THE HIGHLY CHARGED RHETORIC IN TRADE POLITICS: REPRESENTATIONS OF CHINA DURING THE 2010 U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication, Culture, and Technology

By

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Washington, DC
April 26, 2011
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ABSTRACT

In recent years, China’s economic growth has caused alarm, as the global economic crisis highlighted the strength of China’s economy and raised concerns about the U.S.’ economic future. The political advertisements that aired during the 2010 midterm elections highlighted this concern, as both Democratic and Republican candidates and partisan PACs used strong political rhetoric to describe China and its relationship to the U.S. economy, particularly U.S. joblessness and the growing national debt. Over 65 political advertisements targeting China were released in House, Senate, and gubernatorial races across the country.

In order to address why such a large number of these ads were released, my study examined the political advertisements mentioning China that were released during the 2010 midterm elections in the context of public opinion about China, unemployment statistics, media coverage of China, and the content of the ads themselves. The results of the study indicate that although public opinion and unemployment rates were not determining factors in the release of these advertisements, these advertisements reflect a historical trend of implicit Orientalist representations. However, as the Asian American population grows, the media’s production of these Orientalist representations may need to be critically reexamined so that political candidates can consider the effectiveness of these Orientalist appeals to Asian American audiences.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Toward the end of October 2010, as the U.S. midterm elections were gaining relevance in voters’ minds and the news networks were asking where the balance of power would land in the House and Senate after November 4, an organization called Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) released an advertisement entitled “Chinese Professor.” The ad, which started airing on October 21, 2010, spent two weeks on major cable networks and was then re-released in late January and again in late March. It also became popular online, receiving approximately 1.5 million hits on YouTube (Paige & Gelber, 2011). With its ominous music, Chinese narration, all-Asian audience, Communist undertones, and subtitles that spoke of Chinese ambition to take over the world, the advertisement was a memorable reminder of the Chinese threat to the U.S. economy.

This political ad was merely one of a large number of ads aired during the 2010 midterm elections asking voters to consider the impact of China on U.S. jobs and the national debt. In fact, news articles about this phenomenon appeared in various national publications, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. The Wall Street Journal highlighted the Democrats’ strategy to “put trade anxiety at the forefront of new campaign messages” (Williamson & Wallsten, 2010). The Washington Post claimed these ads indicated to “a broader shift in American society toward a more fearful view of China” (Pomfret, 2010). The New York Times pointed out that some ads were accusing their opponents of being “too sympathetic to China and, as a result, Americans …suffered” (Chen, 2010).

China’s economic and military growth have caused the international relations and trade communities to become increasingly concerned with China’s rise and the U.S.’s supposed decline in power. As conflict over China’s currency valuation escalated, the issue dominated the
news. Especially as the U.S. suffered from high unemployment rates, China’s economic strength became apparent as China recovered more quickly than other countries from the global economic downturn. Amidst this concern over China, free trade advocates and businessmen continued to highlight the U.S. role as beneficiary in its trade relationship with China, providing alternative explanations for U.S. job loss.

The political advertisements that aired during the 2010 midterm elections highlighted this tension, as both Democratic and Republican candidates and partisan Political Action Committees (PACs) used strong political rhetoric to describe China and its relationship to the U.S. economy, particularly U.S. joblessness and the growing national debt. This peak in highly charged rhetoric about China provides an opportunity to understand the context and content of perceptions about China that pervade the news media and politics. This research is designed to explore the political advertisements mentioning China that were released during the 2010 midterm elections in the context of public opinion about China, unemployment statistics, media coverage of China, and the content of the ads themselves. By considering the 2010 midterm elections within the broader historical trend of Asian media representations, this thesis addresses the overarching Orientalist narratives that pervade Asian representations. It asks how political rhetoric, particularly the concept of the political myth, is responding to growing, interdependent trade relationships and globalization.

**Research Questions**

My four main research questions, which correspond to the four sections of analysis, allowed me to gain an understanding of the environment into which these advertisements were released, and then determine whether these external factors had any correlation with the political candidates’ decisions to release these ads.
In R₁, I engaged in a statistical analysis to find out what U.S. public sentiment about China was during that time period.

*R₁: What was general public opinion about China in 2010? Did public opinion support the release of political advertisements mentioning China during the 2010 midterm elections?*

In R₂, I analyzed the 2010 unemployment figures to see if they had a relationship with where the ads mentioning China were released.

*R₂: What was the context of unemployment in the U.S. at the time the political ads were aired?*

In R₃, I conducted a qualitative content analysis to determine whether the new coverage about China and trade was mainly positive, negative, or concerned with conflict.

*R₃: What kind of news coverage about China and trade was taking place during the 2010 midterm elections? In particular, how did this coverage talk about the political advertisements being released by political campaigns?*

In R₄, I engaged in a rhetorical and semiotic analysis to examine the content of the political advertisements themselves, and the portrayals of China, the U.S., and the relationship between these two countries.

*R₄: What do the political advertisements say about China and its relationship to the U.S. during the 2010 midterm elections? How is China portrayed in these advertisements?*
Outline of Study

Chapter 2 contains a review of several different bodies of literature used to answer the research questions. Since the study examines Asian representations in news coverage and political advertising, I review literature about representations of Asians, including a history of Orientalized representations, as well as an overview of how Asian economic growth has become intertwined with certain Asian representations in the U.S. I also review literature on media coverage of trade, the relationship between national identity and trade, and the validity of certain popular conceptions of trade because this study examines the economic climate and China’s effect on the U.S. economy during the 2010 midterm elections. Finally, I explore the concept of the political myth and how that works in framing trade politics, as well as literature on visual political advertisements and fear appeals in U.S. politics, because I look at the political myths perpetuated by the ads aired in the 2010 elections.

Chapter 3 details the methodologies used in this study, including a statistical analysis of public opinion about the U.S. economy and views on China, a statistical analysis of unemployment figures for states where the 2010 midterm election advertisements aired, a quantitative content analysis of three prominent newspapers and their coverage of China and trade, and lastly, a rhetorical and semiotic analysis of the political advertisements themselves and some of the parody responses to the CAGW advertisement. The rhetorical and semiotic methodologies were used together because they complement each other; the rhetorical analysis asks about the persuasive nature of the advertisements, while the semiotic analysis concentrates on the meaning behind the signs and codes in the ads.

Chapter 4 consists of the results from the statistical analysis of the Spring 2010 Pew Global Attitudes data set and 2010 Global Views data set from The Chicago Council on Global Affairs,
which provides information about U.S. public opinion on China. It also provides results from the statistical analysis of unemployment averages for the states where these advertisements mentioning China were aired. This chapter also contains the results from the quantitative content analysis of three national newspapers and their coverage of China and trade during a two-month time period leading up to the 2010 midterm election. Finally, the chapter focuses on providing a detailed discussion of the themes and trends found in the political advertisements mentioning China. It also briefly discusses the parodic responses to the CAGW advertisement.

Finally, in chapter 5 I summarize the findings and address the question of why this research is relevant, what the implications are, and suggest future research that would for deeper insight into the context and content of rhetoric about China during periods of economic depression.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will provide a review of the literature related to my study and the research and theoretical frameworks on which my study is based. First, I will discuss the concept of Orientalism, and the historical trend of images and media representations of Asians, particularly the Japanese and Chinese, in the United States. I will then examine literature about U.S.-China trade relations as well as the political rhetoric surrounding trade in U.S. politics. This study relies on Robert Entman’s definition of framing, as well as Chiara Bottici’s concept of the political myth to provide a theoretical framework for studying the political advertisements.

Orientalism and the Yellow Peril

Edward Said points out that Orientalism is “valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient” (1994, p. 6). This framework of power was put in place historically through constructs, such as purported scientific determinations of racial superiority and claims of superior morality, and portrays the Orient as “backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and retarded” in comparison to the people in the West (Said, 1994, p. 207). Orientalism was “a product of certain political forces and activities”(1994, p. 203) and this politicized power dynamic placed the Orient into the position of alien and outsider, resulting in representations of “essentialized cultural characteristics” (Morgan, 2004, p. 209).

Threatening images of “the Yellow Peril sentiment was itself rooted in earlier centuries” when racism was scientifically supported (Dower, 1986, p. 10). Dower points out that during World War II, “[t]he war words and race words which so dominated the propaganda of Japan’s white enemies – the core imagery of apes, lesser men, primitives, children, madmen, and beings who possessed special powers as well – have a pedigree in Western thought that can be traced
back to Aristotle” and were historically used by Europeans and Americans to describe “nonwhites” they encountered during exploration (1986, p. 10).

Media representations of the Japanese portrayed them as “inherently inferior men and women who had to be understood in terms of primitivism, childishness, and collective mental and emotional deficiency,” and even social scientists used similar images to study the Japanese population (1986, p. 9). Popular literature, such as *Time* magazine, called the Japanese people “the Jap” rather than “Japs,” thereby denying the enemy even the merest semblance of pluralism” and conflating the whole nation into a single image of an inferior enemy (Dower, 1986, p. 79).

These notions of a deficient and primitive Japanese people were used alongside references to the Japanese as superhuman. The West had three main fears about Asia, which were “exemplified by that consummate symbol of the Yellow Peril, Fu Manchu” (Dower, 1986, p. 163). Their fears included “vast multitudes of Asia united and advancing on Europe and the Western Hemisphere,” the fact that industrialization may eventually lead Asians to adopt and master Western warfare technology, and “the attribution of vague, nondiscursive, “occult” powers to the Oriental” (Dower, 1986, p. 163). Dower also points out that the Japanese were portrayed as “uniquely barbaric” (1986, p. 48) and compares the vilification of the Germans to the vilification of the Japanese, suggesting that “the Japanese soldier soon came to be seen as more barbarous and diabolical than his German counterpart” and that this juxtaposition only served to portray Japan as an even stronger enemy (Dower, 1986, p. 37).

Although the representations of Japanese people changed after World War II, “the concept of ‘the enemy’ remained impressively impervious to drastic alteration” and continued to persist to the Cold War (Dower, 1986, p. 309). The Japanese and Chinese people were thought to be
interchangeable, especially when China became Communist and therefore, “the newest incarnation of the Yellow Peril – doubly ominous now that it had become inseparable from the Red Peril” (Dower, 1986, p. 309).

When the Japanese economy started to grow rapidly, “the rise of the new Asian capitalisms inevitably evoke[d] premonitions of the Yellow Peril” and the media, scholars, and prominent businessmen such as Lee Iacocca began to disseminate images of the Japanese yet again (Dower, 1993, p. 320). The disparity in population between Asia and the United States, along with different languages and societal norms as other reasons, became reasons why Japan’s economic growth in the 1980s and China’s current economic growth was “not a welcome attainment of global equality but rather a development full of menace” (Dower, 1993, p. 327).

I extend Dower’s argument to the present-day by asserting through empirical evidence that China is portrayed as a unique threat through media framing and political rhetoric that subscribes to Said’s politicized Orientalism and Dower’s images of the Asian threat. I argue that the Yellow Peril image becomes salient in the U.S. when the Asian country in question is deemed a threat to national interests.

**Economic Growth and Asian Representations in the United States**

The historical trend of fear in the United States, particularly in relation to economic threats, can be traced to the Russians in the 1950s, the Arabs and the rise of their equity investments as they tried to recycle petrodollars in the 1970s (Reinsch, 1994, p. 196-197), the Japanese in the 1980s, NAFTA in the 1990s, and currently, to the Chinese economy. Fear about these countries became a part of the “public discourse” as they were linked to economic threats (Altheide & Michalowski, 1999, p. 491). Since this research mainly concerns itself with the recent images of
China circulating in the U.S., I concentrate on tracing how the Japanese in the 1980s and the Chinese in the present are Orientalized.

Reinsch points out that the decline of America and its economic prowess led U.S. workers to “blame the foreigners,” particularly Japan since it was experiencing rapid economic growth and appeared to be contributing to the loss of jobs in the U.S. (1994, p. 193). During the period when Japanese economic growth was superior to U.S. economic growth, there were claims made that the Japanese were “really exporting something more important than cars…[t]hey’re sending us unemployment” (Iacocca, 1984, p. 320). Popular literature, including Lee Iacocca’s autobiography and “business best-sellers” with titles such as America Versus Japan and The Japanese Mind: The Goliath Explained, conjectured that there were fundamental differences between the way Americans and Japanese conducted business and even “bash[ed] Japan for taking advantage of America and Americans” (Aaronson, 2001, p. 93). Even novels, such as Michael Crichton’s Rising Sun, are cited as presenting Japan in a threatening and sinister light (Jespersen, 1996; Reinsch, 1994). Reinsch also pointed to the mass media as one of the factors that worked to “stereotype” and “polarize” the debate on Japanese economic growth and its relationship to the U.S. economy (1994, p. 209).

According to Rankin, “Japan was often featured in negative and threatening terms by TV news coverage” (2006, p. 243), including footage of people “demolishing Japanese cars and products, demonizing America’s trade partners, particularly the Japanese” (Aaronson, 2001, p. 85). The overwhelming coverage of the U.S.-Japan trade relationship even led respondents in a 1991 CBS/New York Times survey to claim that “Japan was the most important economic partner,” which may have been true by some measures; however, Canada was the largest trading partner at the time (Rankin, 2006, p. 643). These negative sentiments toward Japan reached their
peak, with the June 1982 murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit, Michigan serving as another reminder of the notion that Asia in general was the culprit for job loss in the industrial U.S.

Similar to Dower’s argument about Japanese representations, Lampton points out that negative portrayals of China, coupled with friendly relations “are nothing new” (2001, p. 258). Not only were negative portrayals of the Japanese prevalent in the U.S., but there was a “history of Sino-American relations contain[ing] a range of varied and long-standing cultural constructions… ranging from racism and xenophobia to naïveté, paternalism, and awe” (1996, p. xv). With the political climate around trade policy became more protectionist, “China supplanted Japan as prime target” (Destler, 2005, p. 309).

The single frame approach to the American media’s coverage of China can be traced back to coverage from the 1950s and 1960s, when China was portrayed “as little blue ants or automatons,” to the 1970s when Nixon’s visit to China was portrayed as “entertaining” and “cute,” to the 1980s when China was transitioning to a more capitalistic society, and then the 1990s when China was framed as “repressive” after the June 4 incident in Tian’anmen Square” (Mann as quoted in Lampton, 2001, p. 263-264). Not only are media portrayals of China becoming increasingly negative, but “[b]y 1999, 60 percent of Americans considered the PRC a ‘serious threat,’ whereas two decades earlier (in 1980), only 18 percent did” (2001, p. 258).

In recent years, “negative portrayals of China were also evident in media coverage of U.S.-China trade” (Rankin, 2006, p. 644). The China-US trade agreement was “[t]he most volatile US trade issue in 2000” (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001, p. 5) and there were “flare-ups over China in late 2003 and thereafter” because unemployment in US manufacturing was associated with debt to China and China’s currency valuation (Destler, 2005, p. 249). China’s low labor costs,
technological developments, and foreign capital investments in China have been leading to “profound apprehension” about China’s economic growth (Cable & Ferdinand, 1994, p. 253).

Since the media “see themselves as guardians of the core values of their respective societies” (Lampton, 2001, p. 263), they act as the gatekeeper to Chinese values that are thought to be antithetical to “everything Americans stood for: democracy, capitalism, freedom” (Kulma, 1999, p. 85). Differences are highlighted not only in the media, but also by “American policymakers and citizens [who] tend to overemphasize differences between the two systems and downplay the many important similarities” (Lampton, 2001, p. 281). These differences are often a “democratic” America versus a “communist” or “Red China,” or a “pluralistic” America as opposed to a “totalitarian” China (Lampton, 2001, p. 281; Isaacs, 1972, p. 215). An Ipsos-Reid poll indicates that the public reflects the notion that China is threatening, because “[a]bout half of all Americans believe that China’s rise will be “a threat to world peace,” and almost a third believe that China will “soon dominate the world”” (Haft, 2007, p. 181). Also, even phrasing like “the “most favored nation” label suggested that China was getting something very special rather than the market access granted to just about every US trading partner” (Destler, 2005, p. 274). Although the name was changed to “normal trade relations” and later, legislation was passed granting China “permanent normal trading relations,” these measures are still sometimes portrayed as unfair to the U.S.

Since media coverage is crucial for U.S. political candidates to gain exposure, candidates will use “‘red meat’ political rhetoric calling for the realization of American ideals” (Lampton, 2001, p. 278) and tap into the “deep vein of rage and fear among Americans” by inciting fear and “play[ing] to American xenophobia shamelessly” (2007, p. 165). Therefore, these media representations of China are “more the product of domestic forces than the result of anything
else” (Jespersen, 1996, p. 188). The 2010 U.S. midterm election cycle brought about a seemingly large number of political advertisements highlighting the threat China posed to the U.S. economy. Through this study, I argue that even though conventional wisdom among economists’ points to the U.S.-China trade relationship as beneficial to the U.S., the kind of strong political rhetoric that is used to describe China is a continuation of the Orientalist images that have commonly circulated throughout U.S. history.

**Media Coverage of Trade in the U.S.**

This study fills a gap in the research, as the “media coverage of trade politics has received little scholarly attention, in large part, because trade does not fit conveniently into a domestic- or foreign-policy lens” (2006, p. 635). However, trade has been extensively covered in the media in recent years, particularly as the end of the Cold War signaled “the apparent movement of economic issues to center stage” (Destler, 1994, p. 28) and a shift to “more open, if not conflicted, political debate and thus media coverage concerning the domestic and international effects of trade relations and policies” (Rankin, 2006, p. 656).

