

Research Statement

My scholarly interests lie in the areas of mass communication, political communication, and political public relations. Broadly speaking, I am interested in examining the role played by campaigns and news media in shaping public opinion and political behavior. The primary aim of my research is to produce theoretical and practical knowledge regarding ways to communicate effectively in politics, benefit under-represented groups, and enhance the value of journalism in society. During my time as a graduate student at the Manship School, I have participated in several research projects that have helped shape and further my research agenda.

My dissertation, which earned the Manship School's prestigious Hamilton Fellowship award, examines the political strategies used by women candidates. Specifically, I examine how gender stereotypes shape the use of emotional appeals in political ads. My dissertation draws from political psychology and campaigns and advertising theories. While most of the existing literature in this area examines the *effects* of campaign ads, I aim to explore the *antecedent factors* that shape these ads.

In doing so I hope to make a contribution to larger questions about the presence and strategic use of race and gender cues in elections. I also hope to address a gap in the women and politics literature about the strategies used by women candidates to overcome negative gender stereotypes. My project specifically explores how emotional appeals vary with reference to other contextual variables such as level of office, type of issue being discussed in the ad, competitiveness of the race, gender of the opponent, and use of other ad strategies.

Most of my research is centered on news media and politics, with a focus on women and minorities. One specific line of my research is focused on the mechanics of political advertisements. I have worked on a number of collaborative projects in this broad area. One paper that was recently accepted at *Political Communication* examined the use of gender-stereotyped appeals in campaign ads, and found that the use of ad appeals depends more on partisanship than gender. Another paper that I am currently working on examines the effect of Spanish language ads on Latino voters; specifically, whether Spanish news media affect the vote choice and turnout rates of Spanish-dominant voters. A third co-authored paper which I was invited to revise and resubmit at *PS: Political Science and Politics* examined the antecedent factors determining the use of endorsements in political ads. We found that endorsements are used mostly by women and incumbent candidates, and their use varies as the campaign season progresses. Another paper in a related area, with an invitation to revise and resubmit to *Political Research Quarterly*, examines the role played by women journalists and women candidates in shaping the debate agenda at presidential elections.

Findings from my research have broad application not only to political media and campaigns, but also to strategic communication and public relations practitioners who want to study how organizations develop their communication strategies in keeping with the interests of their target publics. I expect my research to not only make theoretical contributions, but also provide practical insights concerning the crafting of messages.

Other than media and politics, a second stream of my research has sought to examine ethnic and foreign media. One of the first papers I co-wrote as a graduate student was about the role played by black foreign correspondent Ollie Stewart during World War II. This paper, which I presented at the 2012 AEJMC conference, and which was published in a peer reviewed journal, employed textual analysis to identify the key themes underlying Stewart's writing, and the role he played in the black press. I furthered my research on foreign correspondence by adding a social media perspective, and examined the nature of the content published in *India Ink*, an India-specific blog published by the *New York Times*. I presented this solo-authored paper at the 2013 AEJMC conference, and it was later published in a peer-reviewed journal.

For future research, I am interested in exploring the communication strategies used by minority women in local-level political races, and the communication strategies used by women candidates on social media. I am also interested in exploring the appeals used in healthcare advertisements—in online, print, and television—and the effects they have on viewers.

My research and teaching areas are intertwined, and I continually seek ways to incorporate my research into the classroom and engage undergraduate students. I am a student leader in the Manship School's political communication research group, where I collaborate on research papers with undergraduate students from backgrounds in mass communication and political science. Two papers written by our group in the past academic year were accepted to the AEJMC conference in Montreal and are currently under review at top journals. I also attempt to find ways to incorporate media research into the assignments I design for my students. For instance, in my Multiculturalism and Media class, students produced a final research project where they used framing theory to analyze media coverage of minorities. A student who analyzed the race and gender composition of people featured in a sample of magazine advertisements wrote the following in her course evaluation statement: "Until this semester I never realized the lack of minorities in the mainstream media and that it was such a big problem. It has definitely changed my perspective when I watch or read the news."

In short, I aim to maintain an active research agenda; I am interested in collaborating with undergraduates and authors from other areas of interest who use varied methodologies, and I aim to ask pertinent questions that can help advance theory and scholarly debates in my areas of interest.