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THE EFFECTS OF PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES AND THE MEDIA ON  
CHARACTER PERCEPTION

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects of the presidential debates and media on character perception in the 2004 presidential campaign. Through an analysis of National Annenberg Election Survey Debates Panel data, debates were found to matter more than network news, cable news, and newspapers. Network news was shown to affect character perception, while cable news and newspapers held no influence. Talk radio affects character perception more than the debates.

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## Section 1

### Introduction

Annual televised presidential debates have been an institution in the United States since September 23, 1976, when Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford bumped heads (though John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon should be credited with participating in the inaugural debate in 1960). Every four years since Carter and Ford's initial encounter on national television, the presidential debates have been heralded as a cornerstone of American democracy, credited with promoting an open discussion of the candidates' issue stances. Recent research, though, has cast doubt upon this view, and we are now learning that the media has a large amount of influence on viewers' perception of what occurred during the debates.

The public views the media as having an inherent bias, and, thus, are much more skeptical of the media (Baron 2006). Previous research has shown that there is bias in this: all major media outlets (including network news and cable news) except for Fox News and the Washington Times show a liberal bias (which have more conservative leanings) (Groseclose and Milyo 2005). If the media shows an inherent bias and the public believes that bias exists, the influence of media is inconsistent with the open airing of issues that debates foster, since the public knows they cannot receive impartial information from them.

What do voters learn from debates? While there is a substantial amount of research on how voters' perception of candidate character is influenced by the debates

and viewer evaluation of who won them, it remains unclear whether this arises principally from the debates themselves or the media portrayal of them. This paper seeks to examine the relationship between voter perception of candidates and presidential debates by focusing on the intervening importance of the media. Character perception is an important component of vote choice (Cho 2005, Bishin et al. 2006). If the media is affecting this vote component more than the presidential debates, which are arguably the only time when the candidates alone control the message they put out to the public.

If the debates, which are arguably the only time when the candidates alone control the message they put out to the public, exhibit less influence over character perception, than the media, which has an inherent bias, has the purpose of the debates have been replaced by media coverage?.

## Section 2

### Literature Review

While the debates have been shown to stimulate voter interest, there is some doubt that they have as much impact on character perception as the candidates and the media would like to think (Drew and Weaver 2006). The debates affect voter learning more than any type of media, but the media seems to hold even more influence in other arenas, like stimulating campaign interest, and even affect perception of who won the debates themselves (Lanoue and Schrott 1989, Drew and Weaver 1991, Holbrook 1999, Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert 2001, Pfau 2002, Tsfati 2003, Zhu et al. 2004). Despite this vast amount of literature, there is no addressing of whether the debates or media affect character perception; we just know that they both hold considerable influence.

Debate viewers learn about candidates' issue stance through the debates, and they learn more through the debates than any other type of media (Lanoue and Schrott 1989, Drew and Weaver 1991, Holbrook 1999, Zhu et al. 2004). Most of this learning, though, goes on during the first debate, when there has been low exposure to issues (Holbrook 1999). Viewers tend to learn the most about little known candidates and less about incumbent presidents who have already served four year terms (Holbrook 1999).

The debates have also been shown to impact the character perception of a candidate: a viewer can think that a candidate is more charismatic after the debates than they originally believed (Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert 2001, Pfau 2002, Zhu et al. 2004). Previous research on the debates and character perception have used

questionnaires both before and after the debates, but only concerning one of them and panel survey data collected from independent agencies (Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert 2001, Zhu et al. 2004). Other debate research has used National Annenberg Election Survey Data, which I use in this research.

Vote choice tends to be reinforced through presidential debates, rather than changed. After watching the debate, viewers have increased confidence in their vote choice (Holbert 2005). Indeed, viewers tend to be partisan, and the debates have been shown to enflame that partisan attachment, leading to no significant change in vote choice (Kenski and Stroud 2005, Holbert, LaMarre, and Landreville 2009).

