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Brian K. Munis
University of Montana

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THE OCCURRENCE OF PLACE-BASED NARRATIVE IN U.S. SENATORIAL CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENTS

By

BRIAN KAL MUNIS

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Thesis

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Approved by:

Sandy Ross, Dean of The Graduate School
Graduate School

Dr. Robert Saldin, Chair
Political Science

Dr. Abhishek Chatterjee
Political Science

Dr. Lucian Conway III
Psychology

Dr. David C.W. Parker
Political Science, Montana State University-Bozeman
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Narratives have been increasingly subject to study within social science disciplines. However, research pertaining to narrative within political campaigns is incomplete. For example, there has been a relative lack of attention in the literature to the symbolic discourse and imagery in many political campaign advertisements that—seemingly—exists in order to link candidates to specific geographic “places” within their constituencies. A more complete understanding of the association between narratives of place and political campaigns will allow us to more effective and accurately gauge how, when, and why candidates use this potential strategy; as well as its possible effectiveness in election outcomes. This study is the first to explore place-based narrative in depth, and provides an overview of where, as well as the degree to which it was featured in political advertisements during the 2012 and 2014 U.S. Senate elections. Moreover, preliminary results suggesting two environmental conditions that account for the occurrence of this phenomenon are discussed. Overall, this study represents a valuable contribution to the literature on political communication, as well as a foundation upon which further research can be undertaken.
I. Theory and Introduction

Introduction

For those living in the United States, a national election cycle is never more than two years away. Moreover, every four years, the country experiences an even grander election cycle, punctuated by the fanfare of electing the nation’s chief executive. In the age of the modern campaign, perhaps no other element of campaigns is more conspicuous—whether engendering chagrin or admiration—than televised political advertisements. Over the course of the twelve plus months leading up to such national elections, seemingly endless and inescapable political advertising floods national and local television markets. This sheer bombardment of political advertising into the homes, work spaces, and even public places (e.g., sports bars) of viewers is among the factors that contribute to their potential effect upon those who view them.

Aside from candidates vying for the Presidency, those who spend the most time and money in their election bids are candidates for the U.S. Senate; the third highest elected office in the national government following the president and vice president. Candidates for U.S. Senate must appeal to a relatively diverse constituency in comparison to those running for the U.S. House in most circumstances, but also one that is relatively specific in comparison to presidential candidates. Additionally, senatorial campaigns are typically much more expensive than those of other offices that appeal to a state-wide constituency (e.g., governorships), which often translates into, amongst other things, increased political advertising. Ostensibly, this increased resource base may allow campaigns to employ a broader range of advertisement styles. These characteristics have potential to influence how candidates try to appeal to voters in their political advertisements.
One such potential strategy that candidates may employ in making such an appeal is to symbolically link themselves to the very places in which voters live. For instance, consider U.S. Senator from Montana, Jon Tester’s ad, Combine, which was aired during his successful bid for reelection in 2012. As the scene rapidly comes into focus, a humbly depicted Tester is shown standing in the foreground of a dusty, manure spattered and uneven barn yard. His attire is similarly modest: work boots, jeans, button-up jean shirt and a Carhartt jacket adorn the Democratic Senator. Behind him, a large red barn and a cattle feed-lot occupy the middle ground of the shot, while an expanse of Montana “hi-line” cattle country disappears into the vantage point in the background. “Being out here gives me perspective” says Tester, just before the next shot transitions onto the screen, showing Tester harvesting grain via combine on his dry-land farm in Northern Montana. His narration continues, “the combine doesn’t care if you’re a Senator; it breaks down when it wants to break down.” All of this occurs in the first eight seconds of the advertisement. The remaining twenty-three seconds of the ad showcase similar scenes of archetypal Montana imagery—from ranchland tucked away in the foothills of one of the state’s many mountain ranges, to a shot of one of the many small towns in this mostly rural state. As the ad comes to a close, Tester simultaneously acknowledges and dismisses the unfavorable political climate his party faces throughout much of the United States, and especially the intermountain West, by confidently stating, “Montanans don’t care which party gets the credit or the blame, that’s why I’m focused on doing what’s right for Montana….always” (Tester, Youtube, 2012).

