown, religion, ethnicity, etc., and matters related to their family members and personal income and wealth.

Fifth, the category of campaign conduct refers to any descriptions about campaign advertisements, debates, campaign finance, negative campaigning, and other campaign trail events. Finally, the category of endorsements includes those statements indicating some explicit support for or denunciation of the candidates

by political parties, interest groups, minority groups, or ordinary citizens. More details of the coding scheme and instructions are presented in the master codebook in Appendix B.

### ***Unit of Analysis***

In analyzing candidate attributes, the study regarded an assertion in an advertisement or a news story as the unit of analysis, following previous studies done especially by McCombs and his colleagues (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas, 2000). According to Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998), a single assertion may constitute a theme about a subject matter, or two or more assertions may be required for forming a theme. Specifically, this study operationalized an assertion as a statement describing the characteristics and properties of a political candidate. For instance, a total of four micro attribute assertions could be identified from the sentence, “[F]ormer Attorney General Dan Morales [experience] is short on cash [campaign finance] and behind Sanchez [competence] in the Democratic race [partisan affiliation] for governor, according to recent polls.” Since a paragraph was considered as the unit of coding and context for this content analysis, however, any category of a micro attribute was not counted if it repeated within the same paragraph. In other words, the multiple coding of micro-level attributes was allowed only when they appeared in different paragraphs.

For testing the coding reliability for these categories of candidate attributes, the test-retest method<sup>2</sup> was employed. The time difference between the first and the second analyses ranged from 1 to 2 months. All the nine ads were included for this reliability test, while about 25 % of the print and broadcast news stories were examined. Holsti's coder reliability coefficient for the analysis of candidate attributes was .83 for campaign spots, .86 for the newspaper, and .87 for the television news.

### ***Other Coding Categories***

Each assertion was analyzed in terms of whom it was about (i.e., Dan Morales or Tony Sanchez), as well as the type of candidate attribute. Each political advertisement or each news article was also coded in terms of when it was aired or published for the purpose of time-related analyses. The unit of analysis, here, was an ad or a news story.

All of the attribute statements in political ads were also coded in terms of the tone of presentation (i.e., negative versus positive). Although Richardson (2001) contends that coding a political ad as either negative or positive is too simplistic, Lau and Sigelman (2000) argue that the dichotomy of negative versus positive is meaningful, at least concerning the matter of political advertising impacts. Using an assertion as the unit of analysis helped capture some variations in tone within one advertisement. As suggested by Buchanan (1996), "negative

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<sup>2</sup> Although Babbie (2001) suggests this method as a way to check the reliability of a survey questionnaire, the present study applied it to the reliability assessment of a content analysis. See Babbie, 2001, pp. 141-142 for more specifics about this method.



advertising” was understood as that focusing mainly on “comments on an opponent’s personal traits, character, records, and policy positions” (p. 95). Similarly, “positive advertising” was operationalized as that focusing mainly on self-promoting comments on personal qualifications, character, and policy positions by the candidate himself. For instance, if an assertion was made about Dan Morales in Tony Sanchez’s ad, it was coded “negative.” In contrast, any assertions about Sanchez in his own commercial were regarded as “positive.”

#### **PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY**

From 9 February to 10 March, a telephone public opinion survey was conducted under the supervision of two professors at The University of Texas at Austin. Only two interviews, however, were done before 19 February. That is, most of the telephone interviews were conducted in the second half of the six-week study period. In the middle of the phone survey (1 March), a bilingual candidate debate was held and televised.

The survey followed the human subject research guidelines and was pre-approved by the reviewing committees before conducting actual interviews. Forty undergraduate students in a communication research class at The University of Texas took part in this survey as interviewers as part of a class requirement. The Office of Survey Research at the same university also executed some portion of the telephone interviews. Two graduate students coded the data and a randomly selected sample of surveys was tested for inter-coder reliability.

The Southwestern Bell Greater Austin telephone directory was used as the sampling frame. The phone numbers were selected using a systematic random sampling and each call alternated between an adult male or female at the residence. A total of 325 interviews were completed. Overall completion rate (completed interviews divided by respondents contacted) was 35 %. When including the people who could not be reached in the calculation, response rate was come up with as 22 %. Citing the results of an experiment conducted by The Pew Research Center for the People & Press, Poindexter and McCombs (2001) suggest that low response rates may have little impact on the results. Each interview lasted approximately 12 minutes on average.

The major question items included: the most important problems facing the state of Texas; the most important issues, or personal qualifications and characteristics for voting decision; descriptions of major gubernatorial candidates; candidate favorability and the likely vote choice; news media exposure; advertising exposure; campaign attention; and other demographic questions such as partisanship, political ideology, education level, age, gender, income, race/ethnicity, etc. The complete questionnaire is available in Appendix C.

Specifically, the most important problem was assessed through an open-ended question, “What do you think are the most important problems facing the state of Texas?” The most important voting criteria among the voters were examined by asking, “Suppose that you vote in the upcoming March primary election for Texas Governor. Considering the problem(s) you mentioned, what problem would you personally consider most important when deciding for whom

to vote?” and “Which candidate qualification or personal characteristic would you personally consider most important when deciding for whom to vote?”

The public’s perceived candidate images were measured by asking another open-ended question, “Suppose that one of your friends has been away a long time and knows nothing about the candidates for Governor of Texas. What would you tell your friend about Dan Morales (Tony Sanchez)?” Two more follow-up questions were asked to detail how the respondents thought of the candidates. The same coding categories and instructions as those for the content analyses were used to analyze these open-ended survey responses.

In the case of the candidate descriptions, the unit of analysis was an assertion about a particular candidate attribute. Again, a single sentence describing a candidate often involved several assertions. Each of those was coded as an individual unit as long as it represented a different category of micro attribute. In the case of the MIP or voting criteria responses, the unit of analysis was each issue (i.e., problem), or each personal qualification or characteristic mentioned by the interviewees. Multiple answers were allowed in the interviews. About 25 % of the total responses were examined for the coding reliability of these open-ended questions. Holsti’s coder reliability coefficient was .85 for the most important problems facing Texas, .85 and .92 for the issues and personal qualifications and characteristics most important for voting decision, respectively, and .83 and .84 for the public’s perceptions of Morales and Sanchez, respectively.

People were also asked to rate their feelings about each candidate. Specifically, the variable of candidate favorability was measured on a 5-point

scale with a “5” meaning “strongly favorable” and a “1” indicating “strongly unfavorable.” Each respondent was further asked about her or his expected choice for Texas Governor among Dan Morales, Tony Sanchez, Rick Perry, or other candidates. Among the respondents who answered this question (N = 205), only about 58 % of the voters appeared to have made up their minds about their prospective voting choice, while 42 % of the interviewed electorate still remained undecided in the early stage of the gubernatorial election. Since this study focuses on the Democratic competition, only those persons who answered they would vote either for Morales or for Sanchez were included in the final analysis. The value of “1” was assigned to a likely Sanchez vote, while a “0” was given to a prospective ballot for Morales.

Regarding media use variables, how the voters had used the news media (i.e., local daily newspaper and local television news) was first measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from “never or seldom” to “every day.” Exposure to television campaign ads was assessed per candidate, using the same 5-point scale. The level of general campaign attention was examined on a 4-point scale ranging from “none” to “great deal.”

Table 3-1 presents the descriptive summaries of some of the key public variables. According to the table, people on average showed neutral feelings toward the two Democratic candidates. People who answered they would cast Democratic ballots were split almost half and half, indicating that there was a considerable level of competition in this particular primary election. Reflecting that the airwaves were crowded with Sanchez’s wall-to-wall televised ads, the

Table 3-1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Public Variables

Key Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Morales favorability	131	1	5	2.90	1.21
Sanchez favorability	131	1	5	2.88	1.16
Vote choice	58 <sup>a</sup>	0	1	.48	.50
Attention to campaign	325	1	4	2.33	.89
Exposure to Morales' ads	314	1	5	1.71	.98
Exposure to Sanchez's ads	321	1	5	2.62	1.53
Newspaper exposure	323	1	5	2.81	1.69
Local TV news exposure	324	1	5	3.10	1.69

NOTES: <sup>a</sup> This refers to the number of the prospective Democratic votes.

level of exposure to the Sanchez ads was obviously greater than that to the Morales ads. Here, the exposure to the Morales ads obviously concerned his two ads aired in January and/or represented errors in self-reporting. Local television news appeared to be a more frequent source of information than the daily newspaper for the primary voters in the greater Austin area.

For control purposes, the survey measured respondents' age, education level, and income. An average respondent was a 37-year-old college graduate

with a family income of about \$65,000 per year. Republicans accounted for about 36 % among the valid interviewees, while Democrats comprised 30 %. A substantial majority of the sample identified themselves as Caucasian or White (72 %), while 15 % of the people answered their racial origin as Hispanic or Latino. Female interviewees slightly outnumbered males, making up 52 % of the sample. According to the U.S. 2000 Census data, White persons constitute 68.2 % of the population of Travis County. Females make up 48.8 % of the population, and the median household income was \$46,761. It appears, therefore, that the sample in this study over-represented Whites, females, or high-incomers. More detailed statistics about sample demographics are available in Appendix D.

## Chapter 4

### Descriptive Analyses of Advertising, News, and Public Agendas

#### ADVERTISING AGENDAS OF CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES

The advertising logs obtained from three local television stations (FOX7, KVUE, KXAN) showed that Tony Sanchez aired a total of ten different commercials nearly 2,000 times during the 8-week period from 15 January to Election Day. Dan Morales aired only two ads a total of 6 times at the end of January. Since this study focuses primarily on the 6-week period between 1 February and 11 March, however, only nine ads sponsored by Sanchez were included in the final analysis. While the frequencies of ad broadcasting per week appeared relatively consistent throughout the campaign, they were highest in the final two weeks of the campaign, as reported in Table 4-1.

Introducing himself to the political landscape, Sanchez, as a political newcomer, first emphasized his self-success story as an oil-and-bank businessman, while showing that he had also gone through very difficult times throughout his life, just like his fellow Texans. This was his first television commercial, called “Biography.” Since it was broadcast only in January, it was not included in the actual analysis.

He then moved to the images of sincerity as a family man and respected father in the next commercial, “Family.” After portraying his personal life and experience in his first two ads, Sanchez began to air some issue-oriented spots.

For instance, the commercials, “Education” and “Passion,” both underscored his interest in public education. While the former detailed specific policies, such as cutting administrative waste, hiring more teachers, and lowering class size, the latter emphasized the candidate’s experience in public education and his passion about improving the quality of education in Texas. The spot called “Health care” dealt with the health care issues, promising more coverage and benefits for

Table 4-1. Broadcasting Frequencies of the Sanchez Ads on Three Local Television Stations during February and March

Title	Week						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	2.01-2.03	2.04-2.10	2.11-2.17	2.18-2.24	2.25-3.03	3.04-3.11	
Health care				151	90		241
Education	48	56					104
Even better					93	41	134
Even stronger						74	74
Family	19						19
Passion	10	154			92	17	273
Remember						23	23
Scheme						90	90
Protect			191	41			232
Total	77	210	191	192	275	245	1190



children and senior citizens. In the commercial named “Protect,” he addressed various issues including the economy, health care, homeowner insurance, and education.

During the last two weeks of the campaign, a total of five different commercials were televised, including four new spots--“Even better,” “Even stronger,” “Remember,” and “Scheme.” In the ad “Even better,” Sanchez expressed his empathy for people’s discontents with partisan politics, underscoring his difference from typical politicians. He condensed his approaches into the following catchphrases: accountability, common sense, and bringing people together. The commercial “Even stronger,” meanwhile, tried to frame the candidate as the person who could protect traditional Texas values, such as family, sacrifice, and hard work, and bring Texans a better life.

Most notably, the two ads, “Remember” and “Scheme,” aired only in the final week, were identified as negative, in that both of them dealt with the opponent’s issue positions, personal attributes, and campaign conduct. Specifically, in those ads Sanchez criticized Morales for his failed child-welfare policies, his negative campaigning, and his misconduct related to the tobacco lawsuit during his term as Texas Attorney General. The ad called “Scheme” was a pure attack ad in that it focused only on matters relevant to Morales, while Sanchez himself was almost invisible in both its contents and audiovisual background. Somewhat differently, the spot named “Remember” employed a contrasting approach. That is, it compared the “corrupt and incompetent

opponent” with the sponsoring candidate, who cared about the issues of education, taxes and spending, and unemployment, with integrity.

Overall, the most frequently broadcast commercials included “Passion,” “Health care,” and “Protect,” most of which portrayed the candidate in terms of his enthusiasm and visions for some substantial issues. The Sanchez campaign also tried to give coherence to its nine different ads by ending most of them with the phrase “a leader as hardworking as Texas,” underscoring the candidate’s compassion for ordinary people.

Table 4-2 summarizes the candidate attributes of both the macro and micro levels addressed in the Sanchez ads. More specific frequencies of those attributes are presented in Tables 4-3 and 4-4. Specifically, the advertising agenda of candidate attributes in Table 4-3 concerns the images of Dan Morales as portrayed in Sanchez’s negative ads. The ad agenda in Table 4-4, meanwhile, consists of the Sanchez attributes emphasized in his own positive spots. Both agendas are comprised mostly of issue-relevant attributes and personal qualifications and character. Specifically, social welfare and tobacco lawsuit controversies tie as the top issue-relevant aspects of the former Attorney General, whereas Sanchez was portrayed most frequently in terms of his interest in education and health care issues. Integrity was the most salient personal attribute in both candidates’ ad agendas. In other words, in his opponent’s ads, Morales was criticized most often for the lack of integrity, while Sanchez stressed his images of honesty and morality more than any other aspects in his advocacy ads.