Watching the debates themselves is hardly the only way voters obtain information about them; the debates are given significant coverage in the media by any standards (Kendall 1997). This media coverage is important to how presidential debates are perceived. In fact, Fein, Goethals, and Kugler placed the presidential debates in the category of what they call “ambiguous stimuli, fertile ground for informational social influence” (2007). In other words, viewers’ impressions of the debates are easily swayed by other interactions, such as media or discussion. In fact, in a study of the media environment that surrounds the debates, it was found that intake of news related to the debate and pre-debate attitudes affect who voters believed to have won the debate (Tsfati 2003). Voters are influenced by both candidates’ arguments during the debates and the immediate media coverage immediately afterwards (Fridkin et al. 2007). Even more significant, the impact of media coverage was stronger for those who watched little of the debates (Tsfati 2003). Pfau, Cho, and Chong examined the effects of the debates and

media on character perception, and found that they both matter, but did not make any definitive statements on which exerts the most influence (2001).

I take issue with several parts of Pfau, Cho, and Chong's study, including its conclusions; they made no comparative statements about the debates and media. They simply concluded that the debates "did influence perceptions of candidates" and that the media did the same (96). It is still unknown which wields the most influence.

I also find fault in small 450 voter sample that Pfau, Cho, and Chong selected solely from Dane County, Wisconsin, home to the University of Wisconsin, where Madison is located. While Pfau, Cho, and Chong maintain that this sample is generalizable, since they were not searching for specific characteristics and perceptions of the candidates, but rather "the relationships of people's use of various communication forms and their attitudes about candidates and the democratic process," I seriously doubt that a sample that small can be generalized to an entire nation (91).

Media also play a role in shaping candidate character perception. In overall media coverage of a campaign, the media focuses on character and perception of the candidate more than their policy stances or ideas and media spin does influence viewer evaluations of the candidates (Kendall 1997, Cho 2005, Fridkin et al. 2008). Additionally, media viewers' attitudes and political leanings tend to be the same as the media's that they are viewing (Coleman and Banning 2006).

The types of media, though, varies in how it affects character perception and issue knowledge, among other things. Nontraditional media, such as talk radio, talk shows, and television news magazines, are shown to have the most influence on candidate perception, though they do not increase issue knowledge (Pfau, Cho, and Chong 2001,

Weaver and Drew 2005). Those who use newspapers have a larger campaign interest than their counterparts (Weaver and Drew 2005). When compared to television, newspapers are associated with more knowledge of difference of policy issues between the Democratic and Republican parties, while television is associated with more knowledge about the campaign and candidate issue stances (Chaffe 1994, Weaver and Drew 1995). TV viewers tend to rely on their perception of a candidate when making their vote choice, while voters who often engage in political discussion vote based party identification (Cho 2005). In fact, discussion among voters has found to normally be held between two people who share comparable political beliefs, and discussion affects who was perceived to have won the debates (Tsfati 2003, Cho 2005).

We see that debate viewers are not only influenced by the debates themselves, but also the media coverage immediately following. It raises the question if one has more influence than the other. We already know that more learning goes on during the debates than in their subsequent media coverage, but the question still remains if the debates or media affect character perception and evaluation of who one more? Moreover, does one type of media affect these things more than the other? Character perception has been shown to affect vote choice, especially for television news viewers (Cho 2005, Bishin et al. 2006). Are the presidential debates or the media affecting this critical vote component more?

### Section 3

## Hypotheses

Previous research has shown that both the debates and media influence character perception; I aim to determine which matters more.

Media coverage exerts considerable influence in the realms of the debates and character perception. Media can sway who voters believe won the debates, and debate viewers are influenced by both candidates' arguments and coverage afterwards (Tsfati 2003, Fridkin et al. 2007). The media focus intensely on character traits, especially when compared to issue stances of the candidates (Kendall 1997, Cho 2005).