This research is especially important since “television heightens drama associated with trade policy” by including “threatening groups and nations” (Rankin, 2006, p. 637). Studying visual cues related to trade will provide more insight into the relationship between trade and media producers and audiences. A previous study on media coverage of U.S. trade from 1988-2002 on the three major U.S. television networks’ evening news and CNN Headline News found that television news covered the U.S.-Japan trade relationship the most, with the U.S.-China trade relationship coming in second (Rankin, 2006, p. 639-640). The study also concluded that approximately half of the news coverage was “generally negative or concerning in tone” and only 10 percent coded as positive (Rankin, 2006, p. 642).
Scholars have highlighted “inadequacies of American coverage” in covering China, saying that “it is like looking at China through a straw” because U.S. media tends to provide a limited view of China (2001, p. 278). Also, since U.S. news reporting generally “tends to focus on the negative,” there appears to be a bias in coverage (Lampton, 2001, p. 278). However, the real dilemma is that “the average American does not have the contextual knowledge of China that he or she has of the United States,” therefore making the negative news about China even more salient to the American public (Lampton, 2001, p. 278).

However, media coverage is merely one facet of the way trade is imagined in the U.S. Although most economists “believe that freer trade policies are better economic policies than protectionist policies,” public opinion does not always agree with this notion (Aaronson, 2001, p. 8). A Kaiser Family Foundation study indicates that “those untrained in economic see the world differently than do those trained in economics” (Aaronson, 2001, p. 8). In particular, “Americans may characterize the different behavior of other nations as unfair, simply because it is different” whereas trained economists tend to “recognize nations have different political and economic cultures” that influence their actions (Aaronson, 2001, p. 8). Also, the general public may “tend to look at an event or trend in isolation, while those trained in economics can weight economic costs and benefits to the economy as a whole, as well as to specific sectors,” which could put trade relations with one nation or the impact of trade relations on one particular industry into perspective (Aaronson, 2001, p. 8).

**Popular Conceptions about U.S. Trade Politics**

In order to understand the relationship between trade and political rhetoric, I discuss some of the literature on free trade in general and U.S.-China trade relations in particular. Globalization has been attributed as a large factor in the changing nature of the world economy.
Scheve and Slaughter point out that “[l]ess-skilled individuals, measured by educational attainment or wages earned, are much more likely to oppose freer trade and immigration than their more-skilled counterparts” and tend to blame globalization for lower wages (2001, p. 9).

However, conventional wisdom among economists indicates that U.S. workers are not directly competing with foreign workers from developing countries (Burtless, et al., 1998, p. 71) and although it is counterintuitive to political rhetoric about the loss of jobs, “most academic research has found that technological change, not globalization, has been the major force affecting US labor markets in recent decades” (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001, p. 86).

Belief #1: American workers are losing jobs because of free trade.

During the 2004 presidential election, “Democratic presidential contenders vied with one another to show toughness on trade, with the “outsourcing” of jobs by US corporations” being seen as problematic (Destler, 2005, p. 249), especially as less-skilled American workers’ wages were decreasing and “American labor increasingly saw itself as the victim of foreign competition that threatened both jobs and wages” (p. 257).

Even though there are benefits to free trade, such as “enormous commercial opportunity for American firms and workers” who export to developing countries like China with populations whose wealth is increasing and low consumer prices (Burtless, et al., 1998, p. 72), American workers believe that the costs outweigh the benefits when considering negative impacts, such as loss of jobs and reduced wages (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001, p. 44). Also, certain industries have benefited from trade even as others, such as the auto industry, have been hurt by trade (2005, p. 257).
Burtless et al. indicate that this opposition to globalization and free trade, which they term “globaphobia,” can prevent voters and in turn, policymakers, from actually addressing the problems that are arising for less-skilled U.S. workers (1998, p. 8). They claim that although wage reductions can occur with free trade, the losses are “vastly exaggerated in media accounts and the popular imagination” (Burtless, et al., 1998, p. 10). The notion that globalization is negative, particularly as labor faced foreign competition, could serve as “an attractive new cover for the old protectionism” (Destler, 2005, p. 257).

Belief #2: Trade is strictly a partisan debate.

Although Republicans have traditionally been perceived as pro-trade, “[t]he greatest questioning about U.S. foreign economic policies seemed to come from individuals on the right” (Aaronson, 2001, p. 92). In fact, “relatively unusual cross-partisan cues” exist in matters of trade politics, as “nativists, isolationists, and traditional conservative Republicans have aligned with liberal Democrats, labor, and progressive groups in opposition to free trade” (Rankin, 2006, p. 638). Those with conservative values that espouse protectionist trade policies sometimes team up with labor groups that are concerned about reduced wages and loss of jobs. However, even though these cross-partisan coalitions were opposed to trade agreements, they did so for different reasons. The conservatives wanted to “protect American jobs, American business, and American sovereignty” while the liberals wanted to “protect their ability to influence a democratically determined system of social regulation” (Aaronson, 2001, p. 5). This could be due to the fact that “conservatives and Republicans were more likely than liberals and Democrats to have more patriotic conceptions of Americanism,” although it appeared that identifying as ideologically conservative was more likely to determine one’s patriotism than Republican party identification (Rankin, 2001, p. 363). As political partisanship in Congress increased, trade disagreements were
attributed to “trade’s social impact, particularly on labor and the environment” (Destler, 2005, p. 252). In particular, Democrats were drawn to the labor issue, because it “had a political appeal greater than a simple anti-import stance” (Destler, 2005, p. 257).

**National Identity and Trade**

Although party identification and ideology were important factors in trade politics, Rankin conjectured that “conceptions of national identity play a more pertinent role in organizing opinion on trade” because they are more easily activated in one’s mind (Rankin, 2001, p. 370). Nationalism, particularly “strong feelings of national identity and an associated set of patriotic and nationalist attitudes that include pride in country, sense of national superiority, and, at the extreme, antagonistic attitudes toward those who are not part of the nation” can contribute to protectionist attitudes in trade policy (O’Rourke & Sinnott, 2001, p. 158). In fact, trade has become associated with immigration to the US, with free trade agreements with countries like Chile and Singapore promising U.S. visas to workers from those countries (Destler, 2005, p. 255). Since “little consideration of the impact of American cultural attitudes and values on trade opinion” exist, this study helps to fill a gap in the literature about trade politics (Rankin, 2001, p. 356).

For this study, I adopt Edelman’s symbolic politics theory, which “predicts that the position one adopts is likely to be rooted in the emotional defense of one’s prior cultural identifications” (Citrin et al., 1990, p. 1126) and “presumes that citizens will rely on the most accessible predispositions automatically activated by the issue environment” (Rankin, 2001, p. 357). This is similar to heuristic or peripheral processing, which “describes attitude change resulting from cues … other than the merits of the arguments” (Sears, 1993, p. 141-142). Often, this means factors other than the argument are influencing an individual’s opinions.
In particular, I consider the “[s]ymbolic conceptions of national identity” that are reinforced by the issue of free trade and its relationship to national sovereignty (Rankin, 2001, p. 353). Since national identity cues are easily comprehended by the “imagined community” of the nation (Anderson, 2006), it appears that symbolic politics theory creates a more compelling argument for the fear of China in trade relations than economic self-interest, which “involves a deliberate calculation of the personal costs and benefits of trade and requires a degree of interest, awareness, and knowledge of the political issue counter to the widely held findings of a less informed public” (Rankin, 2001, p. 356). These widely-circulated symbolic predispositions will be referred to in the study as Chiara Bottici’s (2007) concept of the political myth, which will be discussed in-depth below.

This study will go on to demonstrate that politicians are activating symbolic politics by arguing that trade “threatens the wages and jobs of the American union member and lower skilled Americans in general,” which appears more effective than pointing out that “free trade benefits higher skilled professionals” (Rankin, 2001, p. 369). This is effective because although Americans may not be familiar with the specifics of trade issues and policies, the “symbolic concern for the nation activates predispositions of national identity despite differences in economic self-interest, evoking shared beliefs and values” (Rankin, 2001, p. 371).

**The Political Myth**

I will also use Chiara Bottici’s concept of the political myth as “part of the basic components of our everyday perception of politics” that “tend to remain unquestioned” (2007, p. 253). Bottici asserts that political myths “are not only what we perceive about the world of politics, but also the lens through which we perceive it” (2007, p. 253). These political myths vary in the way they are disseminated, but include text, images, and icons (Bottici, 2007, p. 181).
The role of national identity and identity politics in today’s society indicates that “myths are an important component of politics, even in contemporary modern societies” (Bottici & Challand, 2010, p. 9). As mentioned in the symbolic politics theory, the political myth of American national identity and trade wars with Asian countries will be an “elaboration of a common narrative that provides significance to the political conditions and actions of a social group” (Bottici & Challand, 2010, p. 9). I will use Bottici and Challand’s three criteria to address what creates a political myth: “(1) the fact that it coagulates and reproduces significance, (2) that it is shared by a given group and (3) that it can address the specifically political conditions in which a given group lives” (2010, p. 15). Since political myths are often absorbed through continued exposure over long periods of time, they “can deeply influence our basic and most fundamental perceptions of the world and thus escape the possibility of critical scrutiny” (Bottici & Challand, 2010, p. 16). These myths are referred to as “the basic assumptions of a society that are woven throughout everyday social discourses and practices” which have an effect on public discourse and action (Bottici & Challand, 2010, p. 20).

The myth of national identity is often worked on again and again through the banal “flagging” of the nation, or the use of everyday signs such as a flag waving to indicate belonging to a nation (Billig, 1995). The same is true of a political myth such as the representations of Japan and China in the U.S imaginary; I argue that the myth of the Yellow Peril continues to be perpetuated over time. Myths are often present in political advertisements as well, as they are thought to be “an important and legitimate mode of persuasion in politics” (Nelson & Boynton, 1997, p. 206). In fact, “the most powerful political rhetoric makes use of existing myths and taps into widely held, underexamined beliefs” (Esch, 2010, p. 364).
Framing in Trade Politics

Framing is the “process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, 2010, p. 336) and works to “activat[e] information already at the recipients’ disposal” (Nelson, Oxley & Clawson, 1997, p. 225). In other words, the way a person interprets a message involves the “simultaneous function of both the message (and how it is framed) and the knowledge the audience brings to bear during the process of interpretation” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 44). Frames that use “culturally resonant terms have the greatest potential for influence,” especially frames that use words that are “noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged” (Entman, 2003, p. 417, emphasis in original). In trade politics, frames can act as “critical information shortcuts for Americans on trade in which the relationship between trade policy and economic self-interest may be unclear” (Rankin, 2001, p. 351).

Framing also plays a large role in the way China is perceived in the media, because “the media’s construction of images of China entails the power both to select and promote certain events as more important than others and also to imbue those events with an editorial flavor that emerges from the media’s own value system” (Morgan, 2004, p. 402). In particular, the conflict frame is

In this study, I adopt Altheide’s definition of the problem frame, which says that an “undesirable” problem exists that has an effect on people, and this problem can be identified and fixed through a known “repair agent and process” (1997, p. 655). In fact, certain problem frames are readily used when discussing trade issues, such as language about protecting the U.S. economy and job loss (Hiscox, 2006, p. 760). In particular, I look at the use of problem frames and fear frames in political advertising, and the conflict frame in media coverage of China and trade.
Visual Political Campaign Advertisements in U.S. Politics

Political advertising has changed in form over the years, from political parades, banners, and flags, to partisan newspapers, and now, to campaign mailings and televised political advertisements (Jamieson, 1986). A mainstay in politics today is the 30-second political advertisement, which is “frequently a reflection of the larger society of which they are a part” (Trent & Friedenberg, 2008, p. 159). Televisual advertisements allow candidates’ rhetorical arguments to “be visualized through the magic of television editing that could not be plausibly verbalized,” such as juxtaposing unlike images with one another to create a connection (Jamieson, 1986, p. 15).

Since television plays an important role in the political landscape today, “increasingly our political world contains memorable pictures rather than memorable words” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992, p. 283). In fact, the influence of television on the political process makes the analysis of visual campaign ads and their contents an important part of studying campaign communication (Shyles, 1986; Jamieson & Campbell, 1992). Some scholars argue that although the visual aspects of politics can be overlooked, “[t]he special qualities of visual images underscore the point that, in some cases, visual framing may actually matter more than verbal framing” (Coleman, 2010, p. 235). In other words, they reiterate the notion that scholars should be examining visuals in politics because “people remember visual images longer than they do spoken words” (West, 2005, p. 10) and these images can evoke a powerful response, “particularly negative compelling images that elicit anger, fear, or disgust” (Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 54). Instead of having explicitly positive or negative valences, televisual political advertisements’ content can use a “montage rather than the linear logic of a formal argument” and “creates a rhetorical event that could not have occurred in actuality” (Morreale, 1991, p.
This allows scholars to study “more specific and nuanced” features of visual political advertisements (Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 101).

This study focuses on the political campaign advertising during the 2010 U.S. midterm elections, mainly the “attack (spots criticizing the opposition)” ads and “contrast (those criticizing the opposition and presenting the candidate’s own perspective)” ads (West, 2005, p. 60). The study also includes ads that are positive (affirming) that are “focused on the candidate sponsoring the ad” (Kaid & Johnston, 1991, p. 56). The majority of the ads that I analyzed are attack ads, which are “a legitimate and important part of differentiating one’s candidate biography and positions from another’s” (Jamieson et al., 2000, p. 45).

Since this was not a presidential election cycle, the advertisements during the 2010 midterm elections may subscribe to what Kern describes as “major variations by campaign level” with “ads on the House of Representatives level [being] most platform oriented” (1989, p. 66). Studying the 2010 midterm elections is particularly beneficial because “ads in the House and Senate contests face fewer counterweights than at the presidential level,” meaning that “advertisements [are] potentially even more important in House and Senate contests” (West, 2005, p. 164).

**Strategies in Political Advertising**

In campaign advertising, “association” involves connecting a candidate with popular themes, ideas, or people, while connecting their opponents to “unpopular, controversial, or divisive” issues or people (West, 2005, p. 5). The concept of “guilt by association” is when the Other, particularly “other races, religions, and social classes,” are blamed for the nation’s problems and “whose defeat could restore the stability of the cherished past” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 71). Guilt by association “increases in uncertain times – such as during economic hardship –
when the populace is fearful” (1992, p. 71). Often, these kinds of controversial issues are “more likely to be raised in the ads and news coverage of a Political Action Committee (PAC), not in the candidate’s own messages,” because they are not directly traced back to the candidate (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992, p. 285). This is true in the case of the Citizens Against Government Waste advertisement invoking fear in China’s takeover; however, there were still a plethora of political candidates that also used this strategy in their advertising during the 2010 U.S. midterm election cycle.

Political ads also use visual metaphors that can be easily interpreted by the audience through “shared reference points” (Diamond & Bates, 1992, p. 381). Schema theory indicates that “people filter new information through their preexisting knowledge and beliefs” (Coleman, 2010, p. 240); therefore, these ads signal to the audience “the candidate’s agreement or disagreement with positions voters already embrace” (Jamieson, 1986, p. 13). In addition, “hidden myths” play a role in the political advertising; I examine overt messages as well as the “latent content” of the advertisements (Nimmo & Felsberg, 1986, p. 267).

**Emotional Appeals in Political Advertising**

I focus on the emotional appeals used in advertising, which I define as the “attempt to stir the feelings of the audience while delivering a political message” (Brader, 2006, p. 4). Emotional appeals are often used in politics to cause voters to feel a certain way, because people tend to rely on their emotions when making political decisions and the candidate is more likely to get news coverage because of “the media’s preference for drama and excitement in news reporting” (Jerit, 2004, p. 567). Often, these appeals are “constructed using fears, myths, concerns, and narratives that exist in culture” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 25) through words, music, and
images. They use the Aristotelian epideictic rhetoric to evoke an emotional response that causes the audience to coalesce around common values (Morreale, 1991; Jerit, 2004).

In particular, I will consider fear ads, which Brader asserts are used “to awaken or fuel the anxieties of the viewing public,” particularly toward a candidate’s opponent (2006, p. 6). Fear appeals are designed to cause the audience to “comply with the appeal’s recommendations” by making the threat personal (Hale & Dillard, 1995, p. 71). In politics, fear appeals attempt spur the voter to make a decision and to cause “attitude change and unexpected choices” in voting (Brader, 2006, p. 143).

In order to accomplish this, fear ads rely on “[c]olor, music, imagery, sounds, style of narration, and video editing,” (Brader, 2006, p. 8). These elements are “susceptible also to cultural conventions, symbols, and associations” that can help cue certain reactions and interactions between the audience and the political advertisement they are watching; in fact, sometimes they convey the message more effectively than text and simply become the message itself (Nelson & Boynton, 1997, p. 99).

**Media Context of Political Advertising**

Not only are the videostyle and content of political campaign advertisement integral to this study, but the context of advertisements are important as well. According to West, “the way a journalist reports the ad” can have an effect on the overall reception of the ad (2005, p. 16). In fact, featuring advertisements in the news gives them “a legitimacy they do not have when broadcast in ‘paid time’” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 143) and works to “enhance the power of the ads” (p. 144).

News coverage of campaign advertisements are a recent development, with news organizations monitoring the “accuracy and effectiveness” of political advertising (West, 2005,
One such website, FactCheck.org, was started by Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Jamieson as a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania as “a nonpartisan, nonprofit ‘consumer advocate’ for voters” by checking for the “factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players” (FactCheck.org, 2011).

The media coverage of campaign advertisements is an example of Peter Manning’s “media loops” where “an image is shown in another context, reframed by the media” (1998, p. 26). Ads that are replayed in the media are particularly effective because their “basic message is reinforced by the news media” (West, 2005, p. 21). In fact, political campaigns have “enticed the press into embracing one of its words or phrases” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 182), illustrating Entman’s (2004) concept of “cascading activation.”

In addition, media framing of these ads is also relevant because frames have the ability “to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the terms of a debate,” which can affect the context into which a political advertisement enters public discourse (Tankard, 2001, p. 96). The media is said to “provide a frame through which viewers are invited to see an ad” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 125). This is one of the topics I will consider as I examine the national news coverage on China and trade during the 2010 midterm elections.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

I used three different primary methods in my thesis, which I will describe here. The first method is a statistical analysis of existing data sets from surveys about U.S. public opinion on China conducted by organizations such as Pew Global Attitudes and The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, as well as analysis of unemployment data in the United States. The second method is a content analysis of media coverage concerning China, and the third method is a rhetorical and semiotic analysis of televised political ads that mentioned China during the 2010 midterm elections.