Interestingly, the Tester ad is not unique. Indeed, hundreds of similar ads aired during the 2012 and 2014 U.S. Senate elections across several states and by candidates of both
major political parties, as well as several independent candidates. While Tester’s ads
often featured archetypal shots of Montana mountains, and various agricultural regions
and practices from across the state, an ad for a campaign in Arizona may feature towering
cacti in the Sonora. However, the presence of this type of imagery brings to mind several
questions. While mountains, rivers, forests, desert landscapes and even widely recognized
urban landmarks may be picturesque and, thus, serve as nice backdrops for political
advertisements, is this the only purpose that they serve in political ads? Or, is it possible
that these shots and the places they feature, while not overtly political in isolation, are
actually capable of helping attain political ends (i.e., election)? And, lastly, under what
conditions are political advertisements likely to feature such imagery? It is precisely these
questions that this thesis seeks to address.

In addressing these questions, this thesis provides an important contribution to our
collective knowledge as it is, insofar as I am aware, the first study to explicitly address
the use of what I call “place-based narrative” in televised political advertising. Below, I
provide a definition of what I mean by place-based narrative. In order to do so, the term
is first broken down into its constituent parts: place, and, narrative. Once I have provided
a theoretical background on these two aspects, I bring the concepts together and provide a
definition of the concept under study. After the theoretical framework has been
established, I undertake a study ascertaining the frequency of place-based narrative in
U.S. Senate elections during the 2012 and 2014 cycles, as well as an exploration of the
factors that may explain these occurrences.
What are Narratives and why do they Matter?

Narratives are essentially stories comprised of a number of features. They are externally communicated expressions (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2012, p. 5), consisting of a temporal sequence of events (McComas & Shanahan, 1999) featuring canonical plots, symbols and archetypal characters (Stone, 2002) that culminate in a dominant normative message, that is the “moral of the story” (Jones & McBeth, 2010, p. 329; Verweij, et al., 2006). Due to their relative ambiguity, narratives often leave ample room for individual interpretation (Hajer, 1995)—a characteristic that, in political communication, can be advantageous or quite the opposite depending on the circumstances. In his seminal work, Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action, Walter Fisher (1987) sums up the overarching significance of narrative succinctly by observing that it is used, “to justify decisions or actions already made or performed and to determine future decisions or actions” (p. 362).

Narrative as a particular type of communicative process is only one half of what it is here being posited as being. Indeed, narrative is also to be understood as a type of cognitive organization. Evidence within cognitive and neurological science research has suggested that the human mind primarily organizes, processes and conveys information in a narrative form (Gerrig & Egidi, 2003; Klein, 2003; Herman, 2009). The importance of these findings is immense. For example, neuroscientists have determined that those who develop Alzheimer’s disease are more negatively affected by the loss of narrative processing ability than they are by the loss of other cognitive processes, such as mathematic and linguistic ability (Young & Saver, 2001). These findings can significantly help social scientists in better understanding the effectiveness of narrative
use as a potential political strategy. For the purposes of this paper, I will be studying narrative as a communicative process and expression, bearing in mind its cognitive and neurological importance.

The substance of narrative communication is thematic. Examples of such themes include, characters, temporal relationships, and setting. Because of the focus on 'place' as a social construct, this thesis will primarily focus on the narrative setting. Specifically, the setting of the narrative will be analyzed by taking into consideration the discourse and imagery of political advertisements. The degree to which the setting is integral to the narrative is likely to change depending on the context and purpose surrounding the narrative. However, in political campaign advertising, the success or failure of the narrative is tied to the “setting being relevant to the audience’s vision of the campaign and the candidates” (Leland, 1991, p. 43). Setting is defined here as consisting of both the actual places in which events take place, as well as the implicit locations tied to issues that are discussed. Not all issues have a specific corresponding location, however. Highly abstract and/or generalized statements on issues may not be tied to any specific location, and thus do no contribute to narrative settings. As an example of issue discourse crafting narrative setting, consider the statement from Jon Tester’s, “Everytime [sic]” advertisement, “I took on the Obama administration to put Montana back in charge of wolves” (2012). By mentioning Montana, and subsequently evoking an environmental and natural resource policy highly salient to Montanans, Tester successfully contributed to crafting the narrative’s setting—implicitly locating it somewhere in Montana’s rugged western half. As can be witnessed, setting is undoubtedly one the most important aspects of narrative, as it links the message to a broader, though by no means nonspecific,
context. Christopher Leland (1991, p. 75), in his dissertation on the role of narrative in gubernatorial campaigns, has asserted that the success of one particular candidate was, “not based on the type of character he portrayed, but because that character at least did his actions (i.e., political ads) in a setting that looked appropriate for a governor.” Others, however, feel that the character portrayed is of importance and, in fact, is tied to the particular constituency setting in which the candidate operates (Fenno, 1978; 2007; Parker, 2014).