Despite all of this remarkable influence, I believe that the debates affect character perception more than the media. The media carries an inherent bias, and the public is aware of it (Groseclose and Milyo 2005). The debates matter more because voters know that the media doesn't always present facts in their purest forms. The debates are the clearest and simplest manner of issue presentation and portrayal of character that voters have with out any filter. The debates have been shown to sway character perception, and voters learn more from the debates than from any type of media (Lanoue and Schrott 1989, Drew and Weaver 1991, Holbrook 1999, Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert 2001, Pfau 2002, Zhu et al. 2004). I believe this high amount of learning is demonstrative of amount of faith that is put into the debates

As far as specific types of media, I anticipate that talk radio will affect character perception the most. Previous research has found this, and I expect mine to mirror their findings (Pfau, Cho, and Chong 2001, Weaver and Drew 2005).

The following two hypotheses will be tested using ordinary least squares regression:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *The presidential debates influence character perception more than media.*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Talk radio influences character perception more than any other type of media.*

My dependent variables are the various aspects of character perception, ranging from candidate favorability, to whether the candidate makes the respondent uneasy. The independent variables are the amount and type of media consumption and whether the respondent watched the debates. The unit of analysis will be by individual.

## **Section 4**

### **Data**

I used National Annenberg Election Survey Debates Panel data in my research. NAES was used in more recent literature concerning the debates, notably Holbert, LaMarre, and Landreville 2005; it is also the only all encompassing survey that deals with the 2004 debates and character perception. It is a national survey of 1,248 adults from September 20 to 29, 2004 and October 14 to 24, 2004, before and after the debates respectively. The same respondents were polled both times. The survey asked a variety of questions, ranging from basic demographic information to issue opinions. I used the data concerning candidate character perception, media consumption, the debates, and basic demographic information.

A typical question concerning character traits is as follows:

On a scale of zero to 10, how well does “trustworthy” apply to George W. Bush? Zero means it does not apply at all, and 10 means it applies extremely well.

Media consumption was measured with questions such as:

How many days in the past week did you watch the national network news on TV? By national network news, I mean Peter Jennings on ABC, Dan Rather on CBS, Tom Brokaw on NBC, and the Jim Lehrer “News Hour” on PBS.

I chose this data set, not only because it asks the questions that are critical for this research, but also because of its size: with over 1,200 respondents, a wide variety of people were surveyed.

Ordinary least squares regression was run on the data using three different models. The first was on pre-debate attitudes and media consumption, the second on post-debate attitudes and media consumption for those that did not watch the debates, and the third post-debate attitudes and media consumption for those that did view the debates. I can see any change in significance and means across these models to determine if the media or debates affected character perception.

The first set of test was run on overall candidate favorability (The results can be seen in Table 5-1.), then the same tests were run on every character trait polled. I looked at the significance of character traits across the debates (Table 5-4), as well as three specific traits that elicited stronger reactions than the others (Tables 5-2 and 5-3, respectively).

## **Section 5**

### **Results**

The results of several regression analyses provide significant results for the central questions in the study.