The Statistics behind U.S. Popular Opinion and China

First, I provide an overview of the 2010 survey data and analysis conducted by Pew Global Attitudes and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs regarding China. This includes basic statistics on U.S. public opinion of China. Then, I conduct my own statistical analysis of U.S. public opinion on China and its correlation to factors, such as political party identification, ideology, employment status, household income and state of residence.

My statistical analyses serve mainly as background information for this thesis. These statistical analyses helped me examine how U.S. public opinion factors into political rhetoric about U.S. trade politics with China and whether this strong political rhetoric is palatable for political candidates from both sides of the aisle, as well as from differing political ideologies. I also examined the correlation between U.S. public opinion on China and the location of survey respondents (in particular, the state of residence), employment status, and household income.

I conducted statistical analyses of U.S. public opinion on China from the Global Views 2010 - Constrained Internationalism: Adapting to New Realities study, a nationwide survey of 2,596 adults conducted between June 11, 2010 and June 22, 2010. This study, which is fielded
biennially, is designed to measure American attitudes toward U.S. foreign policy and has a margin of error between 1.9 and 3.3 percent. The study was conducted on behalf of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs by Knowledge Networks (KN), which is a polling, social science, and market research firm in Menlo Park, California. The data for the survey were collected by using random digit dialing (RDD) telephone sampling of U.S. households that have a telephone. If the household agreed to participate in the study, they were provided with free Web access and an Internet appliance (if necessary); therefore, the sample includes households that may not already have Internet access in their home. The sample used in this survey is representative of the U.S. population and “closely tracks the distribution of the United States Census” of people “eighteen years of age or older on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, geographical region, employment status, income, education, etc” (The Chicago Council…, 2010). I also conducted analyses of the data collected from Spring 2010 Pew Global Attitudes Survey conducted between April 15 and May 5, 2010. The data for the survey were collected by RDD, which provided a probability sample representative of all the telephone households (including cell phone only households) in the continental U.S. with adults 18+ years old. The survey was conducted in English under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International with a sample size of 1,002 with a margin of error +/- 4.0.

I created contingency tables based on the frequency distribution of two or more sets of variables to determine the percentage of occurrence between employment status, household income, political ideology, political party identification, and state of residence, and views on the U.S. economy and China. I used Pearson Chi-Square to determine statistical significance. I also used the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression method, which allowed me to find a linear
solution between two or more variables. I adopted the OLS regression methodology because it estimates a robust predictive model of correlation.

**Mapping Unemployment in the U.S.**

I created a map of the congressional districts where the political advertisements invoking China ran in order to examine whether there is a correlation between the ads and unemployment rates in the districts. Through the U.S. Census of the 110th Congress, I accessed a table that listed every county in the U.S., along with the state and congressional district to which it belongs (2007). I used the vertical lookup function in Microsoft Excel, which searches an input value in a range of data and returns a corresponding value in the same row as the range of data, to organize the data according to congressional district. Then, I used the monthly labor force data for December 2009-January 2011 by county from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) and determined the annual average for February 2010-January 2011.

By using the National Atlas of the United States’ online application, MapMaker, I created a map of the lower 48 states which included the 435 congressional districts and the District of Columbia from the 110th U.S. Congress (2011). Then, I created a map of unemployment by congressional district by overlaying the map of the US congressional districts with a map from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that showed unemployment data from the time period February 2010-January 2011. I created three different maps from these data: (1) a map of the candidate-sponsored House advertisements and PAC-sponsored House advertisements, including unemployment data (see Appendix 2 for separate maps of candidate-sponsored House ads and PAC-sponsored House ads); (2) a map of all Senate advertisements, including unemployment data; and (3) a map of all gubernatorial advertisements, including unemployment data.
Then, I took the 2010 unemployment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and compared the unemployment rates of the congressional districts where the advertisements mentioning China aired with the congressional districts where these advertisements did not air. I also compared the unemployment rate of these congressional districts to the national average. I ran a t-test to check for statistical significance. I repeated the same procedure for the states that aired ads mentioning China in Senate and gubernatorial races.

The Relationship between Advertisements and News during the 2010 Midterm Elections

In order to explore the relationship between political advertisements and news coverage, I examined coverage of U.S. trade with China in three newspapers of record – The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post during the two months preceding the election, 9/05/2010-11/05/2010 (Hirschorn, 2009). All of the articles were obtained through the Factiva database with the search terms (china AND trade). The “Duplicate Articles” feature was turned “ON.” This meant that virtually identical duplicate articles (e.g. multiple hits of the same article) would not be included in the search results. For The New York Times, I used the search code (rst=NYTF); for the Washington Post, I used the search code (rst=WP); and for the Wall Street Journal, I used the search code (rst=J).

I mainly analyzed articles with two or more mentions of China, because I wanted to ensure that each article I analyzed had substantial content about China. My criteria for a valid mention of “China” included references to the country itself, references to its people as “Chinese,” or references to its government as “Beijing.” I did not include mentions of China in the title of an organization or institution (e.g. the People’s Bank of China). In order to capture the largest number of articles that mentioned both China and the 2010 midterm elections, I also included articles that contained one or more references to China and also mentioned the 2010 midterm
elections. I excluded articles from the travel section or articles that were related solely to the history of China and travel in China, because of their lack of direct relevance to China and trade.

My search results for the terms “China and “trade” included 158 articles from *The New York Times*, with one duplicate excluded. However, after reviewing the articles, I found that only 112 articles contained 2 or more paragraphs mentioning China, or at least one mention of China and the election. I initially retrieved 85 articles from *The Washington Post*, with four duplicates excluded. However, after reviewing the articles, I found that only 55 articles contained 2 or more paragraphs mentioning China, or at least one mention of China and the election. My search results included 217 articles from the *Wall Street Journal*, with zero duplicates excluded. However, after reviewing the articles with the aforementioned criteria, I found that only 140 articles contained 2 or more paragraphs mentioning China, or at least one mention of China and the election. There were significantly more articles about China and trade in the *Wall Street Journal*, which is to be expected from a newspaper that focuses on economic issues. I gathered a total of 307 articles from the three newspapers. Since the unit of analysis for this study was the paragraph, I examined each article to determine which paragraphs should be included in the analysis. This left me with a sample of 3005 paragraphs to use in my analysis.

I conducted a quantitative content analysis, which is defined in this thesis as “the *frequency* of occurrence of given content characteristics” in the three elite news publications (George, 2009, p. 145). My analysis included the headline and relevant paragraphs in each article. No photographs accompanying the print newspaper articles were analyzed in this study. During my analysis, I also took note of the types of article (e.g. editorial, news, etc) in the sample. By looking at the frequency of positive language, negative language, and conflict frames being used to describe China and trade, my goal was to better understand the relationship between political
advertising and media coverage of China and trade during the months leading up to the 2010 midterm elections.

In order to find evidence of positive, negative, or conflict framing within the articles, I used the following presence or absence coding scheme: Indicate whether each paragraph in each article contains explicitly positive language about China and trade (including the U.S.-China trade relationship and China’s economic growth, etc.), explicitly negative language about China (including the U.S.-China trade relationship and China’s economic growth, etc.), language indicating a conflict or the use of a conflict frame\(^1\), and/or mentions the 2010 political advertisements regarding China. I also coded for whether the article was solely about China or whether it was only partially about China. The results from coding were then cross tabulated through SPSS to determine the frequency distribution of multiple statistical variables. Then, the Pearson Chi-Square was used to determine statistical significance.

In order to ensure reliability of data, or “the extent to which data can be trusted to represent the phenomena of interest rather than spurious ones” (Krippendorff, 2009, p. 350), I conducted an intercoder reliability analysis with three coders (the researcher and two other coders). Although I was the sole researcher and coder for this thesis, intercoder reliability “establish[es] that more than one individual can use the coding scheme as a measurement tool, with similar results” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 142).

I created a reliability sample of 30 articles, or approximately 10% of the sample of 307 articles that contained two or more paragraphs mentioning China or contained at least one paragraph mentioning China plus at least one mention of the 2010 midterm elections. Each coder analyzed 530 paragraphs of text. All three coders were present at the coding session, where I

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\(^1\) The conflict frame is often described as “the media’s emphasis on conflict as a means of attracting attention and readership” (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 64). According to Neuman et al., the “us/them conflict frame” is often used “to voice suspicion of other countries’s motives in the area of international relations” (1992, p. 66).
distributed a coding instruction sheet and gave verbal instructions on how to code the reliability sample. The coders were able to ask questions about coding throughout the process. All of the indices used in my analysis of the full sample were also used to calculate reliability. Then, once the coders finished their analysis and input their data into a spreadsheet, I exported the data to SPSS and performed an intercoder reliability analysis using Cohen’s Kappa statistic to determine consistency among the three coders.

Since I did not achieve a reliability coefficient above 0.80 on two of the coding categories with coder 1, and did not achieve a reliability coefficient above 0.80 on any of the categories with coder 2, I met with the two coders to discuss the differences in coding and attempt to reconcile or explain the differences. I then decided to delete the coding category “highlighting the difference between the US and China” because of the similar nature of this category to the conflict frame.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Kappa’s coefficient for Coder 1</th>
<th>Kappa’s coefficient for Coder 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive China</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative China</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td>0.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions 2010 election</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then, all three coders examined a different reliability sample consisting of 15 articles, or approximately 5% of the sample. I was able to achieve intercoder reliability on all of the coding variables with a Kappa’s coefficient of .90 or greater, which is “acceptable to all” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 143).
A Rhetorical and Semiotic Analysis of 2010 Midterm Election Political Advertising

Visual news and political advertising analysis is a newer genre of analysis, because “news visuals are not emphasized in research” as much as print publications are emphasized (Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 5). However, developments in both television and online media, such as YouTube, have brought about a plethora of news and political material that should be critically addressed by scholars. Although “television is more easily comprehended than print,” particularly because of the visual aspects that “reinforce and contextualize what we hear” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 50), televisual political advertising can also “invite false inferences by amalgamating information,” including words, images, and sounds, to create a singular message (p. 62).

Since a large number of voters in the U.S. gather their information about political candidates “from ads rather than the news” (Kern, 1989, p. 47), studying the content of advertisements is particularly relevant to the field of political communications and contributes to the growing body of knowledge about how the public receives information about political candidates during an election cycle.

Media coverage in various outlets such as The New York Times, CBS News, The Huffington Post, and local newspapers, was used to identify political campaigns that invoked China in their television advertisements. The fact that “prominent ads are discussed and rebroadcast by the media” provides ample rationale to explore these prominent political advertisements that garnered media coverage for their mentions of China (West, 2005, p. 44).

The resulting sample includes a total of 67 ads from the 2010 midterm elections. I broke down the 67 ads into two categories – those aired by the candidates themselves (44 ads) and those aired by Political Action Committees (PACs) on behalf of a candidate (23 ads). The sample
includes general election spots aired on television and/or YouTube by candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, or Governor. The sample contains advertisements from races in 23 congressional districts for House races and 8 states for Senate and Gubernatorial races. These videos were mainly downloaded from the Internet on November 4 and 5, 2010. Some of the videos were accessed from the candidate’s campaign website, others were found on the candidate’s YouTube channel, and the remainder was embedded on a media outlet’s own website (e.g. FactCheck.org). The sample, however, may not include all 2010 midterm election advertisements that mentioned China, as all advertisements mentioning China were not featured in news coverage. Once I compiled the database of advertisements, I indexed them based on the candidate or PAC that sponsored the advertisement, their opponent, party affiliation, state, congressional district (if applicable), incumbent status, whether they won or lost, and ad type.2

This analysis considered the political advertisements as text and examined the symbolic representations of China in those textual spaces. I adopt a broad definition for text, which allows for the examination of “meaningful structures in a larger, cultural sense: symbolic spaces that embrace several semiotic media” and encompasses the multi-faceted and complex way a country is represented in American political advertising (Brockmeier, 2001, p. 215). By referring to scholarly work on rhetorical analysis, semiotic analysis, and previous political advertisement analyses, I adopted a framework for examining the “overall symbols and structures of the ads” (Johnston, 2006, p. 18). This research systematically examines political advertisements featured on television and on YouTube by analyzing how the structure of the ads affects the meaning gleaned by the viewer, looking for “generalizable patterns,” and considering how political advertising affects the “construction of political ideology.” (Biocca, 1991, p. 8). 

2Although I did not find a comprehensive repository of all the political advertisements that mentioned China during the 2010 midterm elections, I did contact the Wisconsin Advertising Project and the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG) for further information about the 2010 midterm election and political advertising.
This thesis defines rhetoric as “[t]he strategic use of communication, oral or written, to achieve specifiable goals” (Kuypers, 2010, p. 288, emphasis in original). In other words, rhetoric is meant to be persuasive and is often used by people “who are interested in influencing how their messages are received” (Kuypers, 2010, p. 288). Jamieson and Campbell point out that “[a]s students of rhetoric, we know that any choice has an influence” and that the content featured in news media and advertisements often lead viewers to have “a world view shaped by those decisions” (1992, p. 1). This thesis explored how rhetoric, particularly “[i]mplications, associations, and juxtapositions” were used to establish a candidate’s image and their policy positions (Morreale, 1991, p. 190).

Semiotics also provides a “framework for analysing the signs, texts, and signifying practices used by the contemporary mass media” (Danesi, 2010, p. 135, emphasis in original). Semiotics is simply “the relationship between a sign and its meaning; and the way signs are combined into codes” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 37).

Within these frameworks, I analyzed the “text” of these political advertisements by relying on past political advertising analyses by Jamieson and Campbell (1992), Kaid and Davidson (1986), Biocca (1991), and Brader’s (2006) to inform my coding schema. I primarily adopted aspects of Jamieson and Campbell’s questions for use in analyzing the advertisements (1992, p. 230-231).

Fundamentals of the Advertisement:

- What is the political party affiliation of the candidate?
- Is this an attack ad or an affirming ad?

Audience:
Who is the intended audience? What assumptions does the ad appear to make about its audience?

Does the ad appeal specifically to that audience, particularly in regards to economic hardship?

Advertising Content:

What is the central claim they are making about China in the ad? Is this claim believable?

Does the advertisement provide evidence for this claim? If so, what evidence?

How does the advertisement position the candidate in relation to China?

What is the verbal content’s message?

What is the visual or non-verbal content’s message? Do the verbal and visual match up?

What strategies are used to adapt the message to the advertisement’s intended audience?

Does the advertisement use the “hard-sell” or “soft-sell negative advertising” method?

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3 According to Jamieson (1992), positioning the candidate in reference to China can occur in a number of ways, including (1) identification and (2) apposition. Identification may involve linking the candidate with another person, a policy, or some kind of visual. Apposition involves associating a candidate with “everything the electorate cherishes” and painting the opponent as “an antonym of those treasured values” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 47). This is accomplished either verbally or visually.

4 The verbal and visual messages refer to the Kaid and Davidson’s videostyle (1986) which consists of three elements: verbal content, nonverbal content, and film and video production techniques (p. 186). The verbal content consists of “issue” or “image” content, which addresses the “nature of the issues mentioned (foreign policy, the economy, crime) or the specific candidate characteristics attributed to an image (honest, competent, experienced, compassionate)” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 27). Verbal content can refer to the candidate themselves (positive) or the opponent (negative), “the type of evidence or proof offered for a claim made by a candidate and by the explicit and implicit values conveyed in a spot,” and “even the language choice” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 27-28).

5 Nonverbal videostyle refers not only to visual elements, such as the setting or environment, including “music, lighting, colors,” but also to performance-related aspects, including “appearance, clothing, body movements, and eye contact” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 28). Also, political advertisements use “television production rhetoric” to compare and contrast, create associations, imply certain meanings or interpretations, and create certain effects such as repeating a sound or an image for emphasis (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 30). The use of “codes and symbols to help audiences interpret the message and the candidate” are an important part of the video production aspect of a candidate’s videostyle (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 30). This includes “camera angles and movement, color, editing, music and sound, lighting” (Kaid & Johnston, 2001, p. 30).

6 I refer to Jamieson’s (1992) assertion that “patriotism and prejudice” play a large part in political advertising and are two ways that ads relate and cater to their audience (p. 64). In particular, I refer to political ads that “vilify opposing candidates and out-groups in ways that manifest primal needs and invite primal responses (Jamieson, 1992, p. 65). Jamieson (1992) points out that “[b]ecause political campaigns rely on identification and contrast, they are rife with in- and out-group distinctions” (p. 66). In particular, “[e]mployment was both the symbol and the substance of most conflicts among immigrant groups” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 67).
• Is the ad offensive? If so, why?

Frames:

• How does the advertisement use China to identify and create recognition, differentiate, associate, encourage audience participation, and use repetition?

• What values and assumptions are underlying the advertisement?

Advertisements are often framed to appeal to their audience through the “use of resonant symbols” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992, p. 187) and enthymemes, which rely on audience cooperation and “often ask rhetorical questions whose answers have already been revealed to the admakers by the polls” (p. 62). Another associative frame involves “[j]uxtaposing images that have no necessary relation to one another” so that the audience can “infer a relationship” (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992, p. 187). There are several frames that were explored very closely. They include:

• The “fear” frame (Brader, 2006),

• The “national identity” frame (Anderson, 2006; Billig 1995),

• The “Other” frame, including “Red China” and the “Yellow Peril” (Said, 1994; Dower, 1986).