Table 4-2. Types of Candidate Attributes in the Sanchez Ads Televised During February and March

Title	Tone	Macro-Level	Micro-Level
Health care	Positive	Issue Personal	Health care Integrity
Education	Positive	Issue Personal	Education Empathy
Even better	Positive	Personal	Experience, Competence, Integrity
Even stronger	Positive	Ideological Issue Personal	Political ideology & General visions Values & Trust Integrity, Empathy
Family	Positive	Biographic	Family relations, Religion
Passion	Positive	Issue Personal	Education Experience
Remember	Positive	Issue	Education, Taxes & Spending, Unemployment
	Negative	Personal	Competence, Integrity
		Campaign	Attacks/Mudslinging
Scheme	Negative	Issue	Social welfare, Tobacco lawsuit controversies
		Personal	Integrity
		Campaign	Attacks/Mudslinging
Protect	Positive	Issue	Economy, Education, Health care, Insurance
		Personal	Empathy

## NEWS AGENDAS OF CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES

### Local Newspaper Agendas of Candidate Attributes

The *Austin-American Statesman* appeared to deliver unbalanced candidate coverage in terms of quantity. The local daily made a total of 428 assertions regarding Dan Morales and a total of 603 assertions about Tony Sanchez. As presented in Tables 4-3 and 4-4, however, the paper's relative emphases among different attributes were highly similar between the two candidates. Specifically, among the six macro-level attributes, the newspaper most emphasized campaign conduct, such as debates, candidate commercials, campaign finance, and attack/mudslinging, in covering the candidates. This pattern is consistent with previous findings that electoral coverage focuses on campaign activities in terms of the horse race (Patterson, 1980, 1993). The candidates' personal qualifications and character and their issue considerations were the second- and third-most-prominent aspects in the newspaper.

Regarding the micro-level of attributes, Morales was described most often in terms of his position on candidate debates and his past experience and record. The Sanchez coverage highlighted his experience in business and other public arenas and his insistence on only one-time bilingual debates with other Democratic contenders. For both candidates, the most frequently mentioned issues included taxes and spending and public education. The former Attorney General was also frequently covered with regard to his positions on affirmative action policies. The other prominent issue besides taxes and education in the coverage of the billionaire businessman was homeowner insurance problems.

In summary, the print media presented the two candidates in highly similar ways, although they granted more access to the political newcomer than to the politically established candidate. In other words, the hierarchy of salience among the attributes describing Morales was highly parallel to that among the Sanchez attributes in the newspaper. The rank-order correlation between the two candidate agendas was .829 ( $p = .042$ ) on the macro-level. The difference between the two candidates in the percentage of each macro attribute in the print agenda ranged from 0.8 % to 10 %. The median difference was 5.5 %, indicating a high level of uniformity in the newspaper's portrayals of the two candidates.

#### **Local Television Agendas of Candidate Attributes**

Compared to their print counterpart, the local electronic media showed a higher level of balance. The four television stations aired a total of 259 assertions related to Morales, while making a total of 297 statements regarding Sanchez. The patterns of candidate coverage did not differ greatly between the two candidates in terms of relative saliencies among the macro- and micro-level of attributes. At the macro level, campaign conduct was again the most salient aspect in describing each candidate, as shown in Tables 4-3 and 4-4. Personal qualifications and character were the second-most-prominent focus of the Sanchez coverage, while the Morales coverage balanced his issue-relevant and personal attributes almost equally.

As in the case of the newspaper coverage, the debates on debates were the most prominent feature among the micro-level attributes in both candidates'

television coverage. Morales's negative strategies and Sanchez's integrity ranked second in the hierarchy of salience among their own attributes described in local television news. Again, the television agendas for the two candidates were highly correlated on the macro-level (Spearman's  $\rho = .943$ ;  $p = .005$ ). The difference between the two candidates in the percentage of each macro attribute in the television agenda ranged from 0 to 8 %. The median of the percentage differences was 2 %, implying that the broadcast news described the two primary candidates in a much more similar way than did the print news.

Table 4-3. Dan Morales's Attributes in the Media and in the Public's Mind

Macro-Level Attributes	Micro-Level Attributes	News -paper	TV	Attack Ads	Public
Political Ideology	Partisanship	32	35		11
	Political Ideology	3	6		19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35 (8 %)</b>	<b>41 (16 %)</b>		<b>30 (13 %)</b>
Policy Issues	Economy		1		1
	Education	19	13		
	Energy & Environment				
	Health care	2	4		
	Immigration & Border	3	1		
	Insurance	2			
	Law & Enforcement	2	1		1
	Racial Issues	20	7		3
	Social Welfare	2	6	90	3
	Taxes & Spending	33	9		2
	Tobacco Controversy	11	3	90	14
	Transportation	3			
	Values & Trust				
Other Issues	3	1		2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (23 %)</b>	<b>46 (18 %)</b>	<b>180 (42 %)</b>	<b>26 (11 %)</b>
Personal Qualification & Character	Leadership				
	Experience	61	15		59
	Competence	15	14	23	23
	Integrity	31	15	113	21
	Empathy		1		6
	Styles/Personalities	6			14
	Other Comments	1			9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>114 (27 %)</b>	<b>45 (17 %)</b>	<b>136 (32 %)</b>	<b>132 (58 %)</b>
Biographic Background	Candidate Education	2			2
	Family Relations	14			
	Ethnicity		9		1
	Religion				
	Personal Wealth	7	3		1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23 (5 %)</b>	<b>12 (5 %)</b>		<b>4 (2 %)</b>
Campaign Conduct	Debates	75	53		7
	Campaign Advertising	9	6		
	Campaign Finance	11	7		1
	Negative Campaigns	38	31	113	5
	Other Conduct	21	12		1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>154 (36 %)</b>	<b>109 (42 %)</b>	<b>113 (26 %)</b>
Endorsement	Interest-Group Support		2		1
	Minority Support	1			
	Other Support		1		18
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1 (.2 %)</b>	<b>3 (1 %)</b>	
Other			3		5
Total		<b>428 (100 %)</b>	<b>259 (100 %)</b>	<b>429 (100 %)</b>	<b>229 (100 %)</b>

Table 4-4. Tony Sanchez's Attributes in the Media and in the Public's Mind

Macro-Level Attributes	Micro-Level Attributes	News -paper	TV	Advoca- cy Ads	Public
Political Ideology	Partisanship	63	31	74	13
	Political Ideology <b>Total</b>	5 <b>68 (11 %)</b>	11 <b>42 (14 %)</b>	<b>74 (1 %)</b>	8 <b>21 (9 %)</b>
Policy Issues	Economy		1	255	2
	Education	20	14	1564	10
	Energy & Environment				
	Health care	2	4	1196	
	Immigration & Border	10			1
	Insurance	12	5	232	
	Law & Enforcement	1	2		
	Racial Issues	10	11		1
	Social Welfare				
	Taxes & Spending	28	7	46	1
	Tobacco Controversy				
	Transportation	3			
Values & Trust			74		
Other Issues	6	3		3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>92 ( 15 %)</b>	<b>47 (16 %)</b>	<b>3367(61%)</b>	<b>18 (7 %)</b>	
Personal Qualification & Character	Leadership	1			2
	Experience	85	28	273	48
	Competence	28	13	134	26
	Integrity	38	30	602	24
	Empathy		1	586	6
	Styles/Personalities	11			9
Other Comments	3	3		19	
<b>Total</b>	<b>166 (28 %)</b>	<b>75 (25 %)</b>	<b>1595 (29%)</b>	<b>134 (54 %)</b>	
Biographic Background	Candidate Education	2	1		1
	Family Relations	12	1	19	3
	Ethnicity	8	6		5
	Religion	1		19	
	Personal Wealth	70	10		24
<b>Total</b>	<b>93 (15 %)</b>	<b>18 (6 %)</b>	<b>38 (.7 %)</b>	<b>33 (13 %)</b>	
Campaign Conduct	Debates	60	43		3
	Campaign Advertising	16	25		10
	Campaign Finance	48	22		9
	Negative Campaigns	9	13		2
	Other Conduct	37	8		
<b>Total</b>	<b>170 (28 %)</b>	<b>111 (37%)</b>		<b>24 (10 %)</b>	
Endorsement	Interest-Group Support	7	1		2
	Minority Support		2		1
	Other Support				9
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 (1%)</b>	<b>3 (1 %)</b>		<b>12 (5 %)</b>	
Other		7	1		4
<b>Total</b>		<b>603 (100 %)</b>	<b>297 (100 %)</b>	<b>5503 (100 %)</b>	<b>247 (100 %)</b>



## **PUBLIC AGENDAS OF CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES**

Individual citizens' open-ended answers produced a total of 229 assertions for Dan Morales and a total of 247 assertions for Tony Sanchez, revealing their own perceptions of the primary candidates. As summarized in Tables 4-3 and 4-4, the majority of those public assertions consisted of the attributes featuring candidates' personas. Specifically, about 58 % of the public statements about the former Attorney General concerned his qualifications and character, while 54 % of the Sanchez-related assertions were also relevant to his personal qualities and traits.

On the macro level, the most noticeable difference between the public's perceptions of the two candidates was that biographical information on candidate education, family, ethnicity, personal wealth, etc. constituted a much larger part of the Sanchez image (13 %) than of the Morales image (2 %). Another difference was that the Morales image was comprised of ideological and issue-relevant attributes (24 %) more than was the Sanchez image (16 %). Overall, the voters' perceptions differed between the two candidates in terms of the macro-level of attribute salience, as evidenced in their fairly low rank-order correlation (Spearman's  $\rho = .086$ ; ns).

On the micro level, the principal components of the public images appeared quite similar between the candidates. The three most prominent micro attributes on the public agenda included experience, competence, and integrity, for both candidates. The most frequently mentioned issue on the Morales agenda

concerned the tobacco-lawsuit controversy, while it was public education in the case of Sanchez.

The survey questionnaire included other open-ended questions asking the respondents to name the most important problems facing the state of Texas and those of personal importance to their voting decisions. Multiple responses were allowed. According to Table 4-5, people considered public education, the economy, and energy and environmental issues as the top three most important problems facing the state. Interestingly, the latter two issues, the economy and the environment, were rarely mentioned problems in the news media's candidate coverage. Quite similarly, the top three issues referred to as the most important voting criteria also included education and the economy. The other issue was taxes and spending. The rank-order correlation between those two sets of most important problems is statistically significant (Spearman's  $\rho = .860$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that the issues most salient in people's minds also functioned as the most critical yardsticks for their voting decision-making.

The interviewees were also asked to cite some personal qualifications or characteristics most important for their gubernatorial choice. Among the valid answers ( $N = 211$ ), integrity accounted for the substantial majority (70 %), followed by experience (15 %) and competence (7 %). These personal qualifications and characteristics most important for voting criteria, furthermore, appeared substantially correlated with candidates' personal attributes as perceived among the public. Specifically, the rank-order correlation between the two sets of salience hierarchies among the personal attributes was statistically significant in

every possible case (Spearman's rho = .812;  $p = .05$  for all three cases, i.e., Morales, Sanchez, and the composite). If the public's perceptions of candidates' personal attributes were shaped by the media, this result would be evidence of priming as a consequence of attribute setting, in other words, attribute priming (Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan, 2002).

Table 4-5. Most Important Problems Facing Texas and for Voting Decision-Making

Issues	MIPs in Texas	Voting Criteria
Economy	22 %	22 %
Education	27	33
Energy & Environment	9	7
Health care	5	7
Immigration & Border	7	4
Insurance	.3	.5
Law & Enforcement	7	4
Racial Issues	.6	1
Social Welfare	3	2
Taxes & Spending	6	8
Tobacco Controversy	0	0
Transportation	9	3
Values & Trust	1	1
Other Issues	4	6
Total (n)	363 <sup>a</sup>	203 <sup>b</sup>

NOTES: <sup>a</sup> Multiple answers counted.

<sup>b</sup> Only the first answers counted.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Results for Hypotheses**

#### **ATTRIBUTE AGENDA FORMATION: HYPOTHESES 1, 2, & 3**

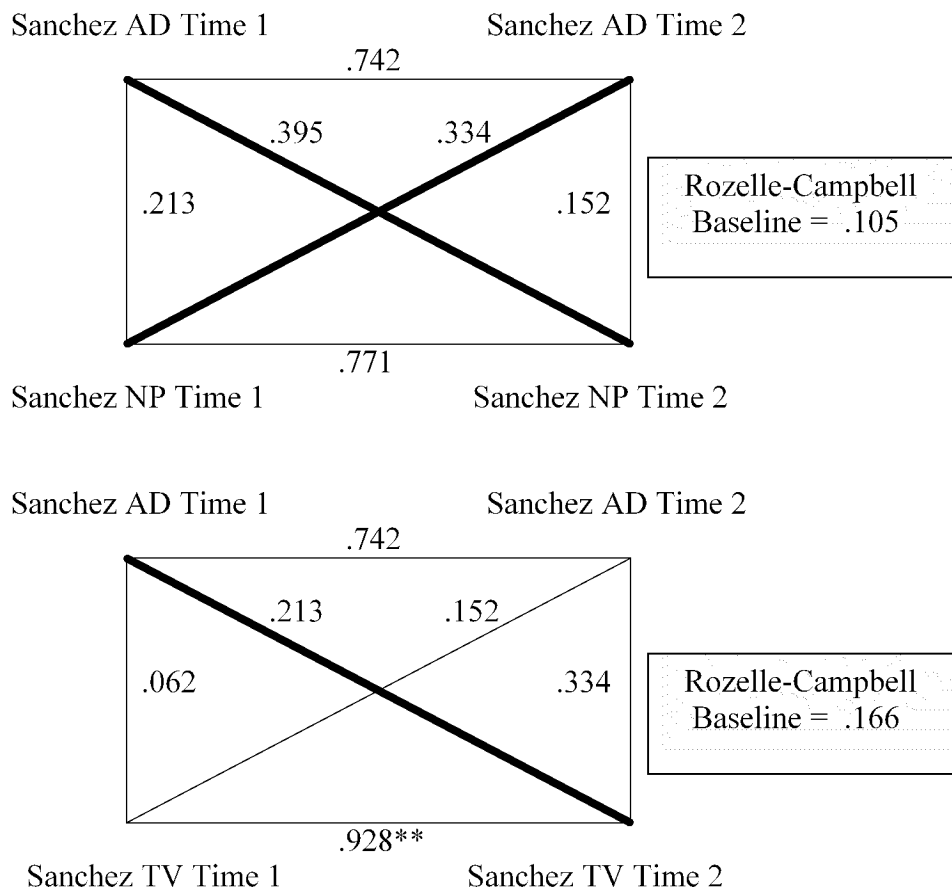
The hypotheses addressing the process of agenda formation posited that candidate ads would significantly influence how the news media cover the candidates (H1), while assuming that the print media also would shape subsequent patterns of candidate coverage in television news (H2). To examine these hypotheses, this study divided the principal study period into two sub-periods, with the first period being from 1 to 20 February, and the second one ranging from 21 February to 11 March. This created two data points, thus making it possible to conduct a cross-lagged correlation analysis. This approach was also employed by Roberts and McCombs (1994) when they demonstrated a substantial level of advertising effects on subsequent electoral coverage in a Texas gubernatorial election.