Table 5-1 Character Favorability

Independent Variables	Bush Favorability = Dependent Variable			Kerry Favorability = Dependent Variable		
	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates
<b>Watched Network News in Past Week</b>	-0.064* (0.035)	-0.081** (0.034)	-0.057* (0.034)	0.076** (0.032)	0.122*** (0.031)	0.099** (0.031)
<b>Watched Cable News in Past Week</b>	0.101* (0.033)	0.024 (0.030)	0.055* (0.031)	-0.076*** (0.029)	-0.029 (0.028)	-0.060** (0.028)
<b>Read Newspaper in Past Week</b>	-0.089*** (0.034)	-0.079** (0.031)	-0.073** (0.031)	0.068** (0.031)	0.070** (0.029)	0.067** (0.029)
<b>Listened to NPR in Past Week</b>	-0.260** (0.038)	-0.263*** (0.037)	-0.249*** (0.037)	0.190*** (0.034)	0.192*** (0.034)	0.186*** (0.034)
<b>Pre Listened to Talk Radio Other Than NPR in Past Week</b>	0.090** (0.040)	0.152*** (0.040)	0.172*** (0.040)	-0.109*** (0.036)	-0.161*** (0.037)	-0.178*** (0.037)
<b>Party ID</b>	-2.756*** (0.115)	-2.690*** (0.106)	-2.651*** (0.106)	2.434*** (0.104)	2.346*** (0.098)	2.300*** (0.097)
<b>Age</b>	0.000 (0.006)	0.008 (0.006)	0.010* (0.006)	-0.010* (0.006)	-0.013** (0.006)	-0.016* (0.006)
<b>Education</b>	-0.168*** (0.049)	-0.184*** (0.045)	-0.173*** (0.044)	0.051 (0.044)	0.056 (0.041)	0.050 (0.041)
<b>Household Income</b>	0.153*** (0.053)	0.160*** (0.049)	0.195*** (0.050)	-0.181*** (0.048)	-0.147*** (0.045)	-0.181*** (0.045)
<b>Female</b>	-0.007 (0.186)	0.199 (0.171)	0.213 (0.170)	0.005 (0.167)	0.009 (0.157)	0.002 (0.156)
<b>Black</b>	-0.822*** (0.402)	-0.504 (0.358)	-0.523 (0.355)	-0.008 (0.363)	0.426 (0.328)	0.495 (0.326)
<b>Watched Sep 30 Debate</b>			0.123 (0.010)			-0.087 (0.087)
<b>Watched Oct 8 Debate</b>			0.142 (0.096)			-0.107 (0.088)
<b>Watched Oct 13 Debate</b>			0.088 (0.095)			-0.147* (0.087)
<b>Constant</b>	5.69*** (0.519)	5.467*** (0.471)	3.997*** (0.562)	5.816*** (0.469)	5.833*** (0.433)	7.215*** (0.515)

Std. errors in parentheses.  $p \leq 0.10^*$ ;  $p < 0.05^{**}$ ;  $p < 0.01^*$

Table 5-1 examines candidate favorability as the dependent variable, with the various indicators of media consumption as the independent variables. The first row looks at the effects of the network news on candidate favorability. The first column shows the pre-debate attitudes towards Bush; network news viewers had a negative favorability of him. The negative sentiment is deepened for those who did not watch the debates post-debate. It is then lessened after the debates for people who watched the debate. Kerry's favorability starts out much higher than Bush's for network news viewers pre-debate. After the debates, his favorability increases even more for those who did not watch the debates, with a more modest increase for those who watched the debates.

Cable news shows no consistent pattern. Newspapers give no changes in means over the three models for either candidate. The respondents who listened to talk radio rather than NPR view Bush much more favorably than Kerry, with those who watched the debates having a higher favorability of Bush and lower favorability of Kerry than their counterparts. This same pattern is mirrored in my next models.

Table 5-2 Bush Anger, Unease, Fear

Independent Variables	Bush Makes Me Angry = Dependent Variable			Bush Makes Me Uneasy = Dependent Variable			Bush Makes Me Afraid = Dependent Variable		
	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates
<b>Watched Network News in Past Week</b>	-0.049** (0.023)	-0.063*** (0.022)	-0.051** (0.023)	-0.045** (0.022)	-0.073*** (0.022)	-0.061*** (0.023)	-0.028 (0.023)	-0.033 (0.023)	-0.031 (0.023)
<b>Watched Cable News in Past Week</b>	0.000 (0.021)	-0.013 (0.020)	-0.001 (0.020)	-0.014 (0.021)	0.001 (0.020)	0.013 (0.021)	-0.013 (0.021)	-0.027 (0.020)	-0.020 (0.021)
<b>Read Newspaper in Past Week</b>	-0.039* (0.022)	-0.066*** (0.021)	-0.063*** (0.021)	-0.040* (0.021)	-0.056*** (0.021)	-0.054*** (0.021)	-0.023 (0.022)	-0.056*** (0.021)	-0.056*** (0.021)
<b>Listened to NPR in Past Week</b>	-0.099*** (0.024)	-0.127*** (0.025)	-0.122*** (0.025)	-0.136*** (0.024)	-0.145*** (0.025)	-0.138*** (0.025)	-0.132*** (0.025)	-0.108*** (0.026)	-0.104*** (0.026)
<b>Pre Listened to Talk Radio Other Than NPR in Past Week</b>	0.001 (0.025)	0.029 (0.027)	0.039 (0.027)	0.005 (0.024)	0.034 (0.027)	0.047* (0.027)	0.001 (0.026)	0.036 (0.027)	0.041 (0.028)
<b>Watched Sep 30 Debate</b>			0.034 (0.064)			0.079 (0.065)			0.009 (0.066)
<b>Watched Oct 8 Debate</b>			0.051 (0.066)			0.003 (0.066)			0.100 (0.067)
<b>Watched Oct 13 Debate</b>			0.060 (0.064)			0.076 (0.064)			-0.051 (0.065)
<b>Constant</b>	3.68*** (0.335)	4.26*** (0.311)	3.69*** (0.375)	3.61*** (0.327)	3.66*** (0.313)	3.08*** (0.376)	4.50*** (0.341)	4.01*** (0.318)	3.75*** (0.383)