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7Montague Kern (1989) defines “hard-sell negative advertising” as making a case for a political candidate that “is different from the voters, and therefore not to be trusted” (p. 94, emphasis in original). Kern describes hard-sell as using the “strongest possible visual and aural” cues to provoke fear and indicate “a serious threat to the viewer” (1989, p. 94). This may include “dark colors and threatening voices,” as well as “few light entertainment related appeals” (Kern, 1989, p. 94). They invoke “fear” or “anger” by using “sound effects and visuals that link the opponent with a feeling of vulnerability on the part of the voter” (Kern, 1989, p. 106). Kern (1989) describes the “soft-sell” approach as negative advertising that “makes heavy use of lighter entertainment values, humor, self-deprecation, storytelling, or the unexpected turn of events” (p. 94-95). This type of negative advertisement involves using issues alongside “negative affective appeals” (Kern, 1989, p. 95). Kern also points to another category of what she calls “get ‘em-mad” ads, which are designed to stir anger at the intentions of the opponent” and may involve “[p]ocketbook issues” that have an effect on the voter’s financial situation (Kern, 1989, p. 95). These pocketbook issues are often highlighted by “[s]ymbols, sounds, and mythology” that weave together a narrative of “a large and powerful entity” that is a direct threat to the voter’s own money (Kern, 1989, p. 99).
The “fear” frame is generally present in “fear ads,” which are designed to make the audience afraid, anxious, or disgusted with a candidate (Brader, 2006, p. 6). Strong fear narratives can be impactful, because “our fears shape our perception of ‘the facts’” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 33). Musical elements, such as “minor chords, ominous rhythms, and discordant tones,” along with “grainy, black-and-white images or dark and muted colors” can work to evoke fear (Brader, 2006, p. 10). Examples include the Daisy ad by Barry Goldwater and the Bear ad by Ronald Reagan. These types of advertisements tend to get more attention and media coverage than other political advertisements (Brader, 2006).

The “national identity” frame relies on what Jamieson & Campbell call “nationalistic association” or evoking images that offer banal but patriotic images (Billig, 1995) or evoke the threat of not belonging to the nation (Anderson, 2006).

The “Other” frame relies on Bottici’s political myths, which include constructs such as “Red China” and the “Yellow Peril” that may have previously been embedded in the minds of the audience (2007).

Then, I examined the content that makes up these advertisements, including the “use of color, music, sound effects, narration, production style, symbols, and other evocative imagery” (Brader, 2006, p. 149). In particular, I was interested in the non-verbal cues in the advertisements, particularly the “specific signs,” “codes,” “discourse (discursive structures) … and their references to other social discourses,” and “semantic framing” (Biocca, 1991, p. 6, emphasis in original).

Within the Saussurean notion of semiotics, there is the signifier, “a physical object” such as an image or a sound, the signified, “a mental concept” that may not overtly relate to the signifier, and the sign, which connects them together (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 38). There are two types
of signs – the iconic or motivated sign, where the signifier and the signified share an obvious relationship, and the arbitrary or unmotivated sign, where the signifier and the signified do not share an obvious relationship but are related because of “an agreement among its users that this sign shall mean this” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 39). These signs convey meaning, which Barthes suggested have three orders of signification; the first “is self-contained” whereas the second order “carries cultural meanings” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 41). The second order of signs can act as a myth-maker or as connotation, where signs “signify values, emotions and attitudes” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 44). The third order is described as intersubjectivity, which is culture-dependent and not only influences the people within a culture, but also indicates their “cultural membership” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 46). Signs gain meaning by becoming part of a system of codes, which keep changing because of the meaning users imbue on it (Fiske & Hartley, 1978). These codes then form convention, which is how “a culture establishes and maintains its identity” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 60).

Semiotics is particularly applicable to the study of television because in this medium, the signified is displaced by the signifier when “the two-dimensional visual representation” of a person, such as a picture, becomes equal to the real person (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 48). Metonymy, when the part comes to signify the whole, also plays a role in television. For this study, “signs” are defined as the “units of meaning within the ad” such as images and music (Biocca, 1991 p. 18-19). In particular, I am interested in the meaning the sign carries within the greater context of the 2010 election cycle.

Codes are “negotiated in a culture” and are largely affected by one’s “social environment” (Biocca, 1991, p. 28). In television, camera angles, lighting, color, narration, sound effects, and music make up the codes that situate the audience in the current political and cultural
environment. Similarly, political myths involve important images or narratives that change meanings depending on the sociopolitical times (Bottici, 2007, 2010). Studying codes in political advertising helps “unmask the ideology of the commercial” (Biocca, 1991, p. 39), particularly since codes can convey “what is otherwise socially unspeakable by a public figure” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 85). Codes are designed to “play to whispered fears, prejudices privately held but publicly denied” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 84).

Along with signs and codes, I address the political and social discourse about China circulating among the U.S. public and U.S. elites through the analyses of public opinion and news coverage of China and trade. I also explore the role of the ads mentioning China as a part of the larger political discourse, particularly how they relate to “current issue debates, other ads, and other media products” (Biocca, 1991, p. 47). Finally, I study how semantic framing combines signs, codes, and discourse to create a coherent message for the audience (Biocca, 1991). Semantic frames prime the audience and “organize the contexts within which the codes and discourses will be processed so that the desired subset of possible meanings will be activated in the mind of the viewer” (Biocca, 1991, p. 62). In particular, I ask if the candidates are connected with certain concepts or people through “contextual links” or are portrayed as a particular genre of politician through “classificatory links” (Biocca, 1991, p. 66-67).

In addition to the political advertisements about political candidates, I will also discuss one particular advertisement that was widely circulated on the Internet and aired on cable news channels, such as CNN, during the 2010 midterm elections. This video of a Chinese professor was funded by the Citizens Against Government Waste, a “private, non-partisan, non-profit organization… [whose] mission is to eliminate waste, mismanagement, and inefficiency in the federal government” (Citizens Against…, 2011). In response to the “Chinese Professor” ad, there
were a number of parodies that emerged on the Internet, some of which were inspired by a contest sponsored by several blogs geared toward Asian American issues. All of the parodies were either linked from the Asian American blog “angry asian man” or were found on YouTube as a suggested link next to the original video. This sample consists of one original video and 13 parodies of the video. Although I originally saw the advertisement on television, the analysis was conducted from a copy of the video obtained on the Internet. The analysis will look at the elements of film parodies adopted from Harries, including reiteration, inversion, misdirection, literalization, extraneous inclusion, and exaggeration (2000).

Reiteration involves recreating certain features of the original video in order to link the two texts (Harries, 2000, p. 43). Inversion consists of changing “the lexicon, syntax or style” in a way that “suggests an opposite meaning” from the meaning suggested in the original video (Harries, 2000, p. 55). In misdirection, the parody will appear similar to the original video, but then “deliver an unexpected turn” (Harries, 2000, p. 62). Literalization stems from “self-reflexivity” and changes relating to “the use of the pun (visual, aural and textual)” (Harries, 2000, p. 71). Extraneous inclusion involves “inserting ‘foreign’ lexical units into a conventionalized syntax” or elements that are considered unconventional (Harries, 2000, p. 77). Similarly, exaggeration is the practice of “extending” elements of the video “beyond their conventionally expected limits” (Harries, 2000, p. 83). Often, parodies also rely on intertextuality, particularly “aspects of popular culture, including movies, TV shows, and other ads to create a new meaning” (Tryon, 2008, p. 210).

The parodies of the Chinese Professor ad are important to this study because they play a different role than conventional political advertisements; instead, parodies are “used to challenge
the authority of political powerbrokers, whether pundits or campaign workers, in shaping political discourse” (Tryon, 2008, p. 210).
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS


Many of the political advertisements that aired on television and on the Internet during the 2010 U.S. midterm elections seemed to suggest or assume that the U.S. public would have an unfavorable opinion of China and its relationship to the U.S. economy. In order to explore what the U.S. public thought about China in the months leading up to the 2010 U.S. midterm elections, I analyzed data from the Spring 2010 Pew Global Attitudes Survey and the 2010 Global Views survey by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs (The Chicago Council). I used cross tabulations, Pearson’s correlations, and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression methodology as a robust predictive model of correlation. These analyses were carried out in PASW Statistics 18 software in the Windows 7 environment. This chapter will address the following research questions:

R1: What was general public opinion about China in 2010? Did public opinion support the release of political advertisements mentioning China during the 2010 midterm elections?

R1(a): How does party identification factor into U.S. public opinion about China, its economic growth, and its relationship to the U.S.?

R1(b): Does ideology play a role in U.S. public opinion of China and trade?
One of the main concerns during the 2010 midterm elections was joblessness in the U.S.

Did employment status and household income have a bearing on U.S. public opinion on China?

Since political candidates often conduct extensive public polling while running their political campaigns, do people from states where the advertisements were aired have a more negative view of China?

The Independent and Dependent Variables

There were five independent variables in this analysis:

- **Party identification**: A person’s self-identification as Republican or Democrat. I created a dummy variable for party identification, which omitted Independents.

- **Ideology**: A person’s self-identification as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, and very liberal.

- **Employment status**: Employed (people who were working as a paid employee or were self-employed) or Unemployed (people who were on temporary layoff from a job, looking for work, retired, disabled, or were unemployed but did not fall into any of the aforementioned categories).

- **Household income**: Ranging from $0 to $25,000, $25,000 to $50,000, $50,000 to 75,000, and $75,000+.

- **State of residence**: States where political advertisements mentioning China were and were not aired.
There were 11 dependent variables, which were based on the questions asked in the Pew Global Attitudes and The Chicago Council’s 2010 surveys about opinion on global issues:

- The first dependent variable is the level of concern about the U.S. competing economically with other countries. In order to develop this variable, I constructed an index from three different variables from The Chicago Council’s survey that were related to the underlying concept. These variables were: how threatening people considered economic competition from low-wage countries, the importance people placed on protecting the jobs of American workers, and the importance people placed on reducing U.S. trade deficit with foreign countries. I performed a reliability analysis with Cronbach’s alpha on this index and added the variables together.

- The second dependent variable is concerned with favorability toward China’s economic growth in relation to the U.S. The Chicago Council asks this question in its survey on a scale of mostly positive, mostly negative, or equally positive and negative. The Pew survey asked if China’s economic growth was good, bad, or neither.

- The third dependent variable, derived from The Chicago Council survey, involves whether the sample population thinks about U.S. debt to China as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat.

- The fourth dependent variable considers whether the U.S. relates to China as more of an enemy or as more of a partner. Pew asked whether you think of China as more of a partner of the U.S., more of an enemy of the U.S., or neither. The Chicago Council asked about whether the U.S. should undertake friendly cooperation and engagement with China or actively work to limit the growth of China's power in dealing with China the rise of China's power.
• The fifth dependent variable questions whether one had a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of China.

• The sixth dependent variable is concerned with whether the development of China as a world power was a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat.

• The seventh dependent variable is concerned with whether China practices fair trade or unfair trade.

• The eighth dependent variable considers whether people are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, not at all concerned about China's keeping its currency cheap to make its exports more competitive.

• The ninth dependent variable is whether people think economic competition from low-wage countries poses is a critical threat, important but not critical threat, or not an important threat.

• The tenth dependent variable is concerned with whether people consider protecting the jobs of American workers very important, somewhat important, or not important at all.

• The 11th dependent variable considers peoples’ opinions on whether reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries is very important, somewhat important, or not important at all.
### Hypotheses

#### Table 2
**Summary of hypotheses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV = Independent Variable</th>
<th>DV = Dependent Variable</th>
<th>IV1: Republicans, Democrats, and Independents</th>
<th>IV2: People with differing ideologies</th>
<th>IV3: Employment status</th>
<th>IV4: Household income</th>
<th>IV5: Whether an ad mentioning China was or was not aired in a state</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-China Specific</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>DV1: US’s ability to compete</td>
<td>H₁</td>
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<td>DV9: U.S. competing with low-wage countries</td>
<td>H₆</td>
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<td>DV10: Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
<td>H₀</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>China Specific</strong></td>
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<td>DV11: US trade deficit</td>
<td>H₁₀</td>
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<tr>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/ growth in relation to the US</td>
<td>H₂, H₅, H₂₃, H₂₉, H₁₆</td>
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<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td>H₁₃</td>
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<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td>H₄, H₅, H₁₉, H₂₁</td>
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<td>DV5: Favorability toward China</td>
<td>H₂₀, H₂₆</td>
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<td>DV6: China’s growth as a world power</td>
<td>H₁₈, H₂₄, H₂₂</td>
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<td>DV7: China’s fair/ unfair trade practices</td>
<td>H₁₉, H₂₅</td>
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<td>DV8: China’s currency valuation</td>
<td>H₂₀, H₂₆</td>
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### Hypotheses about Party Identification

My first four hypotheses explored the claims made by literature on trade politics that political party had no bearing on the way people view matters of trade, particularly the notion that support for trade and trade policies have “relatively unusual cross-partisan cues” (Rankin, 2006, p. 638). These hypotheses were tested through The Chicago Council’s 2010 Global Views survey data set.

**H₁:** Republicans, Democrats, and Independents will express equal amounts of concern about the U.S. competing economically with foreign countries.

**H₂:** Republicans, Democrats, and Independents will express equally favorable or unfavorable sentiments toward China’s economic growth.
**H₃**: Republicans, Democrats, and Independents will express equal amounts of concern about U.S. debt to China as a threat.

**H₄**: Republicans, Democrats, and Independents will express equal consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner.

*Hypotheses on Ideology*

Then, I explored ideology, which ranged from very conservative to very liberal, and its relationship to opinions about China, its economic growth, and its relationship with the U.S. Although the major political parties in the U.S. closely track with a particular ideology, they are not always perfectly aligned with the political parties. Similar to party identification, the literature on trade politics again suggests that conservatives and liberals will often align on their views of trade, and that “left-right coalitions are not new to the trade debate” (Aaronson, 2001, p. 5). However, scholars indicated that conservatism can also translate to a more protectionist view of trade (Rankin, 2001). These hypotheses were tested through the Spring 2010 Pew Global Attitudes 2010 survey data set.

**H₅**: People with differing ideologies will express equal amounts of concern about China’s economic growth.

**H₆**: People with differing ideologies will express equal amounts of consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner.

**H₇**: People with differing ideologies will express equal amounts of favorability toward China.
Hypotheses on Unemployment Rate

My next series of hypotheses were based on one of the central issues during the 2010 midterm elections – the unemployment rate. I asked whether employment status had any bearing on one’s opinion of China and various facets of its economic growth and stature in the world. These hypotheses were tested through The Chicago Council’s data set.

\( H_8: \) Employment status will be indicative of one’s views on whether China engages in fair or unfair trade.

\( H_9: \) Employment status will be indicative of one’s views on whether China is more of an enemy than a partner.

\( H_{10}: \) Employment status and household income will be indicative of how negatively a person views U.S. debt to China.

\( H_{11}: \) Employment status will be indicative of how negatively a person views China keeping its currency cheap to make its exports more competitive.

\( H_{12}: \) Employment status will be indicative of one’s views on China’s development as a world power.

\( H_{13}: \) Employment status will be indicative of one’s views of China’s economic growth in relation to the U.S. economy.
Hypotheses on Household Income

Then, I explored how household income influenced peoples’ opinions on China through the following hypotheses. This is particularly relevant given the literature on low-wage workers and trade. According to Scheve and Slaughter, “less-skilled individuals, measured by . . . wages earned, are much more likely to oppose freer trade and immigration than their more-skilled counterparts” (2001, p. 9).

**H14:** Household income will be indicative of one’s views on whether China engages in fair or unfair trade.

**H15:** Household income will be indicative of one’s views on whether China is more of an enemy than a partner.

**H16:** Household income will be indicative of how negatively a person views U.S. debt to China.

**H17:** Household income will be indicative of how negatively a person views China keeping its currency cheap to make its exports more competitive.

**H18:** Household income will be indicative of one’s views on China’s development as a world power.

**H19:** Household income will be indicative of one’s views of China’s economic growth in relation to the U.S. economy.
**Hypotheses on State of Residence and U.S. Economy**

In addition, I analyzed data by state, focusing on the states where ads mentioning China were aired. First, I hypothesized how states viewed economic competition from low-wage countries, the importance of protecting the jobs of American workers, and the importance of reducing the U.S.’ trade deficit with foreign countries, especially since these three issues played a large role in political advertising during the 2010 midterm elections.

**H₂₀**: Whether an ad mentioning China was or was not aired in a state will have no effect on one’s views on economic competition from low-wage countries.

**H₂₁**: Whether an ad mentioning China was or was not aired in a state will have no effect on one’s views on protecting the jobs of American workers.

**H₂₂**: Whether an ad mentioning China was or was not aired in a state will have no effect on one’s views on reducing U.S. trade deficit with foreign countries.

**Hypotheses on State of Residence and Opinion on China and Trade**

The next three hypotheses asked whether people in the states where the political advertisements that mentioned China aired had different opinions of China, its economic growth, and its relationship with the U.S. Since the advertisements were geared toward a population of people who were purported to have negative opinions of China, these hypotheses aimed to ascertain whether or not these states had a markedly negative opinion of China in comparison to other states where ads mentioning China were not aired. Hypothesis 23 was tested through the
Pew data set, hypotheses 24-27 were tested through The Chicago Council’s data set, and hypotheses 28-29 were tested through both data sets.

\( H_{23} \): People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will express equal levels of favorability toward China.

\( H_{24} \): People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will equally consider the threat of China’s development as a world power.

\( H_{25} \): People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will express equal amounts of consideration about China engaging in fair or unfair trade.

\( H_{26} \): People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will equally consider the threat of U.S. debt to China.

\( H_{27} \): People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will express equal amounts of concern regarding China keeping its currency cheap to make its exports more competitive.
**H28:** People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will express the same level of concern about China and its economic growth.

**H29:** People from states where ads mentioning China were aired and people from states where ads mentioning China were not aired will express equal consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner.