#### **Interactions between Campaign Ads and the News Media (H1)**

The cross-lagged analyses presented in Figure 5-1 provide partial support for the significant role of campaign ads in the formation of news agendas of candidate attributes. The first hypothesis, again, was tested only with the Sanchez ads, more specifically, the positive ads sponsored by Sanchez, since the ads featuring Morales's attributes (i.e., Sanchez's attack ads) were available only in the second half. While the results do not show strong cross-sectional or cross-

lagged relationships between campaign ads and news, comparisons of the two cross-lag correlations with the Rozelle-Campbell baseline indicate that there was modest causal influence from candidate spots to subsequent television coverage. Specifically, the diagonal correlation coefficient from Sanchez ads at time 1 to his TV coverage at time 2 (.213) was greater than the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (.166) while the reverse correlation (.152) was not. Otherwise stated, Sanchez's

Figure 5-1. Cross-Lagged Spearman's Rho Correlations between Advertising and News Media Agendas of Overall Candidate Attributes



Notes: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

advocacy ads shaped to a modest degree how local newscasts presented the candidate, rather than vice versa. The ads and the local newspaper in this particular election showed a stronger yet mutual relationship.

### **Interactions between Newspaper and Broadcast News (H2)**

The data analyses outlined in Figure 5-2 substantiated H2. That is, the cross-lagged rank-order correlation between the print coverage at time 1 and the electronic coverage at time 2 appeared statistically significant, while the reverse correlation did not. This pattern proves true whether the news agenda was the composite constructed across the two candidates or disaggregated by each candidate. Although comparing the cross-lagged correlations with the Rozelle-Campbell baseline indicates that there existed some reciprocal relationships between the newspaper and television agendas of candidate attributes, rather than unidirectional ones, the relative magnitudes of the correlations still attest to the newspaper's leading role in the inter-media processes of agenda formation.

### **Tone of Presentation as a Moderator of Agenda Formation (H3)**

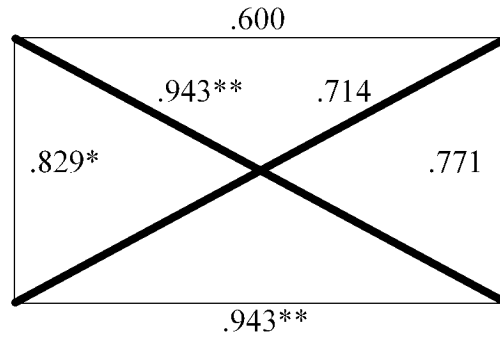
The moderating role of the tone of the advertising, more specifically, the effectiveness of negative advertising in forming news agendas (H3) was tested by comparing the correlations of the attack and advocacy ad agendas with the news agendas. Since only the Sanchez ads were available in the study period, the attack agenda refers to the attributes characterizing Morales that were emphasized in Sanchez's negative ads, while the advocacy agenda means the Sanchez attributes

Figure 5-2. Cross-Lagged Spearman's Rho Correlations between Newspaper and

Television Agendas of Overall Candidate Attributes

Combined NP Time 1

Combined NP Time 2



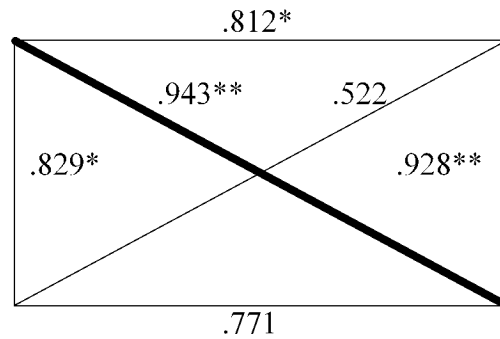
Rozelle-Campbell  
Baseline = .632

Combined TV Time 1

Combined TV Time 2

Morales NP Time 1

Morales NP Time 2



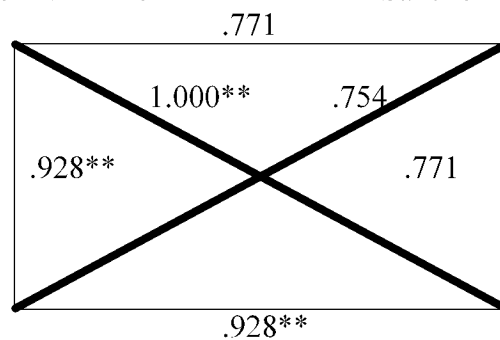
Rozelle-Campbell  
Baseline = .696

Morales TV Time 1

Morales TV Time 2

Sanchez NP Time 1

Sanchez NP Time 2



Rozelle-Campbell  
Baseline = .717

Sanchez TV Time 1

Sanchez TV Time 2

Notes: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

that he promoted in his own ads. Attack agendas, therefore, were paired with the news coverage of Morales, whereas advocacy agendas were compared with the Sanchez attributes on the news agenda. It should be noted, however, that the correlations were based only on the data from the second half because negative ads were available only in that period and, thus, represented completely cross-sectional relationships.

As Table 5-1 shows, the correlation between the attack agenda and the news agenda of Morales attributes is much higher than that between the advocacy agenda and the news agenda of Sanchez attributes, regardless of newspaper or television. Although the correlations between the ad and news agendas of Morales attributes are not statistically significant at the .05 level, they are fairly strong. This suggests that negative advertising is more effective in getting free coverage than is its positive counterpart. The news media may respond more enthusiastically to how a candidate is described by her or his opponent than to how the candidate frames her/himself. The results, however, may also mean that

Table 5-1. Spearman's Rho Correlations Between Attack/Advocacy Advertising and News Agendas of Candidate Attributes

Media Agendas	Morales		Sanchez	
	Newspaper	TV	Newspaper	TV
Sanchez Ads				
Attack Agenda	.770	.698		
Advocacy Agenda			.152	.334



attack ads are more responsive to candidate coverage than are their advocacy counterparts, perhaps because critiques should be made based upon more valid grounds, compared to self-promotions, in order to minimize public cynicism and counterattacks. In conclusion, the data provide only indirect support for the hypothesis positing the effectiveness of negative advertising in news agenda formation.

#### **ATTRIBUTE AGENDA SETTING: HYPOTHESES 4, 5, 6, & 7**

The candidate attributes were ranked-ordered per agenda (i.e., campaign ads, print news, broadcast news, and the public), and these different sets of rank orders were correlated with each other. Since the interviews of the public were carried out between the middle and the end of the campaign (i.e., mostly in the second half), some time lag was assumed to exist between the public's exposure to the media and the opinion survey. This may not perfectly meet the condition of temporal difference between a cause and an output, which is one of the three requirements for substantiating a causal relationship (Babbie, 2001). The rank-order correlations between the media and public agendas, therefore, are not totally sufficient to show the direction of causal influence between the two, by any means. Combined with the theory of agenda setting and plentiful evidence in previous studies, however, the correlations of the two agendas based upon a temporal gap between them does provide at least a partial indicator of whether the media influenced the public's perceptions of the candidates.

#### Advertising Attribute Setting (H4)

Hypothesis 4 posited that candidate advertising would significantly influence the public's perceptions of the candidates. To test this hypothesis, rank-order correlations were computed between the advertising and the public agendas of each candidate's attributes. The first column in Table 5-2 presents the results of the two separate tests for this hypothesis. Although both correlations of advertising agendas with public agendas are positive, neither is statistically significant, providing little support for the paid media's attribute setting function. Since the correlations were computed without controlling the potential influence of the other media, they actually represented both the independent and interdependent impacts of campaign ads.

Table 5-2. Zero-and Second-Order Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Media Agendas

Public Agenda \ Media Agenda	TV Ads	Newspaper	TV News
Dan Morales	.395 ( .512) <sup>a</sup>	.257 ( .456)	.143 ( - .511)
Tony Sanchez	.174 ( .550)	.771 ( .835)	.486 ( - .621)
<i>N</i>	5932 <sup>b</sup>	1031	556

*N* = total number of assertions about candidate attributes identified in the content analysis

<sup>a</sup> The numbers in the parentheses are the second-order partial correlations.

<sup>b</sup> This number represents the total number of attribute assertions, multiplied by the number of the broadcasting frequencies.

There are, however, some noteworthy patterns. First of all, the correlation of the public agenda with the advertising agenda is higher for Morales than for Sanchez. As explained above, the ad agenda for Morales consists of his attributes addressed in Sanchez's negative ads, while the ad agenda for Sanchez is comprised of his images underscored in his own advocacy ads. This finding, therefore, may also indicate the relative effectiveness of negative advertising in transplanting candidate images in the public's minds. This point will be examined in more detail later in this section.

Interestingly, the agenda-setting influence of campaign ads becomes stronger when holding the impacts of news agendas constant, as shown in their second-order partial correlations. This is especially so when it comes to the brand-new candidate's self-promoting ads. This result suggests that the news agendas tended to counteract rather than to amplify the advertising agenda, especially of the Sanchez attributes, in the actual campaign context. Overall, the data do not provide strong evidence for advertising attribute setting.

### **News Media Attribute Setting (H5)**

Based upon extensive reviews of previous agenda-setting studies, Hypothesis 5 predicted a significant level of news media effects in setting candidate attributes. The second and third columns in Table 5-2 present how the news media's presentations of the Democratic candidates correlated with how the voters perceived the candidates per medium and per candidate. As the table

shows, none of the rank-order correlations is statistically significant at the .05 level, failing to reject the null hypotheses.

The correlations, however, reveal some interesting patterns. First, the news media, regardless of print or electronic, showed stronger impacts on the public's perceptions of Sanchez than on those of Morales. This finding can be interpreted in the context of this particular race. Specifically, unlike Morales, a renowned politician who had long-time experience in state politics, Sanchez was a political newcomer who had just been picked up by the Democratic leadership and had never run for any election before. In other words, people might already know at least something about Morales, while most of them might not be familiar even with the name of Tony Sanchez. The voters, therefore, might have a higher level of uncertainty for the political novice than for the former Attorney General, and this could have enhanced their need for information about Sanchez. According to Weaver (1977), people with a higher need for orientation show higher agenda-setting susceptibility, and this may well explain why the public agenda shows a higher level of correspondence with the news agenda of Sanchez attributes than with that of Morales attributes. The correlation between the local newspaper coverage of Sanchez and his images among the public, especially, is quite strong, though not statistically significant at the .05 level ( $p = .072$ ).

Second, the print media reveal greater attribute-setting correlations than the broadcasting media for both candidates. This finding further supports the newspaper's role as an agenda initiator for the broadcast news, the relationship addressed in H2. The print-public correlations become even stronger when

Table 5-3. Quasi Cross-Lag Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Media Agendas

Media Agenda at Time 1 \ Public Agenda	TV Ads	Newspaper	TV News
Dan Morales	N/A	.143	.143
Tony Sanchez	.273	.486	.609

controlling for the potential influence of other media, as indicated in their second-order correlations. The partial correlations for the broadcast news, meanwhile, suggest that the relationship of television news with the public consisted mostly of spurious associations, not of the direct effects that the medium independently yielded. Overall, the data analyses provide partial support for the news media's attribute setting; the newspaper exerted a moderate level of influence on the public's images of one of the major candidates.

A quasi cross-lag analysis reported in Table-5-3 supports most of these findings. This analysis aims at grasping a more correct picture of the causal relationships between the media and the public by relating the media agenda at time 1 with the public agenda that was measured mainly at time 2.<sup>3</sup> Although all of the correlations are statistically insignificant, the quasi cross-lag correlations show that the news media had greater influence on the Sanchez images than on

<sup>3</sup> As such, since the public agenda had largely one data point, a normal cross-lag analysis was not possible to be executed.

the Morales images. In this analysis, however, television news appears to have exerted greater attribute-setting impacts.

Figure 5-3 shows how the rank-order correlations between the media and the public agendas varied depending on the level of exposure. Regardless of whether newspaper or television news, the agenda-setting effects were greater among the people having a moderate level of exposure (1 to 4 days per week) than among those having two extreme levels of exposure (i.e., none or more than

Figure 5-3. Spearman's Rho Correlations between the Media and the Public Agendas of Candidate Attributes by the Level of Exposure