Control variables omitted. Std. errors in parentheses. p &lt; 0.10\*; p &lt; 0.05\*\*; p &lt; 0.01\*\*\*

Table 5-3 Kerry Anger, Unease, Fear

Independent Variables	Kerry Makes Me Angry			Kerry Makes Me Uneasy			Kerry Makes Me Afraid		
	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates	Pre-Debates	Post-Debates w/out Debates	Post-Debates w/ Debates
Watched Network News in Past Week	0.013 (0.020)	0.064*** (0.021)	0.062*** (0.021)	0.055** (0.022)	0.055** (0.022)	0.050** (0.022)	0.042** (0.020)	0.065*** (0.022)	0.063*** (0.022)
Watched Cable News in Past Week	-0.025 (0.019)	-0.073*** (0.019)	-0.080*** (0.019)	-0.030 (0.020)	-0.024 (0.020)	-0.030 (0.020)	-0.037* (0.019)	-0.053*** (0.020)	-0.056*** (0.020)
Read Newspaper in Past Week	0.020 (0.019)	0.022 (0.019)	0.021 (0.019)	0.008 (0.021)	0.015 (0.020)	0.014 (0.021)	0.023 (0.020)	0.017 (0.020)	0.017 (0.020)
Listened to NPR in Past Week	0.043** (0.022)	0.048** (0.02)	0.045* (0.024)	0.076*** (0.023)	0.117*** (0.025)	0.112*** (0.025)	0.077*** (0.022)	0.077*** (0.025)	0.073*** (0.025)
Pre Listened to Talk Radio Other Than NPR in Past Week	-0.111*** (0.022)	-0.075*** (0.025)	-0.081*** (0.025)	-0.122*** (0.024)	-0.106*** (0.026)	-0.115*** (0.027)	-0.104*** (0.023)	-0.111*** (0.026)	-0.116*** (0.027)
Watched Sep 30 Debate			-0.087 (0.060)			-0.069 (0.064)			-0.100 (0.063)
Watched Oct 8 Debate			0.011 (0.062)			-0.047 (0.065)			0.034 (0.065)
Watched Oct 13 Debate			0.011 (0.060)			0.025 (0.063)			0.026 (0.063)
Constant	4.98*** (0.299)	4.68*** (0.292)	4.96*** (0.351)	4.05*** (0.319)	3.99*** (0.309)	4.35*** (0.372)	4.93*** (0.302)	4.49*** (0.306)	4.61*** (0.369)

Control variables omitted. Std. errors in parentheses.  $p < 0.10^*$ ;  $p < 0.05^{**}$ ;  $p < 0.01^{***}$

Tables 5-2 and 5-3 show whether or not the candidate made the respondent angry, uneasy, or afraid as the dependent variables and the same media consumption independent variables as table 5-1. In these tables a negative number denotes a large amount of anger, unease, or fear, while a positive numbers indicate less of these emotions.