**Findings**

The following table visually summarizes my findings from the above hypotheses:

**Table 3**  
**Summary of hypotheses with findings highlighted**

- **Gray shading:** Independent variable IS NOT found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable
- **Black shading:** Independent variable IS found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV1: US’s ability to compete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV9: U.S. competing with low-wage countries</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV10: Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV11: US trade deficit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/ growth in relation to the US</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>H3</td>
<td>H23</td>
<td>H29</td>
<td>H16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H20</td>
<td>H28</td>
<td>H14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td>H4</td>
<td>H6</td>
<td>H19</td>
<td>H23</td>
<td>H17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV5: Favorability toward China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV6: China’s growth as a world power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H22</td>
<td>H24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV7: China’s fair/unfair trade practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H18</td>
<td>H24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV8: China’s currency valuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H21</td>
<td>H25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Public Opinion and Party Identification

Table 4
Summary of hypotheses by party identification

- **Gray shading**: Independent variable IS NOT found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable
- **Black shading**: Independent variable IS found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV = Independent Variable</th>
<th>DV = Dependent Variable</th>
<th>IV1: Republicans, Democrats, and Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV1: US’s ability to compete</td>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/growth in relation to the US</td>
<td>H1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV9: U.S. competing with low-wage countries</td>
<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td>H2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV10: Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td>H3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV11: US trade deficit</td>
<td>DV5: Favorability toward China</td>
<td>H4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/growth in relation to the US</td>
<td>DV6: China’s growth as a world power</td>
<td>H5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td>DV7: China’s fair/unfair trade practices</td>
<td>H6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td>DV8: China’s currency valuation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV5: Favorability toward China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings suggest that there is bipartisan concern about the U.S. competing economically with foreign countries. Both parties were torn on whether China was more of an enemy than a partner, and Democrats did not consider U.S. debt to China an important threat whereas Republicans held a wide range of views on the issue. However, party identification did play a role in how a person viewed China’s economic growth. Democrats felt more positively about China’s economic growth, whereas Republicans felt negatively.

In this analysis, the level of education had a consistent effect on peoples’ opinions of China, with less educated people tending to be more concerned about China than people with more education.
Public Opinion and Ideology

Table 5
Summary of hypotheses by ideology

- **Gray shading:** Independent variable IS NOT found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable
- **Black shading:** Independent variable IS found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV = Independent Variable</th>
<th>DV = Dependent Variable</th>
<th>IV2: People with differing ideologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV1: US’s ability to compete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV9: U.S. competing with low-wage countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV10: Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV11: US trade deficit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/ growth in relation to the US</td>
<td></td>
<td>H₀</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>H₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV5: Favorability toward China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV6: China’s growth as a world power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV7: China’s fair / unfair trade practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV8: China’s currency valuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ideology had a consistent effect on peoples’ opinions about China. People who self-identified as very liberal tended to be more positive about China’s economic growth than people who self-identified as very conservative. Similarly, one-third of people self-identifying as very conservative considered China more of an enemy than a partner, compared to 11.5% of their very liberal counterparts. People who self-identified as very liberal also considered China more favorably, with nearly 30% thinking very favorably while less than 2% of very conservative people felt the same way.

The polarized opinions of conservatives and liberal were mainly on the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum. The opinions of people who self-identified as conservative, moderate, and liberal were not as drastically different as the opinions of the very liberal and very conservative.
Public Opinion and Employment Status & Household Income

Table 6
Summary of hypotheses by employment status and household income

- **Gray shading**: Independent variable IS NOT found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable
- **Black shading**: Independent variable IS found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-China Specific</th>
<th>IV = Independent Variable</th>
<th>DV = Dependent Variable</th>
<th>IV3: Employment status</th>
<th>IV4: Household income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV1: US’s ability to compete</td>
<td>H21</td>
<td>H21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV9: U.S. competing with low-wage countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV10: Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV11: US trade deficit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/ growth in relation to the US</td>
<td>H22</td>
<td>H22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td>H23</td>
<td>H23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td>H24</td>
<td>H24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV5: Favorability toward China</td>
<td>H25</td>
<td>H25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV6: China’s growth as a world power</td>
<td>H26</td>
<td>H26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV7: China’s fair / unfair trade practices</td>
<td>H27</td>
<td>H27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV8: China’s currency valuation</td>
<td>H28</td>
<td>H28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data suggests employment status influences opinions on certain issues pertaining to China. Regardless of employment, the majority of people believe that China practices unfair trade, are concerned with China’s currency valuation, and almost half of the people surveyed think of China’s economic growth negatively. However, people who are unemployed tend to view China more negatively, including wanting to limit China’s growth, viewing U.S. debt to China as a critical threat, and considering China’s development as a world power a critical threat.

Although people across all income levels overwhelmingly view U.S. debt to China as a threat and appear split on whether China’s economic growth is negative or equally positive and negative, the data suggests household income influences peoples’ opinions on China. Lower income households are more interested in limiting China’s power and are prone to view China’s development as a world power as a critical threat. However, converse to expectations, a larger number of higher income households expressed concern about China’s currency valuation and think China practices unfair trade.
Public Opinion and State of Residence

Table 7
Summary of hypotheses by states where ads did and did not air

- **Gray shading:** Independent variable IS NOT found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable
- **Black shading:** Independent variable IS found to be a factor on the proposed dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-China Specific</th>
<th>DV1: US’s ability to compete</th>
<th>DV5: Whether an ad mentioning China was or was not aired in a state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV2: China’s economic growth/growth in relation to US</td>
<td>H_0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV3: U.S. debt to China</td>
<td>H_1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV4: Consideration of China as more of an enemy than a partner</td>
<td>H_2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV6: China’s growth as a world power</td>
<td>H_3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV7: China’s fair/unfair trade practices</td>
<td>H_4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV8: China’s currency valuation</td>
<td>H_5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of whether an ad mentioning China aired in a person’s state of residence, the majority of people in all states thought that economic competition from low-wage countries was an important or even critical threat. Almost 80% of people in all states considered protecting the jobs of American workers important. People in all states agreed that reducing the U.S. trade deficit with foreign countries was very important or somewhat important.

This was also true for public opinion on China. Whether advertisements mentioning China were or were not aired in a particular state accounted for very little of the variance in peoples’ opinions on China’s trade practices, U.S. debt to China, China’s currency valuation, whether people considered China as an enemy or partner, and how much of a threat people considered the development of China as a world power. However, there was a statistically significant difference in a person’s level of favorability toward China. People in states where ads mentioning China aired felt slightly more unfavorably about China (17.3%) than people in the states where the ads
did not air (13.0%). Despite this finding, almost half of people from all states felt somewhat favorably about China, whereas a smaller number of people felt unfavorably toward China.

Across the board, people were concerned about China. Most people viewed the development of China as a world power and U.S. debt to China as a threat, and expressed concern about China keeping its currency cheap so its exports remain competitive. The overwhelming majority of people agreed that China practices unfair trade.

In two cases, data from Pew Global Attitudes and The Chicago Council appeared to yield differing results. Although the Pew data suggested that more than half of people in all states thought of China as neither a partner nor an enemy, the data from The Chicago Council indicated that over 70% of people wanted to undertake friendly cooperation and engagement with China. Similarly, Pew survey respondents were split between considering China’s growing economy good or bad, but more than half of The Chicago Council’s survey respondents said China’s economic growth was equally positively and negative and less than 10% thought it was positive.

**Discussion**

Reflecting the depressed state of the U.S. economy, people in all states indiscriminately expressed concern about trade debt, job loss, and economic competition from low-wage countries. These concerns were prevalent themes in the political advertisements mentioning China during the 2010 midterm elections. In fact, overall U.S. public sentiment seemed to be one of concern about China’s elevated standing in the world. These results bring up a question: If the general opinion about China seems to indicate that people are somewhat concerned by China, then why were ads mentioning China only aired in certain congressional districts and states?

The statistical analysis also provided little evidence to suggest that people in states where the ads aired had markedly different opinions about China, its economic practices, and its
relationship to the U.S. economy than people in states where the ads did not air. In fact, although people were concerned about China, approximately 50% of people from all states viewed China somewhat favorably. This again raises the question of why these ads were aired in the certain locations.

These ads portraying China as a threat to the U.S. economy were aired by both Republicans and Democrats during the 2010 midterm elections, reflecting the findings of bipartisan concern about China. Nonetheless, Democrats were generally more positive about China in these public opinion surveys, which seems to contradict the concerted effort Democrats made to target China during the midterm elections. This Democratic push was documented in newspapers, with the encouragement of former House speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic PACs (Chen, 2010).

Ideology, which was a consistent predictor of peoples’ opinions on China, indicated that very liberal respondents tended to think about China more positively than very conservative respondents. These results point to the polarized environment in trade politics that has prevented agreement on U.S. trade goals in recent years (Destler, 2005). The negative opinions among conservatives also seem to reflect an “ideological conservatism concerned with cultural integrity, national loyalty, and sovereignty” and encourages a new brand of trade protectionism (Rankin, 2001, p. 365).

Despite the state of the U.S. economy and the heavy focus on job loss to China during the 2010 midterm elections, unemployment status appeared to have a sporadic effect on opinions about China. In fact, results indicated that people across the board overwhelmingly felt that friendly cooperation and engagement was the best way to deal with China. I will explore how actual unemployment figures relate to the advertisements mentioning China in the next section.
Household income also appeared to have a sporadic effect on peoples’ opinions on China; when there was a statistically significant relationship between household income and opinion on China, higher income households affected public opinion of China negatively as often as lower income households did. A possible explanation is that higher income households appeared to influence public opinion on China’s currency valuation and trade practices, two topics covered extensively in the news media.

Finally, the two differences in findings between the Pew and The Chicago Council data sets point to the importance of questioning how opinion surveys are framed. It appears that how questions are phrased and the number and nature of the answer choices provided may impact the way a survey respondent perceives a particular topic. For example, choosing between two answer choices – good and bad – may have an entirely different result than providing a third option of neutral.

The Unemployment Context: Mapping Unemployment in the U.S. during the 2010 Midterm Elections

Map of Unemployment by Congressional District

Concerns about the economy, particularly the unemployment rate, dominated the 2010 midterm elections. Unemployment data from the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics were analyzed to answer the research question below:

$R_2$: What was the context of unemployment in the U.S. at the time the political ads were aired?

Political advertisements that mentioned China were aired in House races in at least 23 congressional districts across the country. I explored the unemployment rates in the districts
where these ads aired to determine if there was any discernable difference in unemployment rate between districts where these ads were and were not aired.

First, data were gathered from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that identified the number of employed and unemployed citizens for every county in the U.S. between December 2009 and January 2011. Then, I downloaded a table from the U.S. Census Bureau that lists every U.S. county and the congressional district(s) into which it resides. I combined the data from both sources to determine the unemployment rate for each congressional district.8

I developed two hypotheses relating U.S. unemployment figures to the districts where the ads mentioning China were aired. These hypotheses took into account the public opinion data from Pew Global Attitudes and The Chicago Council that indicated peoples’ opinions of China were not necessarily more negative in states where ads mentioning China were aired and proposed that unemployment figures would not necessarily be higher in these districts.

**H30:** The congressional districts where the ads mentioning China aired during a House race will not have a higher unemployment rate than the congressional districts where the ads mentioning China were not aired.

**H31:** The congressional districts where the ads mentioning China aired during a House race will not have a higher unemployment rate than the national average.

To answer these hypotheses, I compared the mean of the unemployment rate of all the congressional districts with all of the districts where the ads aired and all of the districts where the ads did not air through a single sample t-test. Congressional districts where the political advertisements mentioning China aired during a House race had a lower unemployment rate (M

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8 Counties spanning several districts had their population divided evenly between the districts.
than congressional districts where the ads did not air, \( t(30) = 28.552, p < 0.001 \). The congressional districts where the advertisements mentioning China aired had an average unemployment rate of 9.3%. The congressional districts where the advertisements mentioning China did not air had an average unemployment rate of 9.7%. Congressional districts where the political advertisements mentioning China aired also had a lower unemployment than the national average, which was 9.7%.\(^9\)

These results supported the hypothesis that the congressional districts where ads mentioning China were aired during a House race would not have a higher unemployment rate than the districts where these ads were not aired. The results also supported the hypothesis that the congressional districts where ads mentioning China were aired during a House race would not have a higher unemployment rate than the national average. These findings raise the question of why ads mentioning China were aired during House races in congressional districts that had an overall lower unemployment rate than the national average, and had a lower unemployment rate than the districts where the ads did not air.

To supplement the statistical analysis, I created a map highlighting the U.S. congressional districts where ads mentioning China were aired. This map was constructed by overlaying a map of the 110\(^{th}\) Congress’ district boundaries from the National Atlas of the U.S. on top of a map of average unemployment by county from February 2010 to January 2011 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Then, I highlighted the districts relevant to my study.

\(^9\) The Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that the national average for unemployment during the period Dec 2009 - Jan 2011 was 9.6%. This was likely weighted by population. However, my own analysis was an average of unemployment for every district, with each district weighted equally. Therefore, my 9.7% average is slightly different.
Figure 1. Congressional districts in which political ads mentioning China were aired, either by a House candidate’s campaign committee or by a Political Action Committee (PAC) on its behalf, highlighted on a map of national unemployment rates by county. Adapted from “Local Area Unemployment Statistics” by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011 and “Congressional districts and counties” by U.S. Census Bureau, 2007.

Map of Unemployment by State

There were at least eight states where Senate and/or gubernatorial campaigns released ads mentioning China during the 2010 midterm elections. With the U.S. Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics data, I compared the mean of all U.S. states with the states where the ads aired and the states where the ads did not air. This comparison was conducted using a single sample t-test to answer the hypotheses below.
$H_{32}$: The states where the ads mentioning China aired during a Senate or gubernatorial race will not have a higher unemployment rate than the states where the ads mentioning China were not aired.

$H_{33}$: The states where the ads mentioning China aired during a Senate or gubernatorial race will not have a higher unemployment rate than the national average.

States where the political advertisements mentioning China aired had a higher unemployment rate (M = 0.110, SD = 0.020) than states where the ads did not air, $t(130) = 62.951$, $p<0.001$. The states where the advertisements mentioning China aired had an average unemployment rate of 11.0%. The states where the advertisements mentioning China did not air had an average unemployment rate of 9.1%. These results did not support the hypothesis that the states where ads mentioning China were aired would not have a higher unemployment rate than the states where these ads were not aired. The results also did not support the hypothesis that the states where ads mentioning China were aired would not have a higher unemployment rate than the national average.

To supplement that statistical analysis, I also created two maps highlighting the U.S. states where ads mentioning China were aired in Senate and gubernatorial campaigns. The same process used to generate the district map in Figure 1 was conducted for Figures 2 and 3.
Figure 2. States in which political ads mentioning China were aired by a Senatorial candidate’s campaign committee or by a Political Action Committee (PAC) on its behalf, highlighted on a map of national unemployment rates by county. Adapted from “Local Area Unemployment Statistics” by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011 and “Congressional districts and counties” by U.S. Census Bureau, 2007.
Figure 3. States in which political ads mentioning China were aired by a gubernatorial candidate’s campaign committee highlighted on a map of national unemployment rates by county.

Discussion

The findings from this analysis of unemployment figures in the U.S. indicate that congressional districts where the ads aired had a lower unemployment rate than the congressional districts where the ads did not air and a lower unemployment rate than the national average. The opposite holds true for the states where Senate and gubernatorial candidates aired ads mentioning China; the unemployment rate for those states was higher than the states where the ads did not air and higher than the national average.

These findings are illustrative of the conflicting results from studies that ask “which economic indicators have political effects, and which do not” (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979, p. 497,
emphasis in original). One such study found that there is “no significant independent
unemployment effect” on congressional elections (Kramer, 1971, p. 139). Similarly, the findings
from this study suggest that unemployment figures do not appear to have a consistent
relationship with whether a candidate aired an advertisement targeting China for U.S. job loss.

Additionally, these results suggest that there are differences between House and state-wide
elections, such as Senate or Gubernatorial races. Since national issues often “play a larger role in
Senate campaigns than in House campaigns,” one possible explanation is that candidates for
statewide office were more interested in how the issue of unemployment, which received
considerable national media coverage, affected their state (Fenno as cited in Abramowitz, 1988,
p. 385). This also reinforces the notion that voter “preferences follow a more collective
reckoning” than just personal economic fluctuations (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1979, p. 524).

This analysis has allowed me to eliminate unemployment figures as another reason why
candidates chose to air ads mentioning China in their congressional districts or states. This
finding, coupled with public opinion data that indicated public opinion was not more negative in
the states where ads mentioning China were aired, appears to provide no clear explanation for
why candidates chose to air ads mentioning China during the 2010 midterm elections.

The News Media Context: Analysis of News Coverage of China and Trade during the 2010
Midterm Elections

This content analysis of national newspapers was conducted to determine the media
environment within which the political advertisements mentioning China were released in the
2010 midterm elections. I explored the media frames that were used in articles about China,
particularly “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases … and sentences that
provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). My goal
was to determine whether the three national publications – *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post* – were framing issues of China and trade positively, negatively, or through the lens of conflict. I was also interested in how China and trade were talked about in relation to the 2010 midterm elections. Through this analysis, I hoped to address the research question below:

**R3:** What kind of news coverage about China and trade was taking place during the 2010 midterm elections? In particular, how did this coverage talk about the political advertisements being released by political campaigns?

I analyzed 307 articles that were printed between 9/05/2011 and 11/05/2011 in three national publications. I performed this analysis on the paragraph level, coding for the presence or absence of four elements in 3,005 paragraphs. All articles mentioned China at least twice, although not all paragraphs pertained to China and trade. The coder marked “1” if the element was present or “0” if it was not present. For example, if there is a positive reference to China in paragraph one of article one, the coder would mark “1” in that column. This coding scheme included the presence of explicitly positive language to describe China and trade, the presence of explicitly negative language to describe China and trade, the presence of a conflict frame, and a mention of the 2010 midterm elections.

I also achieved intercoder reliability with two coders. First, I coded a small sample of the articles (10%) with two other coders. Since I did not reach a Kappa’s coefficient of over .80 with both coders, we discussed the differences and reached an agreement on the discrepancies. Then, we coded a different sample of articles (5%) and obtained intercoder reliability with Kappa’s
coefficients of greater than 0.90, which Neuendorf points out “would be acceptable to all” (2002, p. 143).