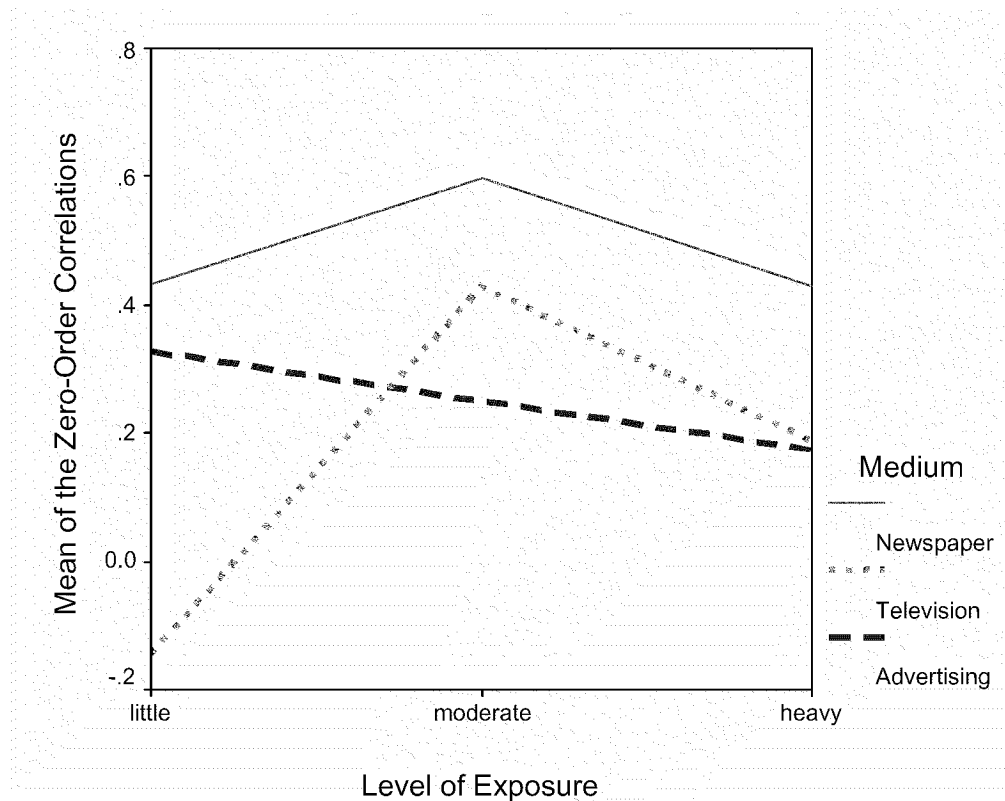
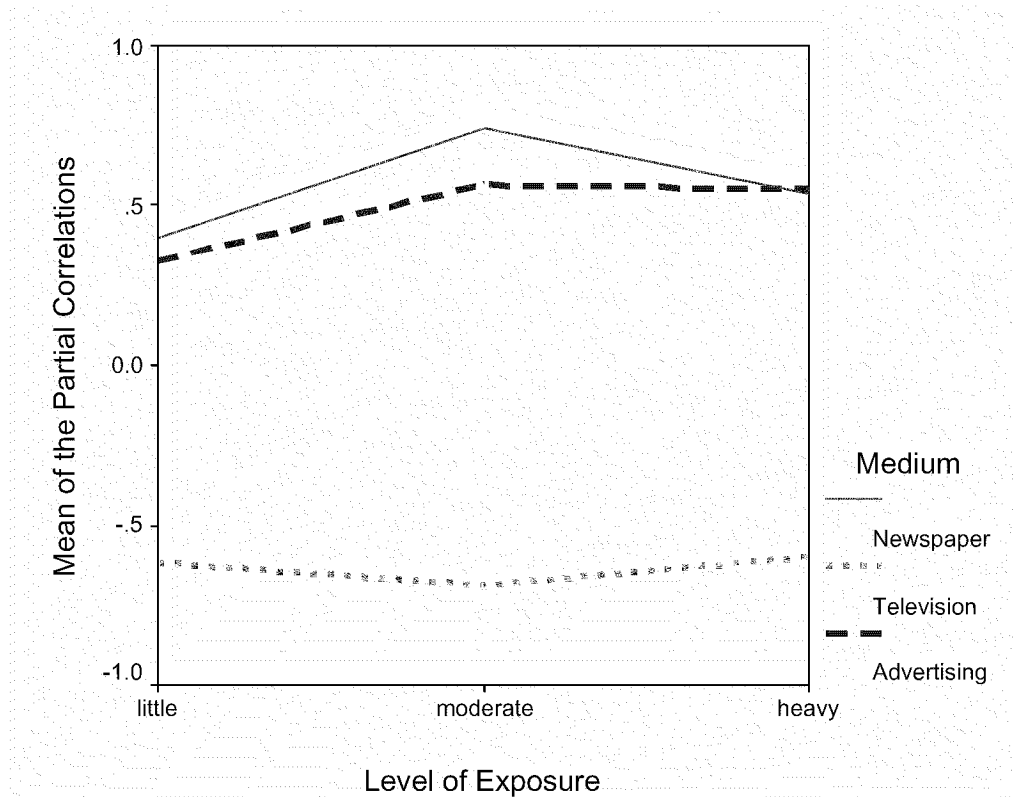


Figure 5-4. Second-Order Spearman's Rho Correlations between the Media and the Public Agendas of Candidate Attributes by the Level of Exposure (Controlling for the Influence from Other Media)



5 days per week). This is probably because people in the middle-exposure group might have a higher level of uncertainty compared to the most frequent news watchers. People in the heavy-exposure group, on the contrary, might have a greater level of political interest, yet they might also have strong predispositions.

The slope coefficient for the advertising-public correlations by the level of exposure, however, is negative, although slow, indicating that the campaign ads

had little influence on the voters' candidate images. The figure also shows that the mean correlation with the public agenda across the two candidates is highest for the print media in all three groups of different exposure levels. Among the people having at least a moderate level of exposure, campaign ads showed the least agenda-setting influence.

The partial media-public correlations by the level of exposure, however, display somewhat different patterns, as shown in Figure 5-4. That is, when taking into account only the independent and unique impact of each medium, television news reveals negative attribute-setting influence in all three exposure-groups. While the newspaper remains as the strongest source of the public's candidate images, political ads exhibit at least a modest level of independent attribute-setting effects.

### **Attribute Agenda Setting in the Nominating Stage (H6)**

Why did the primary data not provide statistically significant evidence of the media's attribute-setting function? This question makes the study turn to Hypothesis 6, which expected that the media's agenda setting influence would be greater in the dimension of candidates' personal attributes than of their issue-relevant attributes, in the primary election.

This is because the race for nomination is an intra-party competition where issue priorities may matter less to the voters' decision-making than do candidates' personal attributes. In other words, people may have a higher interest in personal information than in issue positions. Examining the media's agenda-



setting function in more specific sub-dimensions of attributes will also provide a more precise picture of how the media function in framing candidate images among the public.

***Attribute Agenda Setting in the Issue Dimension***

Before testing attribute agenda setting in specific sub-dimensions, the study examines how the agenda of each campaign communication outlet and the

Figure 5-5. The Media and Public Agendas of Morales Attributes

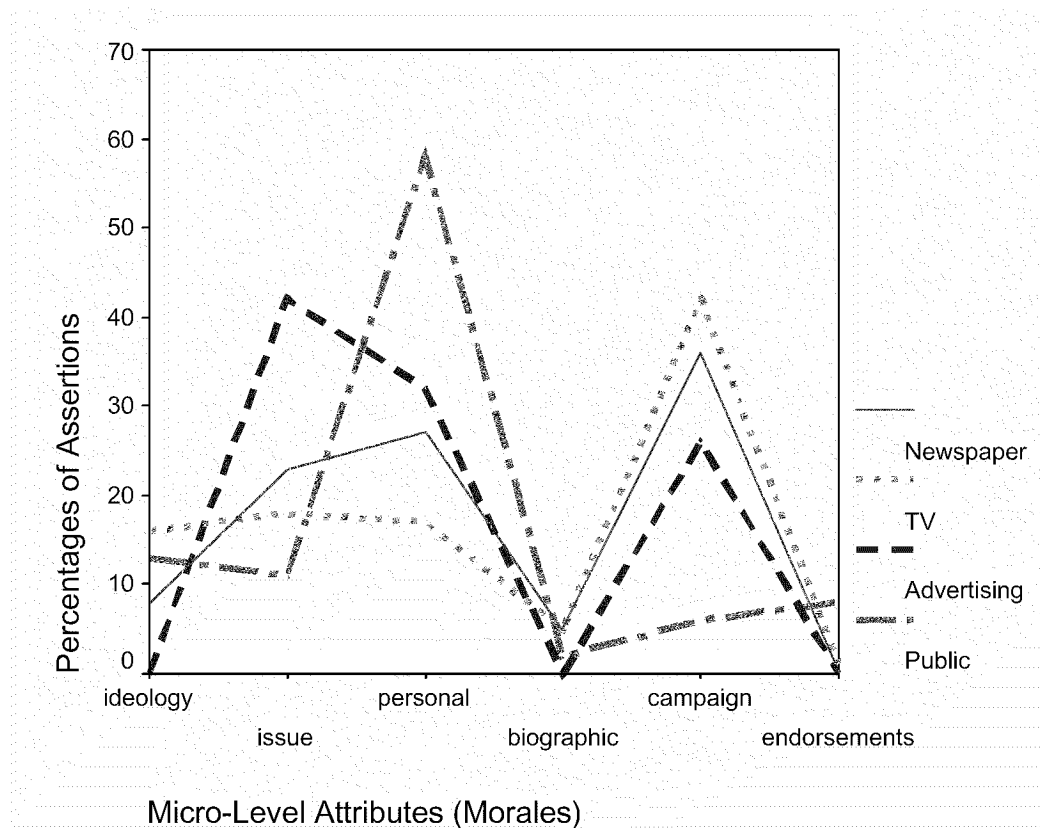
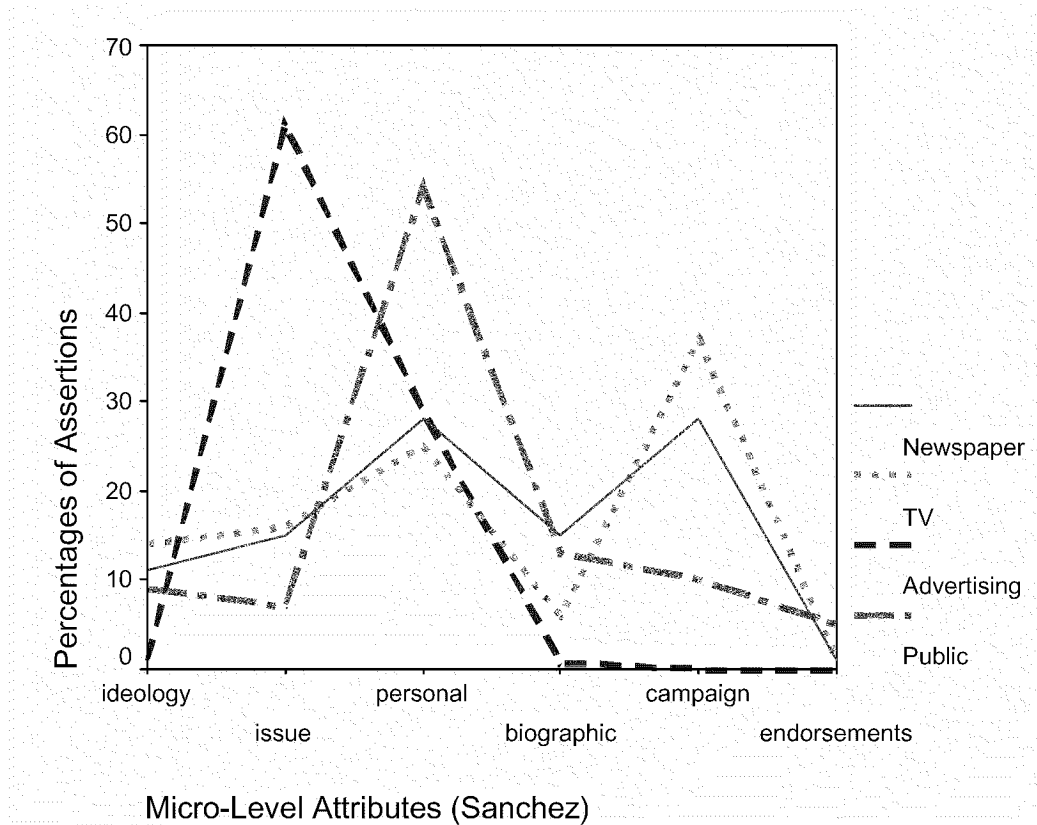


Figure 5-6. The Media and Public Agendas of Sanchez Attributes



public agenda converge or differ in projecting the images of the political candidates. The results are displayed in Figures 5-5 and 5-6.

According to the figures, political ads played primarily the role of delivering the candidates' issue concerns to the public, while television news functioned mainly as a channel of detailing their campaign activities. While campaign conduct was also the most frequent topic of the newspaper in presenting the candidates, it also invested a substantial portion of the space to illustrating the

candidates' personas. The primary voters, meanwhile, most of the time thought of the candidates in terms of their experience, competence, integrity, etc. All these patterns appeared consistent, regardless of which candidate was the object. As noted earlier and as indicated in the above analysis, issue and personal attributes are the most important "substantial" dimensions of candidate images.

This section, in this respect, focuses first on the media's attribute setting in the issue dimension. As shown in the previous chapter, the issue dimension of candidate attributes consists of 12 different items when excluding the "others" category. Table 5-4 displays the correlations between the media and the public hierarchies of salience among those 12 issues.

The patterns of media agenda setting in the issue dimension of candidate attributes are similar to those of overall attribute setting reported earlier in this section. First, while most of the correlations are statistically insignificant, the

Table 5-4. Zero- and Second-Order Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Media Agenda in the Issue Dimension of Attributes

Public Agenda \ Media Agenda	Advertising	Newspaper	Television
	Dan Morales	.659* (.662*) <sup>a</sup>	.314 (.157)
Tony Sanchez	.344 (.043)	.445 (.141)	.514 (.260)

\* $p < .05$

<sup>a</sup> The numbers in the parentheses are the second-order partial correlations.

news media appear to have exerted slightly greater effects on the public's images of Sanchez than on those of Morales. When controlling for the influence from the other media, however, the news media seemed to have almost equal independent impacts on the public's perception of each candidate.

Secondly, the correspondence of the advertising agenda with the public agenda was stronger for Morales than for Sanchez, with the correlation for Morales being statistically significant. This pattern becomes even more evident when removing the interdependent portions from the impacts of campaign ads, as indicated in their second-order correlations. That is, Sanchez's attack ads significantly affected the voters' views of Morales in terms of the issues with which the candidate was most associated, while the extensive volume of Sanchez's own advocacy ads failed to increase the salience of his favorite issues in the public's descriptions of the candidate. This result, again, indirectly attests to the relative effectiveness of negative advertising in transplanting attribute salience in the public's minds.

Unlike overall attribute setting, however, the newspaper did not show a better performance in setting candidate images, compared to four local television stations, in the issue dimension. Rather, the candidates' issue attributes in television news were slightly more similar to the components of the public images than were those in print news. Comparing the relative magnitudes of the correlations suggests that the campaign ads exerted the greatest impact on the individuals' perceptions of the candidates' issue priorities. The median value of the correlations for television ads is .502, while those for the print media and

Table 5-5. Quasi Cross-Lag Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Media Agendas in the Issue Dimension of Attributes

Media Agenda at Time 1 \ Public Agenda	TV Ads	Newspaper	TV News
Dan Morales	N/A	.467	.319
Tony Sanchez	.328	.412	.465

the electronic media are .380 and .481, respectively. Overall, the mass media, except for negative campaign ads, were not stunningly successful in shaping the issue dimension of candidate images among the public.