Narratives have been increasingly subject to study within social science disciplines. In political science, for example, narrative is the subject of study “more than ever these days,” especially in order to “describe and analyze micro-level events” (Ross, 2009, p. 150). It is worth noting that such studies span nearly all of the various sub fields of political science, and make use of both qualitative (Hammer, 2010), and quantitative approaches (Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, & Lane, 2013), despite the common assumption that narrative is a phenomenon amenable only to qualitative study. Even with this relatively recent surge in narrative research, research exploring the role of narrative in political campaigns remains incomplete—especially pertaining to political campaign advertising. Additionally, existing narrative research in American political campaigns primarily focuses on those for executive office, such as those for state governorships and the presidency.

In the realm of gubernatorial elections, the aforementioned dissertation by Leland (1991) found evidence suggesting that narratives are an “intricate part of political campaign messages” that constituencies “se to make voting decisions” “between competing narratives” (pp. 159-160). Ultimately, Leland concludes that “political
campaign narratives are essential to the social, political and cultural decision making of society.” (p. 163) Campaign narratives have also been studied in relation to American presidential elections. Bruce Gronbeck’s (1988) piece on negative narratives in campaign advertisements sets the stage by highlighting the usage of “personalized attacks” upon opposing candidates as dating back to the infancy of the United States. Gronbeck also contends that this strategy was not “fully realized” until the invention of the television (p.333). Important conclusions drawn in this study include the now standard paradigm that negative political ads can be used both defensively and offensively; and that “narrative is preferred to argumentative discourse when the subject matter is morality” (pp.341-343). Stefanie Hammer (2010), in a more recent analysis focusing upon President Obama’s 2008 campaign, contends that candidates should be more cognizant of narratives throughout their bid for election (p. 270), as they tend to play a “decisive” role in election success (p. 287). To illustrate this point, Hammer links Obama’s success to his “persuasive narrative” that relied upon common political principles (pp. 286-287). The findings of policy scholars, that narratives are able to trump scientific evidence in persuading individuals (Shanahan, McBeth, & Hathaway, 2011), reinforce Hammer’s prescription for an increased attention to narrative by candidates and scholars alike.

Place

Throughout his long and prolific career as a researcher, political scientist Richard Fenno championed an influential idea: in order to understand how Congressmen represent their constituents, one must study how they conduct themselves while at home in their constituencies. These methods of conduct, manifested in various forms of interaction and projection, are what Fenno refers to as “home styles.” Rather than simply
focusing on the policy discussions, legislative votes, and other activities that congressmen engage in during their time in Washington, Fenno’s approach emphasizes the importance of the ways in which representatives connect with constituents at home. As an example, representatives often attempt to show constituents that they “see the world the way (their constituents) do” (Fenno, 1978, p. 59). Further, one way that representatives can do this is to symbolically evoke common experiences and understandings that have resulted from interacting within shared physical surroundings; that is, to evoke a shared sense of ‘place.’

As a concept, “place is itself not only profoundly basic but also specifically special” (Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2013, p. 6). Place can be said to be basic to the human experience because, as noted by poet Gary Snyder, “the world is (made up of) places” (Snyder, 2003, p. 27). However, places, as opposed to mere space, shape and are shaped by the people living there. As Carbaugh and Cerulli explain, place is of chief importance to our communication, as our conceptions of place help organize our thoughts and speech as being “not just anywhere (but) somewhere in particular” (p. 7). It may be possible that place-centered cognitive processes are themselves a form of narrative cognitive organization.

As mentioned above, place is not only a potential means of cognitive organization, it is also a key element of human communication. Symbolic Territory Theory (Osborne, 2006) heralds place as being essential to peoples' awareness of identity. Living and—especially—recreating (Hutchins & Stormer, 2013, p. 36) in a place “symbolically charges sites and events” (Osborne, 2006, p. 152) perceived as particular to those places that ultimately shape collective identity and consciousness by providing temporal (i.e.,
narrative) societal reference points. By linking place to the cognitive construction of self, symbolic territories generate means through which people can identify with others around them. These identities of place are reinforced and perpetuated through communication, such as when, for example, people identify as living in a “mountain town”, “mountain state” or “plains state” (Hutchins & Stormer, 2013, p. 29).