First, I asked whether the coverage of China was positive or negative through generic news frames, which do not deal with a specific issue but can be used to study framing of different topics. For this analysis, I inquired about the use of positive and negative language to frame news coverage about China and trade (de Vreese, 2004, p. 36).

\( H_{34} \): *There will be more negative language about China and trade than positive language about China and trade.*

Next, I examined the use of the conflict frame in media coverage of China and trade. The conflict frame, the most commonly used frame in U.S. media, “reduces complex substantive political debate to overly simplistic conflict” by emphasizing the conflict between two or more people or entities (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). This frame is widely used to cover the economy or politics, because these two subject areas are “often framed in terms of disagreement between, for example, individuals or political parties” (de Vreese, 2004, p. 36). I also explored the use of conflict frames in news coverage of China and trade.

\( H_{35} \): *There will be more paragraphs about China that use the conflict frame than paragraphs about China that do not use the conflict frame.*

Finally, I examined the paragraphs that mentioned the 2010 midterm elections to see how positive, negative, and conflict frames were used to discuss China and trade. This is particularly important because media coverage of political advertisements can bolster the ad’s claims through repetition.
**H$_{36}$**: There will be more paragraphs that mention the 2010 election and use conflict frame than paragraphs that mention the 2010 election and do not use conflict frame.

**H$_{37}$**: Paragraphs that mention the election will have more negative language about China and trade than positive language about China and trade.

**Results**

*Framing in News Coverage of China and Trade*

**Table 8**

*Frequency of mentions in paragraphs about China*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
<th>Percentage of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive language about China and trade</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative language about China and trade</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 midterm elections</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I examined the frequency of positive and negative language about China and trade and found that there was double the amount of negative language about China and trade in news
coverage during the 2010 midterm elections compared to positive language about China and trade. The hypothesis that there is more negative language about China than positive language is supported. However, the actual number of positive and negative mentions of China and trade is low.

I also examined frequencies to determine how often the news media employed the conflict frame when discussing China and trade. Since the conflict frame was found in 55.9% of the paragraphs, the hypothesis that there will be more paragraphs about China that contain the conflict frame than paragraphs about China that do not contain the conflict frame is supported.

*Framing in News Coverage of the 2010 Midterm Elections*

**Table 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Not present</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sig. ($p$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there were only 106 paragraphs that contained 2010 midterm election coverage, I analyzed those paragraphs for positive, negative, and conflict frames. I found that there was a greater number of paragraphs that mentioned the 2010 election and had negative language about China and trade ($\chi^2(1, N = 3004) = 7.191, p = 0.007$) than positive language about China and trade ($\chi^2(1, N = 3004) = 4.069, p = 0.044$). This supports the hypothesis that there was more
negative language about China and trade in the paragraphs about the 2010 midterm elections than positive language about China and trade.

I also found an overwhelming presence of conflict frames, $\chi^2(1, N = 3004) = 45.282, p < 0.001$. This supports the hypothesis that there will be more paragraphs that mention the 2010 election and use the conflict frame than paragraphs that mention the election and do not use the conflict frame.
**Coverage of China by Newspaper**

**Table 10**  
*Percentage of each code by newspaper*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive language about China and trade</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative language about China and trade</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 midterm elections</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, I performed a contingency table analysis and a chi-square test to explore the relationship between positive, negative, and conflict frames and the three newspapers that I examined. The relationship between positive language about China and trade and the newspapers approaches statistical significance, $\chi^2(2, n = 3004) = 5.573, p = 0.062$. The relationship between negative language about China and trade and the newspapers is statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 3004) = 60.040, p < 0.001$. *The Washington Post* had the largest percentage of positive and negative language about China and trade. *The New York Times* had about double the amount of negative language about China and trade as compared to positive language about China and trade. *The Wall Street Journal* contained roughly equal amounts of positive and negative language about China and trade.

However, the conflict frame is consistently used throughout all three newspapers, with the largest percentage of usage in *The Washington Post*. The relationship between conflict frame and the newspapers is statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 3004) = 9.700, p = 0.008$. The relationship between the mention of the 2010 midterm elections and the newspapers is not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 3004) = 2.282, p = 0.319$. This could be due in large part to the small number of paragraphs that actually mentioned the elections.
Discussion

News coverage in the months leading up to the 2010 midterm elections had more negative language than positive language about China and trade, although only 15.4% of paragraphs had any positive or negative language about China (5.2% positive language and 10.2% negative). Although each paragraph in the study was about China, not all of the paragraphs were about China and trade. This is one explanation for the low frequencies of positive and negative mentions about China and trade.

The conflict frame was consistently used throughout the paragraphs about China, with over 50% of the paragraphs mentioning some sort of conflict. Although the conflict frame is not always explicitly negative, it does indicate that the tone of these articles did not remain neutral. For example, the use of the conflict frame to talk about Chinese and Japanese boats crashing in a disputed maritime territory ranges from the Chinese trawler and two Japanese coast guard boats colliding to the Chinese boat ramming into the Japanese boats. The use of the conflict frame to describe China’s relationship to other countries, mainly the U.S., illustrates Dower’s argument that the representation of the Asian enemy from World War II persists today (1986). The narrative of China versus the U.S. was common in the articles I analyzed, particularly around issues of currency valuation, economic growth, and human rights.

The Advertising Content: An Analysis of the Political Advertisements Mentioning China during the 2010 Midterm Elections

After examining public opinion about China, U.S. unemployment statistics, and national newspaper coverage on China, I explored the content of the political advertisements that mentioned China during the 2010 midterm elections. The analysis was designed to answer the following research question:
**R4:** What do the political advertisements say about China and its relationship to the U.S. during the 2010 midterm elections? How is China portrayed in these advertisements?

**Political Advertising during Elections**

Guilt by association is a popular tactic used by politicians during economic downturns to connect with an angry, fearful constituency. Political advertisements will “pin the blame” on the Other, particularly foreign countries that are perceived as vastly different from the U.S. (Jamieson, 1992, p. 71). The 2010 midterm elections provided a prime opportunity for political candidates to base their campaigns on rhetoric about economic hardship, especially since political campaigns “simply reinforce themes resonating in the country in noncampaign times” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 100). Historically, the issue of U.S. trade with China had been an important topic, especially with China’s growing economy. Most recently, the dispute over China’s currency valuation and its growing economy have become prominent in political discourse about China.

These issues, along with other longstanding concerns such as outsourcing jobs to China and U.S. trade debt to China, came to the forefront of the 2010 election as purported contributing factors to the economic troubles the U.S. was facing. In particular, I was interested in the advertisements that had been mentioned in news coverage of the 2010 elections. During the course of this study, I reviewed 67 total video advertisements.

**The Candidate Advertisements**

There were a total of 44 videos released by candidates that mentioned China in the advertisement. Thirty of the ads were used in House races, 10 in Senate races and 4 in gubernatorial races. A large portion of the candidate-released advertisements (23 ads) were
attack ads, while the rest were either affirming ads (10 ads) or contrast ads (11 ads). The majority of the advertisements (32 ads) were released by Democratic candidates, whereas Republicans only released 12 ads that mentioned China.

In the races where Democratic candidates released ads mentioning China, 12 Democratic candidates won and 20 Democratic candidates lost. Twenty-six of these Democrats were incumbents, but only 12 Democratic incumbents won. This is consistent with election literature, which suggests that the President’s party consistently loses House seats during midterm elections (Campbell, 1985; Abramowitz, et al., 1986). In races where Republican candidates released ads mentioning China, 6 Republican candidates won and 6 Republican candidates lost. Only one ad was released by a Republican incumbent, who won the race.

**The PAC-sponsored Advertisements**

There were 23 videos released by PACs on behalf of candidates; 20 were aired in congressional districts with House races, while three were aired in Senate races. The PACs that released advertisements included the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), NRCC (National Republican Congressional Committee), and MoveOn.

Twenty-one of the PAC-released advertisements were attack ads, while only 2 were contrast ads. The majority of these ads were released by Republican PACs (15 ads), whereas only 8 were released by Democratic PACs (8 ads). Seven of the Democrats were incumbents, but only two Democrats with PAC-released advertisements won their respective races. In the races where Republican PAC-sponsored ads ran, 12 Republicans won and only 3 lost. Three of the Republicans were incumbents, and two of the Republican incumbents won.
**The Political Myth as a Framework**

Political myths are the foundational premises that inform our view of politics. These myths are encountered in both verbal and visual imagery, and often go unnoticed because of their incorporation into our daily lives. The political myth I propose, the “Rise of the Red Robbers,” is the underlying theme that is influencing the political advertisements released during the 2010 midterm elections. This myth suggests that the perceived and actual rise of China is threatening U.S. jobs, economic growth, and stature in the world. The myth has gained prominence in the U.S. among elite actors in international relations and politics, as well as the general public. Sensitivity to this myth was heightened because of the current global economic situation. The myth also works in conjunction with the myths of the Yellow Peril and the Red Scare. The Yellow Peril is used to describe the threat of mass immigration of Asians to the U.S. and, historically, to Japan’s military expansionism; the Red Scare, which came in two waves during the early and mid-1900s, is used to illustrate the threat of Communism.

The myth of the “Rise of the Red Robbers” is used as a framework for analyzing the ads released during the 2010 midterm elections, and is particularly applicable because “the most powerful political rhetoric makes use of existing myths” that activate already existing beliefs (Esch, 2010, p. 364).

**Analyzing the Political Advertisements**

These advertisements were analyzed through a coding schema that was adopted from Jamieson and Campbell (1992), Kaid and Davidson (1986), Biocca (1991), and Brader’s (2006) past analyses of political ads. I analyzed the advertisements through a series of questions about the audience, content, and frames used in the ads. This involved asking who the intended audience was, and what appeals were used to involve the audience. I asked whether the ads
employed rhetorical devices such as enthymemes, which are rhetorical questions that invite audience participation, or juxtaposed two images with no obvious relationship so that the audience could make the connection. I also asked about the central claim the ad made about China, and whether any evidence was presented to back up the claim. I examined whether the attack ads used the “hard-sell” or “soft-sell” negative advertising method; the “hard-sell” method is made up of darker fear appeals whereas the “soft-sell” method uses “lighter entertainment values” to illustrate negativity (Kern, 1989, p. 94).

In addition, I questioned how the ad positioned the candidate in relation to China through identification and apposition, which associates the candidate with positive qualities and the opponent with negative qualities (Jamieson, 1992). I explored the videostyle of an ad, a term coined by Kaid and Davidson to describe the verbal and nonverbal content, as well as the video production techniques used in the ad (1986). The verbal content refers to the actual words, whether spoken or written, that describe the candidate. The nonverbal content is concerned with the setting of the ad and how the ad is performed through visuals. Lastly, the video production aspect asks how elements such as music, color, and lighting are used in the advertisement.

Analysis of the content also involved looking at the signs, codes, discourse, and semantic framing that is taking place in the ad (Biocca, 1991). Signs include images, music, sounds effects, and even words that are imbued with meaning within in the advertisement. Codes deliver veiled messages that are dependent on the political and social culture at the time the ad was released. Discourse involves the current conversations circulating about China during the time period when the ad was aired, and semantic framing asks what kind of contextual links (e.g. juxtaposition of a candidate with another idea or person) or classificatory links are introduced in the advertisement.
Finally, I examined the frames used in the ad that encompass the values and assumptions that are implicit in the ad, including the “fear” frame (Brader, 2006), the “national identity” frame (Anderson, 2006; Billig, 1995), and the “Other” frame, which relies on the Yellow Peril and Red Scare myths (Said, 1994; Dower, 1986). This analysis will be explored through the meta-framework of the “Rise of the Red Robber” and broken down into the portrayal of China, the portrayal of the U.S., and the relationship between the two countries.

**China’s Portrayal in the Advertisements**

Four of the prevalent themes in the portrayal of China were the idea of a Red or Communist China, the Yellow Peril, Chinese economic growth as illustrated by the label “made in China,” and highlighting certain elements as representative of China’s identity. All of these themes point to China as a threat to the U.S. because of their large population, differing ideology, and growing economy. In order to valorize the candidate, political campaigns will “either explicitly or implicitly defines an out-group that ‘we’ are fundamentally unlike and whose designs ‘our’ candidate will thwart” (Jamieson, 1992, p. 66). Often, the opponent is juxtaposed with images of China or Chinese workers, while the candidate is positioned in direct opposition to China, either through verbal or visual means.

**Communist China**

The notion of communist China is often associated with images of espionage and/or betrayal that played a role during the two periods of the Red Scare. Implicit in these examples are the idea that China is the Other, an untrustworthy nation that does not share the same belief and value system as the U.S., and is therefore stealing jobs from American workers.

For instance, in House candidate Harold Johnson’s (R, NC-8) “Kissell’s Gone Washington” ad, the narrator says that “Kissell voted to give tax credits to firms employing foreign workers in
communist China.” The ad directly employs speech highlighting the political values associated with China and its governing body. Senate candidate Lee Fisher (D, OH) also highlights the differences between the U.S. and China in his ad “Betrayal.” At the beginning, the narrator says, “It’s a betrayal of American values.” This assumes that American values involve creating jobs for the U.S. and not rewarding companies that may be creating jobs in China. In other words, supporting communist China in any way is painted in opposition to the capitalist U.S.

Two of the PAC-sponsored advertisements from the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) also touch on the theme of a communist China. The ad entitled, “Ask Phil Hare: Why?” features a picture of Asian workers who appear to be wearing Communist-style caps; the NRCC’s ad “Baron Hill’s Failed Policies” has a moving image of fists of solidarity often associated with Communism and labor.

![Screenshot from NRCC “Baron Hill’s Failed Policies”](image)

**Figure 4. Screenshot from NRCC “Baron Hill’s Failed Policies”**

**Yellow Peril**

Much like Dower’s argument that the U.S. media frames Asia as a threat, many of the depictions of Chinese workers contained large numbers of Asians that were working in a factory or assembly-line setting, wearing the same uniforms. These images depict the Chinese as a monolithic group of people, and also ascribe on them the collective mentality of communism.
These images also emphasize the population factor as well. The Yellow Peril is often used in hard-sell negative advertising and coupled with an ominous-sounding narrator and music.

Joe Sestak’s (D, PA) ad “Fortune” contains a picture of an assembly-line of Asians working, with an outline of China and the Chinese flag overlaid on top. Scott Murphy’s (D, NY-20) ad also features a long assembly line of workers with a caption that reads, “Chris Gibson Jobs for China Not Upstate.” The word “China” is written in red.

![Figure 5. Screenshot from Joe Sestak’s “Fortune”](image)

Other ads depict crowded streets full of Asians, such as Martin Heinrich’s ad “Easier,” Zack Space’s ad “Thank You,” and the NRCC’s ad entitled, “Glenn Nye – Baloney.” The Yellow Peril threat is illustrated by the large numbers of Asians that seem to be overtaking the screen and presumably, taking U.S. jobs. The NRCC’s ad about Glenn Nye points out in bold yellow font that these people are from “China… Not Virginia” and Zack Space’s (D, OH-18) “Thank You”
points out that his opponent supports measures that would “INCRESAE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING.” The use of the word “their” indicates that what benefits China is not necessarily beneficial for the U.S. and illustrates the fear that China’s growing economy and population are threatening to the U.S.

![Image](China... not Virginia.png)

**Figure 7. Screenshot of NRCC’s “Glenn Nye – Baloney”**

![Image](Increase Their Standard of Living.png)

**Figure 8. Screenshot of Zack Space’s “Thank You”**

The Yellow Peril is also illustrated in MoveOn’s ad entitled, “Connect the Dots.” In this ad, Mark Kirk is accused of taking campaign donations from foreign corporations that are threatening American jobs. This is illustrated by connecting the dot marked “Foreign Corporations,” which is on top of a map of China with another dot on top of an image of white workers wearing gloves and other industrial-style apparel. The notion that China is threatening U.S. jobs is apparent through these depictions of large numbers of working-class Asians.

**Made in China**

China’s economic growth is highlighted by the numerous products that are manufactured in China and labeled “Made in China.” The advertisements often couple the dominance of China’s
manufacturing industry with evidence, namely images of “Made in China” labels. Examples of this include the DCCC’s ad “Harold Johnson Protects Tax Breaks for Companies That Send Jobs Overseas,” which shows images of a sweater vest, denim jeans, and a baseball cap, and notes that “this is a candidate for Congress helping make sure they’re all made in China or Mexico.” This ad highlights China’s growing prominence in the textiles industry.

Other ads, including Barbara Boxer’s (D, CA) “Precisely” and Stephen Fincher’s (R, TN-8) “Garbage” have images of a stamp that reads, “MADE IN CHINA.” In fact, Boxer’s ad targets her opponent, former HP CEO Carly Fiorina for manufacturing computer equipment in China. Spike Maynard’s (R, WV-3) ad entitled, “Made in China” shows an image of a plastic toy; the camera then zooms in on the “Made in China” label. This time, the advertisement highlights the prominence of China in the plastics and toy industries.

Mike Arcuri’s (D, NY-24) “Understands” juxtaposes an image of a chain link fence with a lock on it with an image of an Asian man packing boxes labeled “Made in China.” The text on top of the images reads, “Opportunity for who?” The chain link fence represents manufacturing facilities that are closing down; juxtaposing it with the Asian man packing a box that says “Made in China” addresses the fact that China’s economic dominance in manufacturing and blue-collar jobs are interfering with U.S. competitiveness in these industries.

![Figure 9. Screenshot of Mike Arcuri’s “Understands”](image)
Highlighting China’s Identity

China is represented in many of these ads through maps, the colors red and yellow, and font or music that looks or sounds “Asian.” In particular, red and yellow show up in many of the ads because they are the colors featured in the Chinese flag. For instance, the DCCC’s “Bob Gibbs – Less Jobs for Ohio” features a yellow background with a red ship, presumably a container ship, sailing toward India and Taiwan, which are colored in two different shades of red.