The quasi cross-lag analysis reported in Table 5-5 also shows that the media had insignificant impacts on the public agenda of candidates' issues. In this analysis, however, it is not clear which media were the most successful in independently setting candidate images, or whether the media showed greater influence on the public's perception of one candidate than of the other.

#### ***Attribute Setting in the Personal Dimension***

The personal dimension of candidate attributes is comprised of the following six elements representing the candidates' personal qualifications and character: leadership, experience, competence, integrity, empathy, and

styles/personalities. Table 5-6 presents the correlations between the mass media and the voter agendas of these personal attributes.

As expected, the mass media, especially the free media, appear to have been more successful in telling people what to think most about the candidates' qualities and personas than about their issue priorities. The local newspaper exerted the strongest and statistically significant effects on the relative salience of personal attributes in the electorate's minds, regardless of which candidate is under consideration. Television news also showed substantial influence on the voters' perceptions in this dimension. The paid media, however, had insignificant effects, regardless of their tone of presentation.

Contrary to the patterns of attribute setting both overall and in the issue dimension, the media's attribute-setting effects in the personal dimension were greater for Morales than for Sanchez in all three outlets of campaign communication. The quasi cross-lag analysis in the personal dimension provides

Table 5-6. Zero- and Second-Order Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Media Agenda in the Personal Dimension of Attributes

Public agenda \ Media agenda	Advertising	Newspaper	Television
	Dan Morales	.372 (- .150) <sup>a</sup>	.928** (.787)
Tony Sanchez	.319 (- .150)	.886* (.366)	.725 (.195)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

<sup>a</sup> The numbers in the parentheses are the second-order partial correlations.

Table 5-7. Quasi Cross-Lag Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Media Agendas in the Personal Dimension of Attributes

Media Agenda at Time 1 \ Public Agenda	TV Ads	Newspaper	TV News
Dan Morales	N/A	.941**	.880*
Tony Sanchez	.152	.928**	.759

strong support for all these findings, as indicated in Table 5-7.

The media's partial correlations with the public agenda showed a somewhat different story. The magnitudes of the media-public relationships decreased to a considerable degree in all three media, indicating that a medium's agenda-setting influence in the personal dimension consisted mainly of the interaction effects with other media. The newspaper, however, still showed greater impacts than any other media on people's perceptions of candidate qualifications and character, especially those of Morales' persona.

The expectation of H6 for the media's greater influence on personal attributes than on issue attributes can indirectly be tested by comparing the results in Table 5-4 with those in Table 5-5. The hypothesis is supported only in the case of news media; the patterns of the news media's attribute setting reveal a clear difference between the two dimensions. The news-public correlations are statistically significant or substantially high in the personal dimension whereas

they are insignificant and relatively low in the issue dimension. In other words, the likelihood that the public thought of a candidate in terms of the attributes salient in the news was much higher in the personal dimension than in the issue dimension. This tendency was more evident in the citizens' perceptions of the long-time state politician than of the political novice.

In contrast, the advertising media, especially oppositional campaign ads, show greater effectiveness in salience transfer in the issue dimension than in the personal dimension, which provides little support for H6. That is, as Patterson and McClure (1976) contend, political advertising appeared to function as a more effective tool for delivering more substantive issue-information than for shaping the public's impression of candidates' personas.

Table 5-8 displays the median media-public correlations calculated across the two candidates per medium and per dimension. These correlations confirm the news media's greater influence on personal attributes than on issue attributes once again. Whether this significant transfer of personal attribute salience from the

Table 5-8. The Median Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda with the Media Agenda in the Issue and Personal Dimension of Attributes

Public Agenda \ Media Agenda	Advertising	Newspaper	Television
Issue Dimension	.502	.380	.481
Personal Dimension	.345	.909	.760



news media to the public's minds further influenced the electoral outcomes, therefore, should be the focal point in exploring the consequences of attribute agenda setting.

### **The Moderating Role of Advertising Tone in Attribute Agenda Setting (H7)**

Regarding the moderating role of the tone of message presentation, the study expected that negative advertising, more than its positive counterpart, would enhance the transfer of attribute salience from the advertising agenda to the public agenda. Since Morales had no televised ads during the period of study, however, it was not possible to test directly whether the public's images of a candidate reflected his opponent's attack ads more than his own advocacy ads. This could, instead, be indirectly investigated by comparing Sanchez's positive ads with his negative spots in their attribute-setting effectiveness.

Table 5-9 presents the rank-order correlations between the advertising and the public agendas, calculated in terms of the tone of presentation (negative versus positive) and two important sub-dimensions (issue versus personal attributes). Second-order partial correlations, as presented in the parentheses, were also computed for each case, controlling for the potential influence of the news media.

Overall, Sanchez's negative commercials exerted greater impacts on the citizens' perception of his opponent than did his positive spots on the public's images of himself. When the analysis focuses on the issue dimension, the relative effectiveness of negative advertising appears more evident. The correspondence

Table 5-9. Zero- and Second-Order Spearman's Rho Correlations of the Public Agenda for Each Candidate with the Advertising Agendas

Public Agenda Ad Agenda	Overall	Issue Dimension	Personal Dimension
Negative Ads (Morales)	.395 (.512) <sup>a</sup>	.659* (.662*)	.372 (- .150)
Positive Ads (Sanchez)	.174 (.273)	.344 (.043)	.319 (- .150)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

<sup>a</sup> The numbers in the parentheses are the second-order partial correlations.

of the Morales agenda of issue attributes presented in Sanchez's attack ads with the public's images of Morales is statistically significant, while the relationship between Sanchez's positive ads and his public images is not meaningful. While the difference between negative and positive ads in agenda-setting effectiveness is smallest in the personal dimension, both tones of ads had insignificant impacts in the dimension.

These patterns remain almost the same after holding the influence from the news media constant. The relative effectiveness of attack strategies in the issue dimension becomes even stronger since the effects of advocacy ads significantly decreased when controlling for the other media. The results, therefore, provide at least partial support for H7, indicating that issue attacks may be more effective than personal attacks in molding the public's images of the rival candidates.

## **ELECTORAL CONSEQUENCES OF ATTRIBUTE AGENDA SETTING: H8**

### **Attribute Priming Effects**

From the perspective of priming as a direct result of agenda setting, it was assumed that elements transferred from campaign ads and the news media to the public's minds may function as important voting criteria. This hypothesis can be tested by correlating the mass media agendas with the voting agenda among the public (i.e., the criteria that people considered particularly important for making a choice in the primary). For this analysis, the public opinion survey asked the respondents which issues, or which candidate qualifications and personal characteristics, they would take into account when deciding for whom to vote. The media agendas were constructed as a combined agenda across the two candidates.

As presented in Table 5-10, the priming effects of the mass media were observed only in the dimension of personal attributes, not in the issue dimension, providing partial support for H8. This finding is consistent with the results regarding the media's attribute agenda setting described in previous sections. In the personal dimension, the news media, both newspaper and television, showed significant effects on priming the elements salient in their candidate coverage as the public's criteria for political choice. Whereas the print media exerted greater attribute-setting effects, television news showed larger priming impacts.

Campaign ads also exercised substantial influence, although not statistically significant, on which personal attributes the public considered most

Table 5-10. Zero- and Second-Order Spearman's Rho Correlations between Media Agendas and the Public's Voting Criteria

Mass Media Agenda \ Voting Criteria	Advertising	Newspaper	Television
Issue Dimension	.224 ( .094) <sup>a</sup>	.039 (- .107)	.218 ( .169)
Personal Dimension	.721 ( .423)	.841* (.634)	.956** ( .191)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

<sup>a</sup> The numbers in the parentheses are the second-order partial correlations.

seriously when casting a ballot. The substantiality of advertising impacts on voting criteria in the personal dimension, however, may not be the outcome of the medium's attribute setting since campaign ads had little influence on the public agenda of candidates' personal attributes, as reported in the previous section.

The insignificance of the priming effects in the issue dimension indicate that the mass media were, in general, not successful in making people decide in terms of the issues that the media most emphasized in portraying the candidates. This does not mean that issues did not matter at all to the primary outcomes. Some issues might play an important role in shaping the electoral outcomes, yet the importance of those issues in the voters' minds came neither from campaign ads nor from the news media's candidate coverage, but from somewhere else.

When controlling for the potential influence from other media, the magnitudes of the media effects on the public agenda of voting criteria decreased greatly for all three media, but especially for the electronic media. This result

indicates that television's priming effects consisted mostly of the interaction effects with the other media. The media's partial priming effects, however, are still greater in the personal dimension than in the issue dimension. After eliminating other media's influence, the newspaper still exerted larger influence than any other media in making people rely on those candidate qualifications and characteristics most salient in its coverage in their decision-making process.

The relative saliencies among the personal attributes referred to as important voting criteria, meanwhile, significantly correlated with each candidate's and the combined agenda of personal attributes identified in the public's descriptions (Spearman's  $\rho = .812$ ;  $p = .05$  for all three cases, i.e., Morales, Sanchez, and composite). That is, how the voters perceived the candidates significantly related to what they considered most important when deciding for whom to vote. As noted earlier, this might be evidence of priming as a direct consequence of attribute setting, in other words, attribute priming as conceptualized by Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2002).

### **Direct Salience Effects**

The significant correlations between the news media and the public agendas of candidate attributes and voting criteria in the personal dimension are evidence of the media's priming effects as a result of attribute agenda setting. Now the study focuses on the direct effects of the public saliencies of certain candidate attributes as voting criteria on individuals' political preference and behavior. By and large, the media, paid or unpaid, did not significantly affect how

the public's images of the candidates were composed in terms of the six macro attributes (i.e., political & ideological orientation, issue considerations, personal qualifications and character, biographic background, campaign conduct, and endorsements). In other words, the media and the public agendas did not correspond well in terms of the relative salience among the macro attributes.

When the analysis focused on micro-level attributes, however, it was found that the news media had meaningful effects on personal attribute salience in the voters' candidate perceptions and on their voting criteria, as expected in H6. In this regard, the consequences of agenda setting will be investigated, focusing on the personal dimension of candidate attributes and the news media. This approach can also be theoretically justified. As discussed in Chapter 2, the primary voters may have a higher level of need for orientation toward candidates' personal information than toward their political/policy emphases. Otherwise put, in the nominating stage, candidates' personal qualifications and character that the voters learn from the media can function as more important heuristics for them to employ when making a political choice. Two indicators of important political outcomes, that is, candidate preference and vote intention as measured in the telephone survey, will be examined as the consequences of attribute agenda setting.

### ***Personal Attribute Salience and Candidate Preference***

The direct effects of personal attribute setting were first explored in the attitudinal dimension. Specifically, the study inquired whether the transfer from

the news media salience to public salience further influences one's political preference, here, candidate favorability. Specifically, people's relative candidate favorability was regressed on the variables indicating the saliencies of particular personal attributes and other control-purpose variables. Candidate net-favorability as the dependent variable was constructed by subtracting one's favorability ratings for Morales from those for Sanchez.

Most importantly, the regression model included three salience variables concerning the top three personal attributes most prominent on the news agenda (i.e., experience, integrity, and competence). Each attribute-salience variable was constructed as an indicator of whether or not a given respondent answered with the attribute under consideration as the most important voting criterion, with a "0" indicating the attribute as not salient and a "1" meaning salient in the respondent's mind.

The regression analysis also involved several issue-salience variables as independent variables. Incorporating some issue variables considerably increased the goodness of fit of the model. This strategy was also aimed at avoiding some misspecification errors. Those issue variables included in the model concerned the saliencies of education and the economy, the top two issues that the respondents considered as the most important problems facing the state of Texas and the most important voting criteria. Specifically, including these two variables significantly increased the explanatory power of the model according to the F-test for the R-squared increase ( $F = 4.436$ ;  $df = 2, 84$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Although campaign ads and the news media did not appear to account significantly for the prominence of those

issues in the public's minds, the issues, especially the economy, traditionally play a critical role in shaping people's candidate preference (King, 2001; Lewis-Beck and Rice, 1992). Campaign attention, levels of newspaper and television exposure, and such demographic variables as gender, age, education, income, and race/ethnicity were included as controlling factors in the regression. Advertising exposure was not included since it added little contribution to the performance of the model. The factor of race/ethnicity was re-constructed as a dichotomous variable with a "0" meaning Whites and a "1" indicating non-Whites. As a result, the original EQ (1) formulated in Chapter 2 was modified into the following:

$$Y_1 = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_1 + \alpha_2 X_2 + \alpha_3 X_3 + \alpha_4 X_4 + \alpha_5 X_5 + \text{control variables} + E$$

--EQ (1)

Where,

$Y_1$ : Interval variable indicating one's net candidate preference

$X_1$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives experience as the most important voting criterion

$X_2$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives integrity as the most important voting criterion

$X_3$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives competence as the most important voting criterion

$X_4$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives education as the most important problem facing the state of Texas



$X_5$ : Dummy variable indicating whether a given voter perceives the economy as the most important problem facing the state of Texas

Control variables: levels of news media exposure, attention to campaigns, age, gender, education and income levels, and race/ethnicity

E: Disturbance term

Table 5-11 presents the results of this regression analysis. The results demonstrate the direct effects of the public saliencies of the three personal attributes on candidate preference. That is, whether a given voter perceived experience or competence as the most important personal attribute when deciding their leader significantly mattered to her/his net candidate favorability. The salience of morality, the most important personal quality that the respondents thought their governor should have, as well as the second most salient aspect of the news media's candidate coverage, was not significant at the .05 level, yet still had a substantial level of impact on the relative favorability ratings ( $p = .056$ ). Although their salience appeared to come mostly from non-media sources, economic issues also performed a significant role in shaping the voters' relative preferences between the two candidates, a finding documented in previous studies.