Building upon the work of Fenno, political scientist David Parker's book, *Battle for the Big Sky* (2014), argues that the connection people develop with the places they inhabit affects their political thinking. Significantly, Parker illustrates that place informs voters in who they choose to represent them. Relatedly, “place also dictates the representational choices members of Congress make to build trust with their constituents” (p. 13) by bringing to the fore “a representational style (and) a presentation of self” that reflects the constituency as a place, as opposed to “an undifferentiated mass” (p. 34). Significantly, particularly for the study of American politics, Parker notes frequently that place has become an immensely important feature of politics in Western states—a region itself that is becoming increasingly more influential in the politics of the United States.

*Place-based Narrative in Campaign Advertisements*

As previously mentioned, there has been a paucity of research on narrative pertaining to political campaigns. Moreover, there has been an especially severe lack of attention in the literature to the sort of symbolic discourse and imagery that I described in my recounting of the Tester ad in the introduction. Addressing this knowledge gap is important because many political campaign advertisements feature this type of content, which seemingly exists in order to link candidates to specific geographic places within their constituencies. Parker highlights some of the ways in which candidates for
Montana’s U.S. Senate seat during the 2012 cycle evoked symbolic connections to place. And, while Parker does provide some brief discussion of place in political advertisements, a more extensive treatment of the topic was simply beyond the scope of the book (Parker, 2014). A study dealing exclusively with the occurrence of “place-based narrative” in political advertisements resulting in a more complete understanding of the association between narratives incorporating place and political campaigns is needed, as it will contribute to our knowledge of how, when, and why candidates use this potential strategy; as well as its possible role in election outcomes. This thesis, by being the first to explicitly deal with place-based narrative in political advertisements, makes significant progress toward providing such an understanding.

Both place and narrative have been argued to be influential in shaping cultural identity (Osborne, 2006; Ross, 2009). In putting these two concepts together, I define place-based narrative (PBN) in political advertisements as symbolic imagery and/or narration that seeks to link candidates to archetypal and symbolically charged landscapes and other sites within their constituency. Combining place and narrative into one communication construct allows us to systematically study a phenomenon that, when used by candidates, may be impactful upon the perceptions of voters. More specifically, PBN in political advertisements may assist candidates in establishing an intimate connection with voters, grounded in the very places in which they live and recreate; “a connection that might belie partisanship” (Parker, 2014, p. 41).

When considering what we know about televised political advertising thus far, it is apparent that much of the existing research could potentially be applicable to the use of PBN and as a potential strategy. For instance, we know that political advertisements can
increase one's political knowledge (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996; Geer, 2008).

Furthermore, the televised political spot ad is certainly among the most valued means of communication to candidates and their respective campaigns. This high value is due to their effectiveness (or at least their potential effectiveness that candidates perceive), which, in turn, owes to their exceptional degree of pervasiveness. Evidence of such effectiveness looms large within an extensive body of political science research.¹ Such research, for example, indicates that political ads are capable of influencing voter opinion during elections (Herrnson & Patterson, 2000; Geer, 2008). Moreover, some research confirms the intuitive hypothesis that there is a positive relationship exhibited between the number of ads aired by a candidate, and his or her respective percentage of the votes received (Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Nagler & Leighley, 1992), while other more recent work tends to focus on the timing of advertisements and voter memory as being more important than sheer quantity (Gerber, Gimpel, Green, & Shaw, 2011; Hill, Lo, Vavreck, & Zaller, 2013).

There are several specific aspects that may comprise any given political ad; all of which have received considerable attention in political science. Namely, these elements include, framing, priming, agenda-setting, and general tone. Though all of these aspects have been extensively studied, it is perhaps the overall tone that has received the most thorough treatment. In terms of tone, there are three broad types: (1) positive; (2) attack; (3) contrast (Jamieson, 1993). Of these three categories, attack ads have received the most attention, with most results indicating that they are highly effective (Ansolabehere

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¹ While there are many studies that point to the effectiveness of political advertising, it may be possible that the effectiveness of political advertising may be diminishing somewhat, owing to the rapid proliferation of popularity growth of new media formats. There is currently, to my knowledge, lacking evidence one way or another (likely owing to the rapid proliferation of new media in question being such a new phenomenon) on this topic, but felt that it was worth mentioning here.
Framing, generally viewed as the particular way in which messages are portrayed to an audience as a means to activate cognitive shortcuts, such as heuristics, has been shown to affect voter opinion (Franz & Ridout, 2011). For example, Nicholas Winter has found that even policy issues that are not explicitly related to race, such as social security, are framed in such a way as to activate voter biases that may then, in turn, affect voter opinion toward those policies (Winter, 2008).