![Screenshot of DCCC’s “Bob Gibbs – Less Jobs for Ohio”](image)

**Figure 10. Screenshot of DCCC’s “Bob Gibbs – Less Jobs for Ohio”**

The NRCC’s ad entitled, “Hold Mike McIntyre Responsible” features both red and yellow in the advertisement. Most of the backgrounds are red, and the word “China” is often written in red. In the picture below, the yellow graph line represents rising unemployment and the juxtaposition of the yellow line with the bright red background is reminiscent of the colors in the Chinese flag.

Maps of China, often colored in red, are also present in many of the ads, including the DSCC’s "Modernizing and Growing" ad attacking Pat Toomey, Tim Walz’s (D, MN-1) “To Go,” NRCC’s “Ike Skelton’s Lost His Way,” and the NRCC’s “What Was Mark Schauer Thinking?” Some ads feature the Chinese flag and juxtapose it with images of opposing candidates in order to associate the candidate with China.
Some of ads also use font and music to highlight China’s identity as different from the U.S. The sound most often associated with China in these ads is the sound of a gong, featured most prominently in the DSCC ads attacking Pat Toomey. Ads like DCCC’s “Harold Johnson Protects Tax Breaks for Companies That Send Jobs Overseas” use red, Asian-style font to write “CHINA” on top of a map of China. Others ads, like Zack Space’s (D, OH-18) “Thank You,” use Chinese characters to create China’s identity as distinctly different from the U.S. In Space’s ad, the phrase “thank you” is translated into Chinese characters and displayed alongside the English version.
Some of the advertisements also feature buildings with Asian-inspired architecture as representations of China. Although this type of architecture does not necessarily reflect modern-day Chinese buildings, these stereotypical images are still used to represent China.

U.S. Portrayal in the Advertisements

The manner in which Americans are portrayed also speaks to the intended audience of these advertisements. Although the advertisements are designed to appeal to voters with economic concerns, they appear to be interested mainly in white American voters. The advertisements often assume that the audience members will relate to images of white families and white, working-class people. The ads also feature white individuals using language such as “we” and “us” to signal one’s American identity and use football to represent the American identity. This is illustrative of the symbolic politics theory, because the advertisements appear to assume that the voters will associate white, working-class individuals and sports like football with the U.S.
**Americans as White, Working-Class Individuals**

The U.S. is portrayed as a nation of working-class white people who are associated with industrial equipment and appear either individually or as small family units. Unlike the portrayal of the Chinese as a large mass of people, white Americans appear in small numbers a majority of the time. An example of the stereotypical white American is visible in Mark Schauer’s (D, MI-7) ad entitled, “Ask,” where Schauer is sitting and talking to two white males and one white female at a diner. The diner is a symbol for America, a public space where Schauer is speaking to the image of the “everyday American.”

![Screenshot of Mark Schauer’s “Ask”](image)

**Figure 15. Screenshot of Mark Schauer’s “Ask”**

Images of white Americans standing in front of industrial equipment or wearing hard hats and safety goggles is prevalent in the advertisements. The ads predominantly portray Americans as blue collar workers that are suffering the loss of manufacturing jobs. This is true in John Yarmuth’s (R, KY-3) ad entitled, “Fighting Back,” where many white people and some African-American people are depicted as working-class furniture makers, car mechanics, and factory workers. In this particular commercial, Yarmuth is depicted in a shirt and tie, whereas other ads, feature political candidates dressed more casually. Although candidates did sometimes wear safety goggles or hard hats alongside the working-class Americans, they were not depicted in the same way as the other working-class people in the advertisements.
Billig refers to the banal “flagging” of nation through language, with the use of pronouns such as “us” and “we” to refer to the nation. An example of an enthymematic statement is in Joe Donnelly’s (D, IN-2) “Outwork China,” where a white male says, “Try telling your wife, your kids, you've been laid off.” This speaks directly to an audience that is assumed to be white and male, with a family consisting of a wife and kids. Later in the ad, another white male says, “We can outwork China and anyone else, if we just have a fair chance.” This statement uses the word “we” to invite the viewer to agree that China is a direct threat to the audience.

The American flag also becomes a ubiquitous symbol of the nation. An example is Rich Iott’s (R, OH-9) ad entitled, “Where are the Jobs?” In this ad, an image of his opponent, Marcy Kaptur, is juxtaposed with a Chinese flag. Then, an American flag appears on the screen with the text: WE NEED AN AMERICAN JOB CREATOR. Then, images of Iott speaking with white veterans at a diner and talking to a white, working-class male in front of industrial equipment appear on the screen. This switch from Kaptur’s image in front of a Chinese flag to Iott’s association with the U.S. flag differentiates the two candidates and their allegiances. Also, the use of the pronoun “we” with the American flag again reinforces the idea that the audience will associate themselves with the positive images of Iott and white Americans that follow.
Another example of the U.S. flag being used to assert national identity is in the DCCC ad “Harold Johnson Protects Tax Breaks for Companies That Send Jobs Overseas,” where an image of a pair of jeans is juxtaposed with the American flag, indicating that jeans are an American icon that should not only be identified with the U.S., but also made in the U.S.

Several of the advertisements also use American football as a way to represent national identity. This is an example of the growing trend of politicians that use sports metaphors in their campaigns. For instance, the DCCC’s ad “Harold Johnson Protects Tax Breaks For Companies That Send Jobs Overseas” starts out with the picture of a sweater vest that is surrounded by American icons – a football on the left and a cheerleading megaphone on the right. The ad then
goes on to explain that all these items should be made in the U.S., but are instead manufactured in China.

Senate candidate Lee Fisher (OH) in “Game Day” also uses football to identify as American and in his case, Ohioan. He is holding a football and standing in front of a stadium, speaking directly to the audience about his days as “a kid at football camp” and using language related to football to talk about the state of the U.S. economy. Jason Altmire’s second commercial also illustrates football as an all-American sport that reinforces his identity as an American. The ad shows young boys playing football while Altmire speaks with adults. Later, Altmire has a football in hand while interacting with the young football players.

Figure 19. Screenshot of Congressman Altmire’s Second Campaign Commercial

Defining the Relationship between the U.S. and China

The broader narrative of us versus them is apparent in all of the advertisements that mention China. Some of the ways this relationship is represented includes “drawing a line” that physically represents the separation of those who are loyal to the U.S. from those who are loyal to China. The relationship between the U.S. and China is also characterized as an unfair trade relationship, as a war in which the U.S. is fighting for jobs, through the lens of betrayal and McCarthyism, and by highlighting the physical distance between the U.S. and China.
Although the phrase “drawing the line” describes a metaphorical rift between the U.S. and China, the ads also draw a physical line to indicate the division between the U.S. and China. In the DCCC’s “Bob Gibbs - Less Jobs for Ohio,” the narrator starts out by saying, “Bob Gibbs has crossed the line on trade.” The audience then watches the text “Bob Gibbs” move from the white area above the bold dark red line to the light red area below the line. This appears to indicate shifting loyalties, with the top white area representing the U.S. and the bottom red area representing China. At the end of the ad, the narrator says, “It's time for us to draw the line with Bob Gibbs,” again indicating that Americans should be drawing the line on supporting a politician that is strongly associated with China.

Another example of “drawing the line” is in Tim Walz’s (D, MN-1) ad entitled, “To Go.” Toward the beginning of the ad, the images of factories appear to be hopping over the text “Overseas Tax Breaks” and leaving Minnesota for China. However, once Walz draws a physical line through the “Overseas Tax Breaks” text, then the factories are no longer able to leave Minnesota.
Unfair Trade Relationship

The characterization of the U.S.-China trade relationship as unfair includes language about China violating the rules or not playing by the rules, as well as taking or being given jobs by politicians who are not loyal to the U.S. Some ads, like gubernatorial candidate Ted Strickland’s (D, OH) ad “Truth,” point out that Strickland voted “against the special trade deal for China.” This implies that China is getting special treatment and that the trade relationship between the U.S. and China is somehow unfair. In “Whoa,” Ann Kuster (D, NH-2) mentions that her opponent was providing “special trade privileges for China.” The next image that appeared on the screen is a picture of a fence, a lock, and a CLOSED sign with the text: “Tax breaks for shipping jobs overseas.” This appears to indicate that Kuster will “keep out” special trade privileges for China.

There are also many advertisements that call the U.S.-China trade relationship “unfair,” such as Martin Henrich’s (D, NM-1) “Easier,” Mike Arcuri’s (D, NY-24) “Understands,” Zack Space’s (D, OH-18) “Thank You,” the DCCC’s “Bobby Schilling – Good for India and China,” and Mark Schauer’s (D, MI-7) closing ad in the Toledo market, which characterizes “[u]nfair trade with China [as] part of the problem.” The sentiment that China is engaging in unfair trade practices, which could encompass a variety of trade issues such as currency valuation, is prevalent in the advertisements.
Other advertisements characterize China as not following the rules. Arcuri’s ad states that China “doesn’t play by the rules,” and Ted Strickland’s (D, OH) “Angry” emphasizes that China is violating trade laws and needs to be stopped. The Joe Donnelly (D, IN-2) commercial “Outwork China,” indicates that the U.S. could “outwork China and anyone else” as long as trade was fair; however, the implication is that the U.S. is not being given that chance.

**Fighting for U.S. Jobs**

This representation of the U.S.-China relationship relies heavily on a war metaphor that includes language like “fight” and “protect” to describe the U.S. and China’s relationship in regards to jobs. The frequent use of the war metaphor indicates the effectiveness of arguing that
trade with China will threaten the jobs of American workers versus arguing about the benefits of free trade for more skilled workers (Rankin, 2001).

Some ads use language about fighting to create jobs in the U.S. Mark Schauer’s ad “Ask” states that he is “fighting to help businesses create jobs here” and Lee Fisher’s (D, OH) “Game Day” indicates that Fisher has “been fighting to save and create jobs.” Other ads also mention that the candidate is fighting to keep jobs in the U.S., such as Austin Scott’s (R, GA-8) ads “Georgia Jim” and “Tired,” which both say that “Austin Scott will fight for American jobs.” Arcuri’s ad indicates that “Mike’s fighting to keep jobs at local businesses,” Walz’s ad suggests that “[w]e’ve got to draw the line and protect American jobs,” and Schauer’s closing ad in Toledo says he is “fighting to end outsourcing.” John Yarmuth’s (D, KY-3) ad is titled “Fighting Back” and states that “John’s fought to revitalize American manufacturing” and that “we’re fighting back” as jobs leave the U.S.

However, there are also other uses of the war imagery in these advertisements. The DSCC’s “Moved” ad attacking Pat Toomey puts a new twist on the “war” between the U.S. and China to suggest that Pat Toomey is “fighting for jobs in China” versus in the U.S.

Zack Space’s (D, OH-18) “Thank You” also uses a play-on-words for the phrase “freedom isn’t free,” which is often used as a rhetorical device in reference to the military’s role in keeping
the U.S. safe and free. Instead, this ad states that “free trade isn’t free,” suggesting Americans pay a price, such as loss of jobs, for free trade. The phrase is also enthymematic, because in order to understand the full meaning of the phrase, a person would need to be familiar with the original phrase.

Figure 25. Screenshot of Zack Space’s “Thank You”

Betrayal and McCarthyism

Language and imagery in the advertisements suggest that some politicians are betraying the U.S., specifically through their support of tax breaks for companies that outsource jobs to China. This version of McCarthyism is targeting political candidates who appear to be associated with China in any way, particularly those who support free trade with China, and labeling them as traitors that are betraying the U.S. There is also significant use of language that indicates anti-Washington sentiment and dissatisfaction with the current officeholders.

The MoveOn ad “Connect the Dots” suggests that Mark Kirk (R, IL) is taking donations from foreign corporations, and then puts a big “no” sign over his face to indicate that he should not be trusted. Other ads, such as Harry Reid’s (D, NV) “Sharron Angle: A Foreign Worker’s Best Friend,” uses the label of “foreign worker’s best friend” to indicate that Angle is somehow disloyal to the U.S. and more invested in countries like China. Some candidates choose to explicitly state, “I’ll never forget whose side I’m on,” such as Sestak in his ad “Fortune.”
There are also more explicit questions about candidates’ loyalties, such as the NRCC’s ads, “Who is Zack Space Working for?” and “Who is Chris Carney Working for?” These ads question the candidate’s motivations in two ways. First, the ad questions the candidate’s Washington ties, particularly to former House speaker Nancy Pelosi; second, the ad questions the candidate’s allegiance to China because he is accused of increasing U.S. debt to China and sending jobs to China.

The same idea is true for the NRCC’s ad entitled, “Baron Hill’s Failed Policies.” At the beginning, the narrator asks, “Is Baron Hill running for Congress in Indiana? Or China?” Then, toward the end of the ad, the narrator asks again, “Baron Hill – for Indiana or China?” as an image of the scales of justice are shown weighing the two countries. The scale indicates that one must choose between the two countries, because it is not possible to be friendly with both.
Figure 27. Screenshot of NRCC’s “Baron Hill’s Failed Policies”

**Distance between U.S. and China**

By highlighting the physical distance between the U.S. and China, the ads also speak to the ideological, political, and cultural differences between the two countries. This sentiment is often illustrated through statements about the national debt and the fear that the U.S. will owe China a large amount of money and therefore, will be controlled by China. Both gubernatorial candidate Susana Martinez’s (R, NM) ad “China” and Rich Iott’s (R, OH-9) ad “Where are the jobs?” illustrates the distance between the U.S. and China by either panning over a map of the world from the U.S. to China or showing the globe spinning multiple times before finally landing on China. Senator Barbara Boxer’s (D, CA) ad entitled “Precisely” also illustrates the distance by juxtaposing an image of Asian female factory workers with a Chinese flag and the label “Shanghai” overlaid on top, with an image of a street in the U.S. with the label San Jose overlaid on top. This highlights again highlights the metaphorical distance between the U.S. and China.
Figure 28. Screenshot of Barbara Boxer’s “Precisely”

Coding the Relationship between the U.S. and China

Along with more explicit language and imagery that identifies China, the U.S., and their relationship, there were also signs and codes embedded into the ads that are an integral part of the U.S. discourse about China. These signs and codes are often embedded deep within the text and “in the form of otherwise inexplicable details, small lapses in generic propriety, minute blunders” in order to imply a certain meaning (Jamieson, 1992, p. 85).

The three most prominent codes I identified in the advertisements included the notion of energy and generating growth, fencing people or objects out, and shipping people or objects away. The windmill was the sign for energy and growth, the Great Wall and/or a U.S. border fence were the signs for the “keep out” imagery, and container ships were the sign for shipping people or objects away.

Generating Energy and Growth

Many of the ads mention that clean energy is a growing sector and that renewable energy jobs are continually being generated in China, often at the expense of U.S. taxpayers. In these advertisements, the clean energy sector is represented by wind turbines, which are associated with China. The image of a wind turbine, which generates power, stands for creating jobs for China. Even though the idea of generating clean energy jobs is positive, its association with jobs
in China makes it negative. The windmill also signals that the U.S. is losing its former stature as a world power with a booming and modernizing economy. This is illustrated clearly in Austin Scott’s (R, GA-8)“Georgia Jim” ad and the NRCC’s “Tell Martin Heinrich You Want Your Money Back,” where the wind turbine is depicted in grayscale, and seems to signal lifelessness as opposed to energy generation.

![Figure 29. Screenshot of Austin Scott’s “Georgia Jim”](image)

These negative codes for windmills are mirrored in the images of empty warehouses, which are also prevalent in the ads and feature dark colors and broken windows. Instead of windmills, images of greenery, which are coded for growth, are shown in the candidates’ affirmative ads.
Fencing Out

The advertisements contain imagery of the Great Wall of China, a border fence, and the chain link fences and locks that stand for a shut-down industrial complex. First, the border fence is mentioned in Jason Altmire’s (D, PA-4) first campaign commercial, where the narrator says that Altmire is “making sure the border fence was built with steel made here, not China.” The sign of the border fence is then coded with other meaning and is reflective of the larger discourse about immigration. The border fence in this ad is indicative not just of immigration issues, but also of steel manufacturing jobs being lost to China. Therefore, the border fence is imbued with two meanings – as a place that becomes complicated with issues of immigration, along with the issue of losing the steel industry to China.

Images of the Great Wall, particularly the one illustrated in the DCCC’s “Bob Gibbs is the Wrong Fix for Ohio's Economy” are not only a representation of China, but also speak to the text on the screen. The text associates Bob Gibbs with the phrase “remove trade protections with China;” however, the Great Wall imagery is coded in opposition to Gibbs and indicates that Gibbs is on the wrong side of the wall – the side that favors China. The wall comes to stand for more than just an iconic image of China, but also is used as a metaphorical wall between those who are loyal to China and those who are loyal to the U.S.
Figure 31. Screenshot of DCCC’s “Bob Gibbs Less Jobs for China”

Shipping Away

Ship imagery is often associated with Asian people, who may have arrived to the U.S. on ships. The term “boat people” applies to Asians, particularly Vietnamese people who may have resettled in the U.S. after the Vietnam War by traveling in a ship. There are also phrases such as “F.O.B.” in the Asian American community, which stands for “Fresh Off the Boat,” which circulates within the Asian American community and is used to delineate between 1st generation Asian Americans, who are symbolically separated from the more acculturated 2nd generation Asian Americans. The use of container ships is prevalent throughout the advertisements, with ads like Ann Kuster’s (D, NH-2) “Get Real,” where she wants to end tax breaks for companies that “ship jobs overseas” and showcases an image of a container ship in open water. Not only are containers full of goods, or in some cases people, arriving from China to the U.S., the containers are coded to stand for the jobs that are being shipped from the U.S. to China.
The “Rise of the Red Robber,” which illustrates the perceived and actual economic rise of China as a threat to U.S. jobs, economy, and prominence in the world, was used as a framework for analyzing the political advertisements mentioning China that were released during the 2010 midterm elections. I explored the way China, the U.S., and their relationship were portrayed in the advertisements. China’s portrayal was consistently one of a threatening economic power, from the images of Communist China, whose ideology differs greatly from the U.S., to images of a mass of Asians, signifying the growing Yellow Peril. Even seemingly benign images, like the “Made in China” stamps, were indicative of China’s dominance in the manufacturing sector and what Americans perceive to be a hostile takeover of their jobs. Other stereotypically Asian representations, such as Asian-style architecture, music, and font, worked to reinforce China as the Other, vastly different from the U.S.