Interestingly, the more salient these elements were in a voter's mind, the less likely s/he was to favor Sanchez rather than Morales. That is, the  $\beta$  values for

Table 5-11. Regression of Candidate Net-Favorability on Personal-Attribute Salience Variables

Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$
Experience	- 1.538	.757	- 2.032**
Morality	- .729	.376	- 1.939*
Competence	- 1.861	.866	- 2.149**
Educational issues	- .438	.381	- 1.151
Economic issues	- 1.443	.484	- 2.983***
Newspaper use	.056	.230	.246
Television use	- .346	.234	- 1.479
Attention to campaign	- .297	.253	- 1.175
Gender	.759	.341	2.229**
Age	.097	.202	.479
Education level	- .039	.186	- .207
Income	- .034	.052	- .653
Race/ethnicity	.729	.449	1.624
Constant	.937	1.412	

Full Model:  $\underline{R} = .502$ ;  $\underline{R}^2 = .252$ ;  $SEE = 1.59$ ;  $\underline{F} = 2.180$  (df = 97),  $\underline{p} = .017$   
 \* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$

the personal- and issue-salience variables were all negative, indicating that the saliencies of those attributes decreased the voters' relative preferences toward Sanchez, probably because the candidate was considered less experienced and competent, although not particularly less honorable.

These findings are also consistent with previous documentation that the public's appraisal of competence usually functions as the most significant factor

in overall candidate evaluation when competence is broadly conceptualized to encompass attributes related to experience (e.g., Kinder, 1985). Among various control variables, only gender appeared to have significant effects on candidate preference. Specifically, there was a noticeable tendency to prefer Sanchez to Morales among female voters. Male voters, in contrast, had more favorable feelings toward Morales. The levels of media exposure and campaign involvement and other demographic variables showed little power in explaining whom the voters felt more favorable about. The independent factors included in the equation altogether explained about 25 % of the variation in the dependent variable.

The number of cases included in the analysis was 98. Only 40 % of the participants in the survey expressed how they felt about the primary candidates. This may be because it was just the beginning of the statewide election when most people might not be interested in the race or informed about the candidates. The power of a statistical test, which means the power of making correct inferences about population parameters with sample statistics, or “the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false” depends considerably on sample size (Stevens, 2002, p. 5). More specifically, the null hypothesis is more likely to be rejected in larger samples than in smaller ones, given the same value of a sample statistic (Kline, 1998). This indicates that the significant impacts of the saliencies of some personal attributes on candidate favorability, demonstrated in the above regression analysis with a fairly small size of sample, could be even more evident in larger samples. To assure statistical stability of the results, however, suggests

Kline (1998), a realistic ratio of the number of subjects to the number of model parameters would be 10:1. That is, a rule of thumb is that there should be no more than 1 independent variable for each 10 cases in the sample. With the sample size of 98, therefore, this model can have about a maximum number of 9 independent variables.

Another issue is the problem of multicollinearity, the intercorrelation of independent variables. The more independent variables a model has, the more likelihood of multicollinearity. A high level of intercorrelation between independent variables increases the standard errors of the beta coefficients, thus making it difficult to assess the unique function of each independent variable as a predictor of the dependent variable. To assess multivariate multicollinearity of the current regression model, collinearity statistics, such as tolerance and variance-inflation factor (VIF), were calculated for each independent variable. None of the tolerance values was less than .20 and none of the VIFs was greater than 4, indicating that there was not a problematic level of multicollinearity. Additionally, the condition index (CI) for the model was examined since it is possible that the violation of the rule of thumb for condition indices may indicate multicollinearity, even when the rules of thumb for tolerance and VIF are met. Although the value for this model (CI = 26.9) was less than 30, the cut-off criterion for serious multicollinearity, it indicates a relatively strong level of collinearity in the model.

To address the problems of sample size and multicollinearity, the study conducted a re-modified regression analysis after dropping several control

variables from EQ (1). One of the ways to deal with multicollinearity is to exclude the variables most highly correlated with other independents, if they have relatively less theoretical importance to the model (Gujarati, 1995). According to the correlation matrix, campaign attention, newspaper exposure, age, education level, and income were significantly interrelated with each other. Among these variables, only campaign attention was chosen to be included since it added the greatest contribution to the explanatory power of the model. The residual sum of squares explained by those four variables excluded was not statistically significant ( $F = .421$ ;  $df = 4, 84$ ; n.s.).

The results of the re-modified regression are presented in Table 5-12. The indexes of the goodness of fit, such as R-squared and the standard error of estimates (SEE), suggest that the performance of the model generally remained at the same level after leaving out the four control variables. The significance tests for the slope coefficients of independent variables also show similar patterns. That is, the public salience of experience appeared to function as a more critical predictor of whom to prefer than did that of competence or morality. Other significant indicators of candidate preference include the salience of economic issues and gender. The CI for this modified model is 16.95, which indicates that multicollinearity has been reduced to a moderate level.

To cross-validate the results of this final model, a random sample of 60 % ( $N = 65$ ) was chosen from the cases included in the analysis (See Stevens, 2002, pp. 115-117 for more specific procedures of cross validation). By replicating the modified analysis for this selected sample, a specific regression equation was

Table 5-12. Modified Regression of Candidate Net-Favorability on Personal-Attribute Salience Variables

Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$
Experience	- 1.503	.712	- 2.110**
Morality	- .679	.361	- 1.879*
Competence	- 1.500	.766	- 1.959*
Educational issues	.424	.358	- 1.184
Economic issues	- 1.429	.467	- 3.059***
Television use	- .328	.226	- 1.454
Attention to campaign	.276	.239	1.154
Gender	.711	.331	2.151**
Race/ethnicity	.700	.423	1.655
Constant	- .439	.982	- .447

Full Model:  $R = .486$ ;  $R^2 = .237$ ;  $SEE = 1.56$ ;  $F = 3.064$  (df = 98),  $p = .003$   
 $*p < .10$   $**p < .05$   $***p < .01$

developed. This equation was then applied to the other sample of 40 % (N = 34) to compute the predicted values for the dependent variable (i.e., candidate net-favorability).

Cross-validation is a method to evaluate how well the regression formula obtained from one sample actually predicts for other samples drawn from the same population. That is, cross-validation is one way to determine the confidence and stability of “the predictive accuracy and the degree of relationship between

[the] linear combination of predictors [independents] and the criterion [dependent]” in one model (Grimm and Yarnold, 1995, p. 23). In the present case, the cross-validation  $R$  obtained from the second sample was .468, almost identical to the  $R$  (.452) from the first sample, and was also statistically significant. This result indicates that the predictive power of the final regression model is fairly stable across different samples from the same population.

In conclusion, these results attest to the attitudinal consequence of the salience transfer of personal attributes from the news media to the public. This transfer process might consist of the following two steps: The first step concerns the process by which the news media’s candidate coverage influenced the public’s perceptions of each candidate’s personal attributes. In the second phase, the most salient attributes in the public’s images of the candidates were transferred to their voting criteria (i.e., the personal qualifications and characteristics that people would consider most important in their choices of the leader of their state). This justifies why this study employed personal attribute saliencies as voting criteria as independent variables instead of those in the public’s candidate descriptions.

### ***Personal Attribute Salience and Voting Intention***

Secondly and more importantly, the study investigated the behavioral consequences of attribute agenda setting in the personal dimension. To test how the public saliencies of the elements prominent in candidate coverage further influenced voting choice, this study conducted a logistic regression analysis of candidate choice on the variables indicating saliencies of certain personal

attributes. Again, this regression analysis also included issue salience variables to avoid possible specification errors and increase the goodness of fit of the model. The analysis included only the voters whose prospective gubernatorial vote would be either Morales or Sanchez. The dependent variable (i.e., vote choice), therefore, was dichotomous, with a “0” meaning a Morales ballot and a “1” indicating a Sanchez vote. The original EQ (2) proposed in Chapter 2 was modified into the following:

$$Y_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \text{control variables} + E \text{ ---}$$

EQ (2)<sup>4</sup>

Where,

$Y_2$ : Dummy variable indicating one’s vote choice between the two major candidates

The results of the regression analysis demonstrate the direct behavioral effects of the public saliencies of some personal attributes most emphasized in the news media’s presentations of the candidates. According to Table 5-13, whether an individual perceived experience, the most prominent factor in the news agendas of candidate attributes, as the most important qualification for the leader of the state government significantly affected her or his choice between the two Democratic candidates. Again, the prominence of this personal attribute in one’s mind decreased her or his likelihood to vote for the first-time candidate, Tony

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<sup>4</sup> The same independent and control variables as those in the modified EQ (1) were also employed in this logistic regression.



Table 5-13. Logistic Regression of the Sanchez Vote on Personal-Attribute Salience Variables

Variables	B	SE B	Wald
Experience	- 3.198	1.608	3.955**
Morality	- .681	.844	.652
Competence	- 2.509	1.734	2.095
Educational issues	.205	.846	.059
Economic issues	- .575	1.103	.272
Newspaper use	.088	.462	.036
Television use	- .196	.559	.123
Attention to campaign	.638	.501	1.622
Gender	.210	.761	.076
Age	- .033	.474	.005
Education level	- .359	.390	.844
Income	.078	.114	.473
Race/ethnicity	2.162	1.070	4.082**
Constant	- .274	2.903	.009

Full Model: -2 log likelihood = 52.75; Cox & Snell  $R^2 = .336$ ;

Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .448$

\* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$  (N = 54)

Sanchez, as indicated in its negative slope coefficient.

The saliencies of competence, morality, and other issues did not meaningfully account for the variation in the political choice for the Democratic primary. Among various control-purpose variables, only the race/ethnicity factor significantly affected the direction of voting. Specifically, non-White voters were

more likely to vote for Sanchez than were their White counterparts. The fact that minority voters tended to support Sanchez, rather than Morales, can be deemed interesting, given that the two candidates are both Hispanic.

The number of cases included in this analysis is 54, which is far less than the rule of thumb requiring at least 130 cases for the model of 13 independent variables. As discussed earlier, the collinearity statistic for the independent variables ( $CI = 26.9$ ) also indicates a possibility of strong multicollinearity. To deal with these problems, EQ (2) was re-modified so that it contained the most powerful predictors of theoretical relevance, that is, the three variables indicating personal-attribute saliencies. The backward method of regression, meanwhile, suggested campaign attention and race/ethnicity as the most significant control variables explaining the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 5-14 presents the results of this re-modified regression. The performance of the model is at almost the same level, according to the goodness-of-fit measures. The tests of significance for the partial slope coefficients of the independent variables also display similar patterns to those in the previous logistic regression. The salience of experience in one's mind, again, appeared to influence her or his choice between the two candidates, specifically increasing the likelihood of voting for the former Attorney General. Racial identity as non-Whites, in contrast, enhanced the public's intention to cast a ballot for Sanchez. The CI for this re-modified analysis was computed as 7.4, suggesting that the multicollinearity problem in the previous model had mostly been taken care of.

Table 5-14. Modified Logistic Regression of the Sanchez Vote on Personal-Attribute Salience Variables

Variables	B	SE B	Wald
Experience	- 2.634	1.340	3.860**
Morality	- .847	.729	1.350
Competence	- 2.309	1.574	2.153
Attention to Campaign	- .766	.453	2.859*
Race/ethnicity	2.341	.955	6.012**
Constant	2.381	1.454	2.682

Full Model: -2 log likelihood = 54.5; Cox & Snell  $R^2 = .323$ ;

Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .431$

\* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$  (N = 55)

These results, overall, suggest that the ways in which the news media portrayed the candidates ultimately influenced the voters' behavioral decisions. More specifically, those people who employed the judgmental cues from the news coverage focusing on candidate experience were more likely to vote for the politically experienced candidate than for his politically inexperienced rival. In conclusion, in this particular local primary election, candidates' personal attributes were the focuses of the news media and the public agendas and ultimately functioned as central heuristics for political reasoning. In other electoral settings, such as general election campaigns and national-level races, however, other aspects of candidate attributes may play a more prominent role in shaping the electoral outcomes.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The present study has explored political advertising, the news media, and the public--the three principal components of campaign communication--and their interactions in terms of agenda formation, agenda setting, and salience effects in the 2002 primary election for Texas Governor. Following the traditional methodological scheme in agenda-setting research, the study compared a content analysis of the media agenda with survey data assessing the public agenda in the particular election. By doing so, this study has shown how the mass media influence the topics and the direction of public opinion by manipulating the relative salencies of candidate attributes. This chapter aims to summarize the major findings from the data analyses and discuss their implications. The limitations of the study will then be specified, followed by the suggestions for future research.

#### **MAJOR FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Attribute Agenda Formation**

Agenda formation refers to the initial process of agenda setting by which various social and political forces compete for the limited carrying capacity of the news arena (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988). Previous studies have addressed the formation of news agendas mainly in the dimension of public issues

(Brandenburg, 2002; Buchanan, 1996; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, and Weaver, 1991). Brandenburg (2002), for instance, investigated agenda formation as the process by which “a campaign regulates the salience of issues [of the news media]” and, by way of that, influences the vote (p. 35). This study, however, has examined agenda formation, focusing on the role of political ads in shaping the news agendas of candidate attributes. As noted earlier, television ads function as a strong and efficient surrogate of the whole campaign agenda in contemporary elections, constituting the single biggest campaign expenditure.

To summarize major findings, first, the data analyses provide only partial support for the hypothesis positing campaign ads as a significant agenda setter for the news media. Specifically, there was found a kind of medium effect: televised candidate commercials meaningfully influenced subsequent candidate coverage on television, yet showed a reciprocal relationship with the print news. In other words, television news reflected the preferences of the elites (political candidates) more than did the newspaper. In Semetko and her colleagues’ (1991) terms, the electronic media played a role closer to “agenda amplifier,” while the print media’s function was closer to that of “agenda shaper.” That is, as Just, Crigler, Alger, Cook, and Kern (1996) point out, the print news tended to assign less space to campaign-initiated stories, compared to broadcast news.

Secondly, the formation of news agendas also involved the interactions among themselves of different news outlets--a local newspaper and television stations in this study. The data provided strong support for the print news’s role as

an agenda initiator for television news. That is, the newspaper's portrayals of the primary candidates significantly affected the candidate images presented in subsequent television news.

Third, the analyses of agenda formation also revealed that the tone of presentation (negative versus positive) could moderate the effects of campaign ads on subsequent news coverage. Specifically, there existed a stronger correspondence of the news agenda with oppositional ads than with self-promoting ads, indicating the effectiveness of negativity in attracting free coverage. This finding indicates that television ads could be a better tool for a campaign to set the opponent's (unfavorable) images on the news media, rather than to promote its own candidate's (favorable) images. Since this analysis was conducted based on purely cross-sectional data, however, the result can also mean that attack ads may be more responsive and sensitive to how the news media have portrayed their opposing candidates, than are advocacy ads to how the news has covered their own sponsoring candidates. Campaign commercials frequently cite news reports as credible sources to support their messages (Jamieson, 1992), and this could be especially so when it comes to negative advertising, in order to justify attacks and minimize possible counterattacks and ad-watch critiques. In that there is little research addressing the role of advertising tone in news agenda formation, the findings about the effectiveness of negative strategies in this study are noteworthy. Considering that negativity has increasingly become a commanding attribute of political ads (Finkel and Geer, 1998), research on this topic can be deemed even more valuable.