The first row in both tables 5-2 and 5-3 examine the impact of network news on the three different dependent variables “Makes Me Angry,” “Makes Me Uneasy,” and “Makes Me Afraid.” Viewer of network news had a consistent angry attitude towards Bush: it was the least severe pre-debates, but increased post-debates. The anger was higher without watching the debates than it was with debate viewing. Kerry, for network news viewers, had a very pattern: they felt no anger towards him. Anger was very low pre-debates and not significant. It increased dramatically and became significant after the debates, with the watching of the debate exhibiting no real impact.

“Bush Makes Me Angry” and “Bush Makes Me Uneasy” both have the same pattern as Bush Favorability in network news: an increase in negative feelings post-debate without watching the debate, which is then decreased upon watching the debate. Cable news had no significance for any of Bush’s variables and no real pattern emerged in Kerry’s variables. Similarly, the newspaper showed no significance for Kerry and no pattern for Bush.

“Bush Makes Me Angry,” “Bush Makes Me Afraid,” “Kerry Makes Me Angry,” and “Kerry Makes Me Uneasy” show similar patterns for NPR viewers as favorability did: a rise or decrease in a sentiment from pre-debate attitudes to both post-debate

stances. Other talk radio had no significance for Bush, but displayed the same (but reverse) patterns as NPR for “Kerry Makes Me Angry” and “Kerry Makes Me Uneasy.”

From these data it can be concluded that the presidential debates do matter, but not more than talk radio; the increase or decrease in both post-debate opinion indicate this. Watching the debates did nothing to sway the third model. Network news affects character perception, since changes are seen in post-debate without watching the debate models, but not in those who viewed the debates. Cable news and newspapers don't exert any significant influence: no pattern could be found in any of the variables. These results partially confirm  $H_1$  and completely confirm  $H_2$ .

Table 5-4 Significance of Character Traits by Debate

Character Trait	Debate					
	Bush			Kerry		
	Sept 30	Oct 8	Oct 13	Sept 30	Oct 8	Oct 13
<b>Favorability as a Person</b>	-			n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Cares About People Like Me</b>	+					
<b>Inspiring</b>	+				-	
<b>Strong Leader</b>	+					
<b>Trustworthy</b>	+					
<b>Share My Values</b>	+				-	
<b>Knowledgeable</b>	+				-	
<b>Reckless</b>				+		
<b>Says One Thing, Does Another</b>				+		+
<b>Has Right Experience</b>	+				-	
<b>Easy to Like</b>	+			-	-	
<b>Out of Touch</b>				+		
<b>Arrogant</b>						+
<b>Optimistic</b>	+					
<b>Effective</b>	+					
<b>Decisive</b>	+					
<b>Flip Flops</b>				-		
<b>Not Willing to Admit Mistakes</b>	+					
<b>Makes Me Angry</b>						
<b>Makes Me Uneasy</b>						
<b>Makes Me Afraid</b>						

Table 5-4 shows which character traits reach a level of significance and if that significance is positive or negative by debate for each candidate. I constructed this chart by looking at whether each trait was significant with a specific debate. I then noted in the chart if the correlation was positive or negative. “Cares About People Like Me” had a positive significance for Bush in the first debate, but not at all for Kerry. Bush again had a positive significance in the first debate for “Inspiring,” while the same trait for Kerry had a negative significance for the second debate.

This table shows that character perception does not follow the same pattern as issue learning from the debates. Previous research has show than viewers learn less

about four year incumbents during the debates, but here the amount of character perception significance is less for Kerry: Bush has 13 character traits of significance, while Kerry has 12 (Holbrook 1999). The most learning for Bush occurred in the first debate, which is consistent with previous literature that showed that viewers learn the most while watching the first debate, but Kerry does not follow that pattern (Holbrook 1999).

## Section 6

### Discussion and Conclusion

The findings here show that the debates *do* matter, even in this increasingly digital age where media is available at every turn in any form imaginable. Despite this more modern media, talk radio is what affects character perception the most. Network news sways character perception, though not as much as talk radio, while cable news and newspaper exhibit no significant influence.