On the other hand, the U.S. was depicted as white, working-class individuals or small family units, who were tied together through football and the banal use of pronouns like “we,” as well as the American flag. The working-class depiction was embedded with capitalist notions,
and individuality appeared to be clearly juxtaposed with the depiction of China as a more communal mass of people.

The relationship between China and the U.S. was defined by several characteristics; (1) a physical line was drawn, which stood for a metaphorical rift between the two countries; (2) the trade relationship between the two countries was characterized as unfair and more favorable to China; (3) the two countries were at war with one another, with the U.S. fighting for jobs; (4) in the style of McCarthyism, politicians were accused of betraying the U.S. because of their views on free trade or their association with China; and (5) the metaphorical and figurative distance between the two countries was highlighted.

Implicit codes were also apparent throughout the advertisements. Windmills were coded negatively as job-generating mechanisms for China, although they are generally referred to in positive terms as generators of clean energy. Fences and walls, such as the Great Wall of China, was coded as a barrier to keep China from stealing jobs externally through outsourcing and internally through immigration, although it is generally viewed as an iconic Chinese image. The container ship imagery, which is typically used as a means to ship goods and sometimes people from China to the U.S., alluded to notion of the Chinese as foreigners, or “Fresh Off the Boat.”

All of these representations of China, the U.S., and their relationship pointed to strained relations as a result of China’s economic growth and U.S. economic turmoil. Similar to the national newspaper coverage, the ads did not always explicitly use negative language to describe China. However, the advertisements clearly depicted a conflict between the U.S. and China, and continued to perpetuate it through signs, codes, and representations of the two countries and their relationship.
The Chinese Professor Ad and its Parodies

The Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) released an advertisement entitled “Chinese Professor” that aired during and after the 2010 midterm election cycle. This was an advertisement paid for by the Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) that aired on television and was also broadcast on the web through YouTube and CAGW’s website. I first saw the ad on CNN while watching the election returns on the evening of November 4, 2010. After the ad aired, there was extensive media and blog coverage of the advertisement. In addition, a number of parodies began to circulate on the Internet. In fact, one of the parodies caught the attention of CAGW, who accused Campus Progress, the organization that created the parody, of a copyright violation (Smith, 2010). Several blogs geared toward Asian Americans co-sponsored a contest to encouraging people to create parodies of the advertisement. Although the CAGW “Chinese Professor” advertisement was not issued by a candidate or on behalf of a candidate, it is anecdotally the most remembered ad about China that aired during the 2010 midterm elections. Since this ad in particular garnered so much response, I analyzed the parodies of this ad to better understand how the public views explicitly negative depictions of China and how the parodies respond to these depictions by “challeng[ing] the authority of political powerbrokers, whether pundits or campaign workers, in shaping political discourse” (Tryon, 2008, p. 210).

First, I provide a brief description of the “Chinese Professor” advertisement. Then, I examine a sample of 13 parodies of the ad, which were found through the Asian American blog, angryasianman.com or by clicking on YouTube’s “Related Videos” next to the CAGW advertisement. For this analysis, I chose to analyze the six parodies that were most illustrative of the elements of a parody. The six distinct elements of film parodies are reiteration, inversion, misdirection, literalization, extraneous inclusion, and exaggeration (Harries, 2000).
“Chinese Professor” Ad

The ad starts out with the camera at the back of a lecture hall, with pictures of Mao on the side and the subtitle: Beijing, China 2030 AD. The audience is full of Asians, and Chinese characters are written in red on the screen at the front of the room. Footsteps are heard, and then there is a close-up of a man, the Chinese professor, with a plastic headset. The Chinese professor begins speaking in Mandarin about the fall of great empires. He mentions the United States of America and says they all make the same mistake of turning their back on the principles that made them great. In the meantime, the camera is sporadically panning the audience and shows images of Asians intently listening. The professor is still talking about how the U.S. tried to spend and tax itself out of the recession with stimulus spending, healthcare reform, government takeover of private industry, and national debt. When the professor mentions government takeover of private industries, there is a close-up of an Asian male audience member using a tablet, which showcases a picture of the Wall St sign. Then, the caption reads: Of course, we owned most of their debt … (The professor laughs.) so now they work for us. (The audience members laugh).

Findings

I analyzed the parodies according to Harries’ framework. First, I addressed the role of reiteration, where material from the original video is also used in the parody to connect the two texts together (Harries, 2000, p. 43). All of the parodies recycled material from the original video. In fact, most of the parodies kept the same visual content and just changed the subtitles and voiceover. Others, like the animated parody by Next Media Animation TV – Taiwan, only recycled some of the original footage and juxtaposed it with new footage and new characters.
The animated parody also acted as an example of inversion, where the parody “suggests an opposite meaning” from the intended meaning in the video (Harries, 2000, p. 55). Instead of criticizing the U.S. for its wasteful spending habits, the ad spoke negatively about China, suggesting it was “selling cheap crap to gullible consumers,” and doing the following: “manipulate the RMB, pay slave wages, offer few changes for upward mobility” and “[c]ut corners on product safety.”

Misdirection, although somewhat similar to inversion, kept more of the original video intact but toward the end of the parody, would deliver an unanticipated ending (Harries, 2000, p. 62). This occurred in three different parodies, where at the end of the ad the picture of Mao hanging on the left side of the screen was replaced with another image; one parody replaced him with an image of Kim Jong Il from *Team America*, while another replaced Mao with the Statue of Liberty. A third parody replaced Mao with Glenn Beck, and was based on making fun of the Tea Party rally in Washington, D.C.

The Ellis Island of the Future Parody, which was created by www.VincentWhoFilm.com, used literalization, or the reading of figurative speech as literal, as a self-reflexive tool (Harries, 2000, p. 71). The parody conjectured that “China would become the world’s new beacon of democracy” and claimed that the U.S. was “too hostile a place for an Asian face.” In other words, the parody referred to China as less prejudiced than the U.S. and essentially warned Americans against xenophobia.

Extraneous inclusion of elements that “fall outside of the target text’s general conventions” (Harries, 2000, p. 77) and exaggeration were also demonstrated by the animated parody; the main character in the parody was not the Chinese professor but a giant panda. Instead of invoking fear like the original ad, the panda subverted the fear and made it seem ridiculous
instead. Also, the flags used in this parody were heavily exaggerated; the Chinese flag was a far more vibrant red and yellow than in the original video.

Intertextuality, or “references to other aspects of popular culture, including movies, TV shows, and other ads” as well as current events, was also an important part of parodies (Tryon, 2008, p. 2010). This was particularly true in the Campus Progress parody that referenced both Sharron Angle speaking to Latinos and saying they looked Asian, and Christine O’Donnell’s political advertisement where she corrected the rumor that she was a witch. Another parody poked fun at the Tea Party and Republicans by referring to Glenn Beck his rally in Washington, D.C. Intertextuality also played a role in the parodies that targeted Asian Americans; there were mentions of stereotypical Asian occupations, such as a career in medicine or IT. The parodies aimed at Asian Americans also spoke about the people who were extras in the political advertisement and poked fun at the fact that these Asian Americans had been duped into thinking they were extras in Transformers 3.

**Discussion**

These parodies were the lens through which I examined how different audiences might receive highly charged rhetoric about China. It is possible that since the CAGW ad was more explicit than some of the other advertisements in this study, it garnered a stronger response than the other ads that more implicitly spoke about China and the U.S.-China trade relationship.

Campus Progress, a liberal organization, quickly responded with a parody that was designed to further expose the gaffes of Tea Party and Republican candidates. This seems to be in line with the earlier public opinion finding that ideology does affect one’s opinion on China, with more liberal people tending to be more favorable toward China.
The parodic responses of the Asian and Asian American communities’ raises the question of how Asian Americans are receiving and decoding the other political advertisements that mentioned China during the 2010 midterm elections. Did Asian Americans respond to the “Chinese Professor” ad because it was explicit? What about more implicit political advertisements about Asians? Also, Asian American responses to the “Chinese Professor” ad, including the parody-making content, indicated a productive response to the highly charged rhetoric of the advertisement. However, as the population of Asian American voters increases, will advertisements like the ones featured in the 2010 midterm elections work to alienate Asian American voters?
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the major findings of the study by tying together the analysis of the public opinion, unemployment, and news media context of the 2010 midterm elections and the content of the advertisements released during the 2010 midterm elections. In addition, I address the implications of this research within the context of existing scholarly work on Asian representations, as well as the implications for Asian and Asian American audiences. This chapter also addresses the limitations of this study and suggests future research.

Major Findings

Through this study, I came across five major findings pertaining to the political advertisements mentioning China during the 2010 midterm elections. First, I found that people in the U.S. were generally concerned about China, particularly economic matters. General public opinion did support the release of political advertisements that mentioned China as a threat to the U.S. economy. However, this raises the question of why ads targeting China were not released in all of the political races during the 2010 midterm election.

Second, I found that there was no clear difference in public opinion regarding China between states where political advertisements mentioning China did air and states where the ads did not air. There was very little variance in a person’s opinion of China, regardless of whether an ad targeting China had been released in their state of residence or not. This finding rules out a trend of highly negative public opinion as a reason for releasing ads targeting China during the 2010 midterm elections.

Third, there was no consistent unemployment trend among the congressional districts and states where ads targeting China were released. Annual unemployment averages for the congressional districts where the ads mentioning China were aired were lower than the national
average. The opposite was true for annual unemployment averages in the states where Senate and Gubernatorial candidates released ads mentioning China.

Fourth, I found that newspaper coverage of China during the two month period leading up to the 2010 midterm elections was dominated by the conflict frame, which was used in more than half of the paragraphs that mentioned China. Use of the conflict frame was illustrative of implicitly negative media representations of China. These findings appear to align with literature that indicates there is present-day continuity in the history of negative, conflict-laden U.S. media coverage of Asian countries, particularly China and Japan.

Fifth, the content of the political advertisements was dominated by the overarching political myth of the “Rise of the Red Robber.” This narrative characterizes China, the U.S., and the U.S.-China relationship through the lens of the perceived and actual economic rise of China as a threat to the U.S. The “Rise of the Red Robber” myth does not have explicitly negative, Orientalist tendencies; instead, it contains implicitly negative, Oriental notions about Asia and China.

Although this study found that unemployment and public opinion were not the reasons why candidates in certain congressional districts and states decided to air ads targeting China, one possible explanation is the “guilt by association” tactic, when groups of minorities, such as immigrants, religious minorities, or racial minorities, are Otherized during times of economic hardship. In periods of economic distress, politicians and general public sentiment tend to assign blame for economic difficulties to the Other. Politicians will use negative advertising and fear appeals about the economy to identify and vilify the enemy – in this case, China.

Another explanation for the release of these ads, which is related to the historical trend of representations of Asians by in the media, is the perpetuation of cultural memes that are replicated among the U.S. population through “meme-vehicles,” such as the news media, popular
culture, and in this case, political advertising (Dennett, 1990). Images of the Yellow Peril and the Red Scare abound in Hollywood, as do other stereotypical Asian representations that then get spread throughout culture. In this case, it appears that the spread of Orientalist memes was perpetuated through these political ads.

In fact, this study indicated that implicitly negative representations of China were prevalent in the news media and political advertising. Media coverage of China and trade used the conflict frame whereas political advertising used signs and codes that defined China, the U.S., and the two countries’ relationship through a political myth that perpetuated implicitly negative, Orientalist representations of Asians. Since I found that public opinion was generally concerned with China, and these negative beliefs about China already existed in society, the news media and politicians were able to reinforce these existing beliefs through implicit representations, such as the “Rise of the Red Robber,” which is disseminated to a willing and complicit public. The impact of these political myths on public perceptions should also be explored to better understand how these popular representations get translated into the entertainment industry, the news media, and the way politicians choose to portray Asians and Asian Americans.

**Implications of the Study**

The narrative of the “Rise of the Red Robber” dominated the portrayals of China during the 2010 midterm election. Although the political advertisements released by or on behalf of candidates during the 2010 midterm election were not explicitly negative about China, they relied on themes like communism, population, or China’s large manufacturing industry to imply that the Chinese are stealing jobs from the U.S. In this thesis, I showed that notions of Orientalism were more implicit in the 2010 election than the explicit representations of deprave or superhuman Asians suggested by scholarly literature. In fact, the most explicit ad suggesting
that China’s intentions are negative, the “Chinese Professor” ad, was heavily parodied. The lack of scholarly literature written about implicit representations of Asians makes this analysis important because it addresses the gap in scholarly literature and provides new evidence of implicitly Orientalist representations in media coverage and political advertising.

This finding about implicit Orientalism raises questions about how scholars can recognize and study this phenomenon. The implicit nature of many present-day Asian representations make them harder to detect and therefore, harder to address in dialogue or action. As implicit Orientalist representations become more prominent than explicit representations, new ways of studying and interpreting these representations must be developed. Also, if my findings suggest that Asia has been, and continues to be represented negatively in the media, albeit implicitly, then continuing to critically study news coverage, political representations, and Hollywood representations of Asians and Asian Americans is imperative.

In addition, it is worth studying Asian American audience reactions to these representations, as Asian American voters may receive and react differently than other populations to media content with highly charged rhetoric about an Asian country or issue. This may provide political candidates with insight into the effectiveness of certain kinds of appeals when considering specific audiences. Though the Asian American community’s vote appears to have been disregarded by these ads, the community’s response to the “Chinese Professor” ad, particularly the parodies, indicates this group’s willingness to engage politically.

Limitations of Research

Since my research did not explore the coverage of China and the 2010 midterm elections in local news, it does not provide a complete picture of how the news media and political advertisements interacted during the 2010 midterm elections, particularly since so many of the
ads were aired by candidates or PACs on behalf of candidates in House races. Although I obtained approval from Georgetown’s Institutional Review Board, I was unable to directly interview the producers of these political advertisements, particularly political candidates and their campaign managers, to understand their perspectives. However, understanding both the production, reception, and the content itself is would provide a more encompassing and nuanced view of the advertisements mentioning China that were released during the 2010 midterm elections.

I also believe that exploring public opinion through data sets available through Pew and The Chicago Council limited my conceptualization of the variables to the questions asked as part of their surveys. By critically considering how these two organizations frame their questions about trade may bring about strategies for eliciting opinions that are not already biased by the content in the question itself. The Chicago Council often frames questions about China by asking if a person considers the matter a “critical threat,” an “important but not critical threat,” or “not an important threat.” However, the use of the word threat may skew a person’s opinions on the topic of the question. If the way questions are phrased had an impact on the answers, U.S. public opinion may shift if the nature of the questions is changed to remain neutral.

**Future Research**

There are many areas of this study that would benefit from further research, including an analysis of local and broadcast news during the 2010 midterm election, interviews with the political advertisement producers, critical considerations of survey wording, and comparative studies of political advertisements.
Local News Analysis

Although I conducted a content analysis of three prominent national papers, future research might consider the role of local news outlets and publications in the 2010 midterm elections. Since this was not a presidential election cycle, the individual Congressional races likely dominated the local news coverage but did not garner as much national coverage. In the future, conducting a content analysis of the local newspapers in the districts where ads mentioning China were aired would provide further insight into the local news media’s relationship with Congressional races. It would also allow me to compare local press coverage to the national press coverage analysis in this study.

Broadcast News Analysis

A cross-media analysis of news coverage of China and trade during the election would allow for a comparison of the way the medium affects the message, and whether different media tend to provide differing messages. Comparing the print newspapers and the television broadcasts would indicate whether there was a difference in the rhetoric or tone used in print and broadcast media. This analysis could also extend to comparisons of print and broadcast coverage of political advertisements mentioning China.

Also, a broadcast news analysis could lead to comparisons between the political ads themselves and the broadcast news coverage of China to see if similar videostyles emerge. In particular, I would look at clips of the evening news shows on the three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) to explore the rhetoric on China and trade from the same dates as the newspaper analysis – September 5, 2010 until November 5, 2010.
Interviews with Political Ad Producers

Since I obtained approval from Georgetown University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct interviews with the political candidate or a member of their campaign staff, I would like to explore the political strategies behind including China in their ads. This would provide a more insight into why these ads were aired. Although I had difficulty gaining access to many of these political candidates and their staff, due to their staff being restricted from participating in research projects, I believe that interviews with the producers of political advertising would provide insight into the underlying values and beliefs about China that are then presented in these advertisements.

Comparative Analyses of Political Advertisements

A comparative analysis of the way political advertisements portray other Asian countries would provide insight into the themes and trends that are resonant across Orientalized views of Asian countries and their trade relationships with the U.S. In particular, comparing the way Japan was portrayed in the 1980s and the way China is portrayed now by political advertising would provide insight into how these representations of Asians change or remain the same over time.

Also, a comparative study of political advertisements released during times of economic crises would allow for the study of who is blamed in these ads, what kind of rhetoric is used to describe them, and how that relates to the themes used to portray China during the 2010 midterm elections.
APPENDIX A

Figure 33. Congressional districts in which political ads mentioning China were aired by a Representative candidate’s campaign highlighted on a map of national unemployment rates by county.
Figure 34. Congressional districts in which political ads mentioning China were aired by a political action committee on behalf of a Representative candidate highlighted on a map of national unemployment rates by county. Adapted from “Local Area Unemployment Statistics” by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011 and “Congressional districts and counties” by U.S. Census Bureau, 2007.
## APPENDIX B

<table>
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<th>District</th>
<th>Unemployment in Region</th>
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<td>GA-8</td>
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# APPENDIX C

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<td>Congressman Altmire's First Campaign Commercial</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Affirming</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>PA-4</td>
<td>Keith Rothfus</td>
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<td>Congressman Altmire's Second Campaign Commercial</td>
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