### **Attribute Agenda Setting**

Although the paid and unpaid mass media in this statewide primary were not stunningly successful overall in shaping candidate images among the public, the data analyses revealed some interesting patterns about specific media and specific candidate attributes:

#### ***The Advertising Media and Attribute Agenda Setting***

First, somewhat unexpectedly, the paid media did not appear to function as a significant source of information about candidates' overall images among the public. Recalling that the airwaves were unusually crowded with political spots in this election, one might find this finding exceptional. This result is also inconsistent with many of the previous studies documenting the significant impacts of political ads on issue knowledge and impression formation. Some of these studies even contend a greater potential for televised campaign ads than for the electoral coverage in influencing the public agendas (Bryan, 1997; West, 1994).

Given that all the ads included in the analysis were those sponsored by first-time candidate Tony Sanchez, however, the unusual finding could be understood in relation to source credibility. According to Iyengar and Valentino (2000), source credibility can function as a moderator of the electoral effects of campaign advertising. Specifically in this case, the ads paid for by the political newcomer whose name the citizens might never have heard before the election could have low perceived credibility. The low credibility of the Sanchez ads

might further have weakened the effectiveness of the paid media in attribute setting, while possibly enhancing the voters' reliance on the news media as an alternative source of information about the brand-new figure. This assumption, however, needs to be examined more rigorously in various electoral settings involving barely-known candidates.

Second, although the effects of campaign ads appeared insignificant in shaping the public's overall images of the candidates (i.e., how the public perceived the candidates in terms of the six macro-level attributes--ideological, issue, personal, biographic, campaign, and endorsements), the analysis disaggregated in terms of specific sub-dimensions, mainly the issue and personal dimensions, yielded a different picture. Specifically, the paid media displayed consequential impacts on the voters' perception of the candidates' issue priorities although they were still unsuccessful in forming the voters' impressions of the candidates' personas.

Political commercials, especially negative ads, functioned as a more powerful agenda-setter than did the news media in the issue dimension, and this pattern became even more evident when controlling for the potential influence from other media. This result indicates that televised ads function as a better tool for communicating issue-relevant information than non-issue information, such as personal qualifications and character, even in the nominating stage of an election, where substantial partisan competitions on core policy issues barely exist. In fact, the content analysis of the campaign ads showed that the commercials actually



televised during the campaign period emphasized candidates' issue considerations much more frequently than their personal attributes.

Third, the analysis of the moderating role of the tone of presentation in advertising agenda setting suggested that attack strategies can be effective only when they deal with the opponent's issue problems, particularly when advanced by a political newcomer. Specifically, Sanchez's negative issue spots showed greater effects on the public images of Morales than did his positive ads on the public's understanding of his own issue priorities. When holding other media influence constant, the relative effectiveness of negative appeals becomes even stronger. When it comes to personal matters, however, the effectiveness of attack politics substantially decreased. These results imply potential interaction effects between the tone of message presentation and the specific content of the message (e.g., issue versus personal). Otherwise stated, issue negativity is more effective than trait negativity in enhancing the agenda-setting function of political advertising.

### ***The News Media and Attribute Agenda Setting***

As mentioned earlier, the data analyses in this study did not provide strong evidence for what many of the previous second-level agenda-setting studies have demonstrated. However, the local newspaper exerted not-so-minimal, although not quite statistically significant, impacts on the public's overall images of the primary candidates. As in the case of the paid media, however, there still existed

some especially noteworthy findings regarding the news media's function in setting specific aspects of the candidate images.

First, the attribute-setting effects of the news media were substantially higher for the political first-timer than for the long-time state politician. Although both candidates were less known, compared to the figures in national politics or the incumbent governor, people might possess more knowledge about their former Attorney General than about the brand-new politician. This may indicate that the level of uncertainty among the voters could be higher for the latter candidate than for the former. As Weaver (1977) maintains, a higher level of uncertainty about the subject of a message results in a higher level of need for orientation, consequently enhancing the level of agenda-setting susceptibility. This could be one of the reasons why the news media showed greater impacts on the Sanchez images than on the Morales images among the public.

Second, among the three outlets of campaign communication, the local newspaper showed the highest effectiveness in influencing candidate images in the public's minds. After controlling for the potential influence from other media agendas, the print media's impacts on candidate images increased, whereas the agenda-setting power of the electronic media considerably decreased. That is, the agenda-setting function of the print media was quite unique and independent with other media, while the impacts of broadcast news were mostly interdependent. Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) similarly point out that newspapers usually exert greater agenda-setting influence early in an election, while television's power tends to go beyond its print counterpart in the later stages.

Third, as noted above, the news media did not exert a statistically significant (although quite substantial, especially for the brand-new candidate) influence on how the public images of the candidates consisted of the six macro-attributes--ideological, issue, personal, biographic, campaign, and endorsement attributes. The analysis focusing on the dimensions of issue and personal attributes--the two macro-level substantial attributes most frequently emphasized in the news--however, unveiled a different story. The news media, especially the local newspaper, showed a statistically significant effect on how the public perceived the candidates in terms of their leadership, experience, competence, integrity, empathy, and styles/personalities. Conversely, the news media exerted even less influence on the public's understanding of the candidates' issue priorities than did the advertising media.

Considering the political contexts of the primary election as a strictly intraparty race, it was expected that the voters would employ candidates' personal traits as judgmental heuristics for their political reasoning more frequently than their issue priorities. The substantial majority of the public's descriptions of the candidates, in fact, concerned their personal qualifications and character although personal attributes were not the most prominent aspect of the campaign commercials or the candidate coverage. These results indicate that the transfer of personal-attribute salience from the media to the public can be more successful than that of issue salience in the nominating phase of an election probably because the primary voters tend to focus on the media content about personal information as efficient reasoning cues for making a political choice.

### **Consequences of Attribute Agenda Setting: Attribute Priming and Direct Salience Effects**

This study found a statistically significant correspondence of the media agenda with the public agenda only in the personal-attribute dimension. In other words, the salencies of news elements were successfully transferred to the public only when the elements concerned the candidates' personal attributes. This transfer process might consist of two sub-phases: in the first step, the news media's candidate coverage may have framed how the public thought about the candidates (i.e., attribute agenda setting). In the second phase, the public might further be primed to employ those elements salient in their candidate images as important judgmental cues, that is, as their voting criteria (i.e., attribute priming as a direct outcome of attribute setting).

This study demonstrated a significant level of the news media's attribute-priming effects in the personal dimension. The electoral consequences of attribute agenda setting were further investigated by examining the direct impacts of certain personal attributes salient as voting criteria in one's mind on his/her candidate preference and voting choice. Here, candidate preference was regarded as an attitudinal consequence and voting choice as a behavioral outcome.

First, in the attitudinal dimension, the public salencies of the personal attributes most frequently highlighted in the candidate coverage, such as experience, competence, and integrity, functioned as meaningful predictors of political preference, more specifically, how the voters felt about the candidates. Among others, the salience of experience in one's mind showed the most significant explanatory power for feelings about the candidates. Candidate

experience was the most prominent aspect of the candidate coverage of both the local newspaper and television stations. Specifically, the public salience of experience advantaged the candidate having a long-time political career rather than the first-time candidate.

Second, in the behavioral dimension, the public salience of experience again was a significant predictor of whom the voters would be likely to vote for. The salience of experience in one's mind, again, enhanced the electoral prospects of the former state politician rather than the political newcomer. To summarize, candidates' personal attributes were the focuses of the news and public agendas and ultimately functioned as central heuristics for political reasoning in this primary election.

In conclusion, the data analyses indicate that the agenda-setting function of the mass media may bear significantly on the electoral outcomes. By elevating the availability of certain image components in a voter's mind at the moments of judgment, the media can indirectly influence her or his important behavioral decisions. This could be even truer in low-involvement elections, such as local primaries, where simple cues of saliencies rather than the complex calculus of policy benefits may play a more decisive role in decision-making.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The present study documents strong evidence of the media's attribute agenda-setting effects on the public, especially those of negative campaign commercials in the issue dimension and the news media in the personal dimension

of candidate attributes. These findings suggest the importance of agenda-setting research disaggregated in terms of specific media and specific attributes. This study also contributes to expanding the agenda-setting theory on its newest front--the consequences of media agenda setting--while showing one alternative way to execute the conventional priming analysis in evaluating the media's function as a significant source of electoral outcomes. The study, of course, has limitations.

First of all, it did not provide elaborated theoretical accounts of the consequences of the salience transfer of candidates' personal attributes. It was an interesting finding that candidate experience functioned as the most significant predictor of political preference and choice, but some questions still remain unexplained. Why did only experience matter to people's decision-making? Why not other attributes? These unsolved questions, however, provide a good guideline for future research. As the electoral campaigns get more and more personalized, personal information will become more accessible from the mass media and be used more often as judgmental heuristics for many cognitive misers' political reasoning. There are various theorizations on issue voting, including both spatial and non-spatial theories (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen, 2001), yet little research has illuminated how the impressions of candidates' personal qualifications and character shape individuals' political choice. Future research, in this respect, needs to focus on developing a theoretical model of the underlying mechanisms of personal attribute agenda setting and its consequences.

Second, the study has demonstrated the roles of several intermediary factors in agenda setting. The function of the tone of message presentation as a

moderator of salience transfer, however, could be tested only in an indirect way because only one candidate had televised campaign ads. Given that negativity has been a commanding attribute of contemporary campaign discourse, students of political campaigns have examined it as a conditioning factor of the persuasive and mobilizing function of campaign communication (Lau and Sigelman, 2000). Whether negativity as a message variable facilitates or hampers salience transfer from the media agenda to the public agenda still remains relatively unexplored and, thus, needs to be an important part of the endeavor of future scholarship on campaign effects.

The study has addressed a key political context, that is, primary campaigns as a unique environment for the media-public interactions, regarding it as another intermediary variable. Specifically, the study has shown that a substantial portion of the public images of the candidates was comprised of their personal attributes in the nominating stage. The correspondence of the news media with the public agenda was also greater in the dimension of personal attributes than of issue priorities. The elements most salient in the news coverage of the candidates' personas functioned as significant predictors of political preference and choice.

To make a more compelling argument that the patterns of media agenda setting are context-dependent rather than context-free, however, future research should compare two or more different political contexts, such as the primary and the general election. For instance, certain candidate attributes may be more or less effectively transferred from the media to the public depending on the stage of an election campaign. Specifically, personal attributes may attract more public

attention in a primary competition, as this study has demonstrated, while people may have a higher need for orientation about the political and issue positions of the candidates in later stages.

This study also has methodological shortcomings. First, the two-step processes from the media salience to public salience, then from public salience to public behavior did not perfectly control other possible third variables. More importantly, the study could not assure a sufficient length of time lag by which the media's agenda-setting effects could be maximized. The causality of the influence from the media to public opinion, therefore, can possibly be questioned. Subsequent research on this topic, in this regard, should try to build much more controlled analytical models using path analysis or structural equation modeling, or replicate this study in a panel study or in an experimental setting.

Second and more importantly, it should be noted that the number of cases included in the regression analyses was fairly small because there were a substantial number of undecided voters who expressed no opinion, especially regarding their voting intention. The small size of sample might have entailed various statistical problems although the study tried to address most of them. Sanchez's win of the top position on the Democratic ticket also indicates that there might be other significant factors influencing the direction of voting which this study did not capture. This may have engendered some specification errors in the regression analyses. Assuring a reasonable size of sample and specifying a more correct model, therefore, would be other important assignments for future replications.



While redressing these limitations, future scholarship needs to attend to the important implications of the findings in this dissertation and replicate them in various settings. First of all, the analytical framework that the study employed can help future research address a comprehensive process of campaign communication. In other words, the three analytical components (i.e., agenda formation, agenda setting, and salience effects as consequences of agenda setting) provide key conceptual frameworks for future studies on campaign effects. The present study can be deemed even more valuable in that it empirically examines the processes and effects of campaign communication in a state gubernatorial primary, a political context that has been virtually ignored compared to the presidential and the general elections, with the focus on the specific roles of the local media on local voters.

Second, more scholarly endeavor needs to be invested in addressing the moderating roles of the tone of message presentation and political contexts. Although this study examined their intermediary roles primarily in agenda formation and agenda setting, future research also can examine their roles relating to the consequences of agenda setting.

Third, the study showed that the media's agenda-setting function has different patterns according to specific media and specific candidate attributes. In the primary campaign, the news media had greater agenda-setting and priming effects in the personal dimension than in the issue dimension. Campaign ads, in contrast, exhibited larger agenda-setting influence in the issue dimension, even in the context of a local primary campaign, especially when they appealed in

oppositional tones. These findings suggest that future research delve into the agenda-setting process in detailed dimensions of salience elements, also considering specific contexts where the media-public transactions occur.

Fourth and most importantly, this study demonstrated that agenda balance in the media, more specifically how the media balance the agendas of candidate attributes, could affect the audiences' political preference and behavior, well beyond their perceptions. The consequences of agenda setting, therefore, are a meaningful, although new, research topic that students of agenda setting and political communication need to attend to. In investigating the outcomes of agenda setting, future studies may employ the analytical strategy that the present study used as an alternative to the conventional priming analysis, or modify it in more appropriate ways.

## **Appendix A**

### **Scripts of Televised Sanchez Ads**

#### **HEALTH CARE**

Do you know why big insurance companies and HMOs bury us in red tape and paper work in confusions and delays?

Because the law allows them to play games with your money.

On healthcare, Tony Sanchez will focus on specific goals and meet them.

He'll sign a bill to get patients and their doctors paid properly. Health insurance coverage for more children. And help our elderly with the high cost of prescription drugs.

Promise less, deliver more. Tony Sanchez for Governor.

## **EDUCATION**

Problems in education really begin in the first five years.