This research has fulfilled its goals of discovering if the debates matter; which media influence character perception the most; and filling the gap in previous research, which had, until now, made no definitive conclusions if media or the presidential debates affect character perception more. An extension of this study could be to examine the effects of the new and emerging media of blogs and internet news sources on character perception when compared to the debates.

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## VITA

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Current Address: 221 S. Barnard St. Apt. 21, State College, PA 16801

Permanent Address: 43 E. Foothills Dr., Drums, PA 18222

**EDUCATION:****The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA**

B.A., Political Science, **expected May 2010**

B.A., German

B.A., International Studies

Schreyer Honors Scholar

**Georgetown University, Washington, DC, Summer 2009**

The Fund for American Studies

Engelitcheff Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems

**IES Abroad European Union Program, Freiburg, Germany, Spring 2009****RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:****The Pennsylvania State University, The Sociology Department, 2009-Present**

Coded newspaper articles concerning riot activity to contribute to a database  
using PASW (Predictive Analytics SoftWare)

Supervisor: Patrick Rafail

**The Pennsylvania State University, The Political Science Department, 2007-2008**

Searched television news and newspaper databases Vanderbilt Television News Archive and Lexis Nexis Academic and coded data related to the effect of interest groups on the frequency of diseases coverage

Supervisor: Marie Hojnacki, Ph. D

**WORK EXPERIENCE:****Intern for the George Washington Center for Global Health, Washington, DC, 2009**

Coordinated a Swahili class for graduate students studying abroad in Kenya; researched other centers for global health; investigated faith-based organizations in Washington, DC for a fundraising proposal; wrote briefings for newsletters; managed advising schedules; and maintained student files

**Blogger for IES Abroad, 2009**

Wrote a bi-monthly blog of study abroad experience so that perspective study abroad students may gain a better understanding of the every day happenings of an international student living and studying in Freiburg, Germany

**Governor's School Assistant for the Governor's School for the Agricultural Sciences, 2008**

Acted as both a Resident Assistant and Teaching Assistant for gifted high school students interested in the agricultural sciences in a college setting for six weeks

**Schreyer Honors College Office, Work Study, 2006-2007**

Performed research, organized, filed, typed, and carried out various office tasks

**LANGUAGE SKILLS:**

**German: Conversant**

**French: Elementary**

**COMPUTER SKILLS:**

**Microsoft Office 2007**

**Lexis Nexis Academic**

**Vanderbilt Television News Archive**

**PASW (Predictive Analytics SoftWare)**

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:**

**Phonebanker for Hillary Clinton Pennsylvania Primary, 2008**

Called registered Pennsylvania voters to promote Hillary Clinton

**Campaign Assistant for Superior Court Judge Correale Stevens, 2007**

Performed duties of an administrative assistant

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:**

**Rent an American, 2009**

Educated German high school students about American culture, current events,  
and a variety of other related topics

**ACTIVITIES:****Mock Trial, 2006-2009**

Honed oral communication skills as both a witness and an attorney; led five intramural and invitational teams over two years as co-captain, one of which placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in competition in an invitational competition; placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in regional competition and attended the national championship in 2008; and placed 5<sup>th</sup> in regional competition and attended the national qualifying competition in 2007

**Schreyer Honors Mentor, 2007-2008**

Acquired leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills by leading sophomores and juniors who were recently admitted to the Honors College; assisting in a faculty led case study; and moderating an alumni panel

**HONORS AND AWARDS:****Edwin Thompson and Dr. Regina Bloch Thompson Scholarship, 2009-Present**

Recognizes students majoring in German with an exceptional academic record and financial need

**Attended NATO Youth Summit in Strasbourg, France, 2009**

Participated in talks with NATO officers about international involvement of the organization

**Nominated to attend Leadership for a Small Planet Seminar, 2008**

Examined how to improve international cooperation through community based leadership programs

**Recognized as a Gifted Student in French, 2007, 2008**

**Hershey Company Scholar, 2007-Present**

Based on exceptional academic record, demonstrated leadership, honors, participation in school, and community activities

**Penn State Academic Excellence Scholarship, partial tuition, 2006-Present**