If we don't do a good job in education little babies in pre-kinder, kinder, first, second and third, there is a very high probability they're not going to make it out to a high school and certainly to a college.

Tony Sanchez will cut administrative waste, hire more teachers, and lower class size, all to help our teachers focus on educating our kids.

Tony Sanchez for Governor. A leader as hardworking as Texas.

## **EVEN BETTER**

Everywhere I go people tell me they want better schools and more secure jobs.

But they are frustrated and tired of empty promise, politics, and partisanship.

They're right. Here's my approach.

Accountability. If the program doesn't work, fix it or cut it.

Common sense. Promise less. Set realistic goals.

And bring together the best people for the best results.

It's not about partisan politics. It's about making Texas even better.

## **EVEN STRONGER**

Texans are strong and they're decent.

They have a spirit that is the best in America.

Teachers -- doing hard work of educating our children.

Our police and firefighters -- sacrificing so much to keep us safe.

Families -- committed to faith, hard work and building a better life.

I see a proud state leading a proud nation.

And I know that, with strength and resolve, we can make Texas even better.

## FAMILY

Daughter: He would never let us be lazy kids. He always had us up really early, shouting in the hallway, “rise and shine!”

Tony Sanchez: I have been accused by my children of being a little bit strict.

And perhaps they’re right. But I’ve done it with more love than they could ever imagine.

Daughter: He’s always taught us to remain close to each other, remain close with our family, remain close to God, and to kind of give back and help others who’re less fortunate and don’t have their own voice.

## **PASSION**

Education is my passion and has been for 25 years.

I think education is the only way to achieve American Dream.

Texas is the third worst in the nation in high-school dropouts.

Tony Sanchez has comprehensive education plans that focus on classroom and helping teachers.

Progress won't be easy.

But Tony Sanchez doesn't think Texas should settle for the third worst.

“There are no second-class kinds. We will not settle for second-class schools.”

Tony Sanchez for Governor.



## **REMEMBER**

Remember when Dan Morales quit the Senate race to run for Governor? He promised he would run a quote “wholly positive” campaign.

But now desperate and behind in the polls, Morales has even attacked Tony Sanchez’s children.

Desperate. Negative. Broken promises.

Tony Sanchez. A record of creating jobs, improving in accountability in education, cutting waste and holding down taxes.

Tony Sanchez for Governor. A leader as hardworking as Texas.

## SCHEME

Behind. Desperate. Dan Morales has resorted on negative attacks.

What about the Morales record?

As Attorney General, he mismanaged child support cases. 8 of 10 of them were uncollected.

Dan Morales secretly tried to funnel \$ 500 million dollars from the tobacco settlement to a close personal friend.

\$500 million dollars to a friend who did no work.

It's a scheme, now under federal criminal investigations.

Dan Morales negative attacks. Broken promises.

## **PROTECT**

You worked hard to buy a house in a good neighborhood and have a better life.

I am running for Governor to protect what you have earned.

Tony Sanchez understands, as the economy weakens, families get squeezed.

As Governor, he'll take on drug companies to lower the costs of prescription drugs, stop insurance companies from sticking homeowners with massive premium hikes, and focus your hard-earned tax dollars on the classroom and our children.

Tony Sanchez -- a leader as hardworking as Texas.

## **Appendix B**

### **Master Codebook for the Analysis of the Media Content and Survey Responses**

#### **Political Ideology and Partisanship**

- 01 Partisanship (Republican, Democrat, etc.)
- 02 Political Ideology (Conservative, liberal, etc.), General Visions and Policy Promises (keep Texas values, making Texas even better, etc.), and Voting Records (in past elections, etc.)

#### **Issue Priorities**

- 03 Economy (General economic issues, unemployment and jobs, personal finance, etc.)
- 04 Education
- 05 Healthcare
- 06 Immigration and Border issues
- 10 Insurance (Homeowner insurance, etc.)
- 11 Law and Enforcement (Crime, crime justice system, capital punishment)
- 12 Racial Issues (Racism, affirmative action, etc.)
- 13 Social Welfare (Social Security, childcare, family welfare, senior citizens' welfare, poverty, etc.)
- 14 Taxes and Spending (Tax cuts, budget deficit, big government, etc.)
- 15 Tobacco Controversy (Issues related to the tobacco lawsuit in 1988)
- 16 Transportation
- 17 Values and Trust (declines in trust in government, between people, disappearing old values, etc.)
- 18 Other Issues \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Personal Qualifications and Character**

- 19 Leadership
- 20 Experience (Past or current occupation, personal life achievements, experience in the public domain, etc.)
- 21 Competence (Knowledgeability, descriptions of a candidate as a good choice or strong choice, or as a qualified candidate, communication skills,

good or bad performance, high or low name recognition, ahead or behind in polling, etc.)

22 Integrity (Morality, Family values, sincerity, corruptness/wrongdoings, trustworthiness, fairness, accountability, etc.)

23 Empathy (Understanding of and knowing about ordinary people, the people like me, compassion for people like me, hardworking for Texas, etc.)

24 Styles/Personalities (Likability, good or bad person, kind or ugly person, etc.)

25 General/Other Descriptions \_\_\_\_\_

### **Biographic Background**

26 Candidate Education

27 Family Relations

28 Ethnicity/Racial Roots

29 Religion

30 Personal Wealth or Income

### **Campaign Conduct**

31 Debates

32 Campaign Advertising

33 Campaign Finance

34 Negative Campaigning

35 Other Conduct

### **Endorsements**

36 Political Parties' or Interest Groups' Organized Support

37 Minority Groups' Support

38 Other Kind of Support (support from ordinary citizens, etc.)

**Others** 97 \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't Know** 98

**Don't Answer** 99

## Appendix C

### Primary Survey Questionnaire

#### A. Most important problems

1. A. MIP Questions (Open-ended). What do you think are the most important problems facing the state of Texas? (Probe for more than one problem by asking: Anything else?)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Suppose that you vote in the upcoming March primary election for Texas Governor. Considering the problem(s) you mentioned, what problem would you personally consider most important when deciding for whom to vote?  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Candidate Descriptions

3. Suppose that one of your friends has been away and knows nothing about the candidates for Governor of Texas. What would you tell your friend about Dan Morales? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6A. Anything else that would tell your friend about Dan Morales?
  - 6B. Anything else about Dan Morales?
4. How do you feel about Dan Morales? Would you say:
  - 1 Strongly unfavorable
  - 2 Somewhat unfavorable
  - 3 Undecided
  - 4 Somewhat favorable
  - 5 Strongly favorable

5. What would tell your friend about Tony Sanchez? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5A. Anything else that would tell your friend about Tony Sanchez?
- 5B. Anything else about Tony Sanchez?
6. How do you feel about Tony Sanchez? Would you say:
- 1 Strongly unfavorable
  - 2 Somewhat unfavorable
  - 3 Undecided
  - 4 Somewhat favorable
  - 5 Strongly favorable
7. Suppose that you vote in the primary election for Texas Governor. Which candidate qualification or personal characteristic would you personally consider most important when deciding for whom to vote?
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### C. Turnout and Vote Choice

8. So far as you know now, how likely is it that you will vote in the primary election on March 12?
- 1 Definitely will vote
  - 2 Probably will vote
  - 3 Probably will not vote
  - 4 Definitely will not vote
9. Whom do you think you will vote for in the primary for governor?
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### D. Mass Media Use

10. How often do you watch local evening TV news? Would you say: (Local TV evening news comes on at 6 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.)

- 1 Never or seldom
- 2 1 or 2 days a week
- 3 3 or 4 days a week
- 4 Nearly every day
- 5 Every day

11. What local TV news do you usually watch?

- 1 KTBC (FOX 7) (Cable 2)
- 2 KVUE (ABC Affiliate, Cable 3)
- 3 KXAN (NBC Affiliate, Cable 4)
- 4 KEYE (CBS Affiliate, Cable 5)
- 5 News 8 Austin (Time Warner Cable, Cable 8)
- 6 Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. How often do you read a daily newspaper? Would you say:

- 1 Never or seldom
- 2 1 or 2 days a week
- 3 3 or 4 days a week
- 4 Nearly every day
- 5 Every day

13. Which newspaper do you usually read? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How much attention have you paid to news about the primary campaigns for Texas Governor?

- 1 Great Deal
- 2 Some
- 3 Very little
- 4 None

15. How often in a week have you seen campaign ads on television for Dan Morales?

- 1 Never or seldom
- 2 1 or 2 days a week



- 3 3 or 4 days a week
- 4 Nearly every day
- 5 Every day

16. How often in a week have you seen campaign ads on television for Tony Sanchez?

- 1 Never or seldom
- 2 1 or 2 days a week
- 3 3 or 4 days a week
- 4 Nearly every day
- 5 Every day

#### E. Control-Purpose Questions

17. Generally speaking, do you identify yourself as a:

- 1 Democrat
- 2 Republican
- 3 Independent
- 4 Other \_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you consider yourself:

- 1 Conservative
- 2 Moderate
- 3 Liberal
- 4 Other \_\_\_\_\_

19. How old are you? (If respondent does not volunteer age, read categories.)

- 1 18-20
- 2 21-22
- 3 23-25
- 4 26-29
- 5 30-34
- 6 35-39
- 7 40-44

- 8 45-49
- 9 50-54
- 10 5-59
- 11 0-64
- 12 5-69
- 13 0 or older
- 14 refused to answer

20. What is the highest level of education that you've completed? (Read categories.)

- 1. Some High School or Less
- 2. High School Graduate
- 3. Some College or Technical School Degree
- 4. College Graduate
- 5. Some Graduate or Professional School
- 6. Masters, M.D., or Doctorate

21. What is your race or ethnic group? (If respondent does not volunteer race or ethnic group, read categories.)

- 1. Caucasian or White
- 2. African American or Black
- 3. Hispanic or Latino
- 4. Asian American
- 5. Native American
- 6. Indian-American
- 7. Arab-American
- 8. Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

22. Approximately, what is your household income? Please stop me when I read your current income category? (If student is supported by parents, use parents' income.)

- 1 Under \$20,000
- 2 \$20,000-29,000
- 3 \$30,000-39,000
- 4 \$40,000-49,000

- 5 \$50,000-59,000
- 6 \$60,000-69,000
- 7 \$70,000-79,000
- 8 \$80,000-89,000
- 9 \$90,000-99,000
- 10 100,000 or more
- 11 Refused to answer

23. Do not ask this question. Was the respondent female or male?

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

## Appendix D

### Key Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Table D1. Party Identification

	Frequency	Percent
Democrats	96	29.5
Republicans	116	35.7
Independents	82	25.2
Other	31	9.5
Total	325	100.0

Table D2. Age

	Frequency	Percent
18-25	52	16.0
26-29	29	9.0
30-34	39	12.0
35-39	39	12.0
40-44	39	12.0
45-49	35	10.8
50-54	33	10.2
55-59	17	5.2
60-64	15	4.6
65-69	8	2.5
70 or older	15	4.6
Refused	3	.9
Total	324	100.0

Table D3. Education

	Frequency	Percent
Some High School or less	17	5.2
High School Graduate	43	13.2
Some College or Technical School Degree	86	26.5
College Graduate	113	34.8
Some Graduate or Professional School	18	5.5
Masters, M.D., or Doctorate	48	14.8
Total	325	100.0

Table D4. Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
Caucasian or White	232	71.6
African American or Black	21	6.5
Hispanic or Latino	49	15.1
Asian American	3	.9
Native American	3	.9
Other	16	4.9
Total	324	100.0

Table D5. Income

	Frequency	Percent
Under \$20,000	30	9.2
\$20-29,000	22	6.8
\$30-39,000	32	9.8
\$40-49,000	31	9.5
\$50-59,000	36	11.1
\$60-69,000	26	8.0
\$70-79,000	20	6.2
\$80-89,000	13	4.0
\$90-99,000	11	3.4
\$100,000 or more	60	18.5
Refused	44	13.5
Total	325	100.0

Table D6. Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	154	48.1
Female	166	51.9
Total	320	100.0

Table D8. How Feel about Dan Morales

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favorable	24	18.3
Somewhat Favorable	20	15.3
Undecided	42	32.1
Somewhat Unfavorable	35	26.7
Strongly Unfavorable	10	7.6
Total	131	100.0

Table D9. How Feel about Tony Sanchez

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favorable	19	14.5
Somewhat Favorable	28	21.4
Undecided	45	34.4
Somewhat Unfavorable	28	21.4
Strongly Unfavorable	11	8.4
Total	131	100.0

Table D10. How Likely to Vote in the Primary

	Frequency	Percent
Definitely will vote	123	38.4
Probably will vote	81	25.3
Probably will not vote	63	19.7
Definitely will not vote	51	15.9
Undecided	2	.6
Total		100.0

Table D11. Whom to Vote For

	Frequency	Percent
Dan Morales	30	14.6
Rick Perry	57	27.8
Tony Sanchez	28	13.7
Other Candidates	3	1.5
Undecided	87	42.4
Total	205	100.0

Table D12. Level of Attention to the Gubernatorial Campaign

	Frequency	Percent
Great Deal	67	20.6
Some	112	34.5
Very Little	119	36.6
None	27	8.3
Total	325	100.0



Table D13. Exposure to Local Newspaper

	Frequency	Percent
Never or Seldom	112	34.7
1 or 2 days a week	59	18.3
3 or 4 days a week	30	9.3
Nearly everyday	22	6.8
Everyday	100	31.0
Total	323	100.0

Table D14. Exposure to Local Television News

	Frequency	Percent
Never or Seldom	83	25.6
1 or 2 days a week	58	17.9
3 or 4 days a week	62	19.1
Nearly everyday	35	10.8
Everyday	86	26.5
Total	324	100.0

Table D15. Exposure to TV Campaign Ads for Dan Morales

	Frequency	Percent
Never or Seldom	166	52.9
1 or 2 days a week	103	32.8
3 or 4 days a week	24	7.6
Nearly everyday	11	3.5
Everyday	10	3.2
Total	314	100.0

Table D16. Exposure to TV Campaign Ads for Tony Sanchez

	Frequency	Percent
Never or Seldom	117	36.4
1 or 2 days a week	53	16.5
3 or 4 days a week	44	13.7
Nearly everyday	50	15.6
Everyday	57	17.8
Total	321	100.0

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