Closely related to framing is a concept that is referred to as priming. Priming is a psychological concept that, applied to voting and political ads, holds that people are likely to use the most readily available information when evaluating candidates. Studies of priming effects in political ads have exhibited significant impacts (Iyenger, 1994; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Finally, agenda-setting is an attempt by candidates to establish a particular issue (i.e., “their” issue) as being the most important by repeatedly drawing attention to it in numerous advertisements throughout an election cycle. In doing so, the candidate hopes to isolate a particular issue upon which voters will cast their ballot (Iyenger, 1994; Herrnson & Patterson, 2000).

Although a full exploration of the various possible interplays between place-based narrative and the psycho-communicative concepts presented above, such as framing, is beyond the scope of this thesis, it does provide the foundation upon which a more complete understanding of this phenomenon can be built. First and foremost, this study provides answers pertaining to the degree in which place-based narrative has been utilized by candidates in recent election cycles for the U.S. Senate. In doing so, this thesis provides empirical evidence that speaks to Parker’s observations that place-based imagery is an important aspect of representation across the Western United States. And, perhaps
more importantly, this thesis also answers the question of whether “demonstrating a connection to place (is) more important in certain places or (if) this place-based style of representation is widespread,” that Parker poses in his conclusion (Parker, 2014, p. 244). Further, in the absence of the time and other resources required for the type of experimental work most suitable for assessing the role of place-based imagery and discourse upon voter opinion and perception, this study also includes a rhetorical analysis of a advertisement from the 2014 election cycle that features a large amount of place-based imagery and discourse. The purpose of the rhetorical analysis is to provide a qualitative and more detailed perspective on what PBN entails in the context of a single advertisement, as well as the various effects that such an advertisement may have upon individual voter opinion.
II. Data and Methods

Research Questions, Independent Variables and Hypotheses

As stated above, in addition to establishing the frequency of place-based narrative in recent election cycles on a per state basis, this study also explores some of the structural and demographic variables that explain variations in place-based narrative. I argue that campaign advertisements are more likely to craft a narrative incorporating archetypal qualities and values of specific places and their associated populations if the campaign is operating in states that meet any one, or combination, of the following criteria: (1) high public land concentration; (2) a high overall percentage of the state’s population as rural; (3) a relatively high number of farms per capita; (4) competitive election environment. In order to test this, this study addresses campaign narratives, with special attention paid to the role of the identity of place. Specifically, research assistants examine and code the content of televised advertisements for U.S. Senate campaigns that have taken place during the past two election cycles (2012 & 2014) for discursive and symbolic elements related to archetypal place-based identities within those states. In the final analysis, I will combine the scores of the place-based elements into a scaled dependent variable, and, through multiple regression, test the degree to which changes in the score on the dependent variable is accounted for by various independent variables.

Pertaining to the conditions that may account for and predict the occurrences of PBN, there are several hypotheses which will be tested. First, (H1) it is expected that the data will exhibit a positive relationship between public land density and place-based campaign narratives. This is due to, among other things, public lands providing a common space wherein people can form a shared identity through common experiences. Moreover, in
his paper on press releases by U.S. Senators, Justin Grimmer found that senators from public lands rich Western states allocated considerably more attention to public land topics in their press releases than did senators from non-Western states (Grimmer, 2010). In the context of this study, Grimmer’s findings suggest that public land density may also predict the occurrence of PBN in political advertisements; as such, public land density is also included as a predictor variable in the regression model. Public land density for each state is derived from data compiled by the Natural Resource Council of Maine (Public Land Ownership by State, n.d.). This source lists the total amount of public land in each state, including local, state and federal lands. These three jurisdictional categories are then aggregated into a total public lands percentage (public land area / total state area) that is used as an independent variable.

Secondly, (H2) I hypothesize that there will be a positive relationship between higher-than-average rural state population growth and PBN. While I expect this to be true for non-rural states as well, I expect that the effect size will not be as large. This expectation is primarily based on research in social-psychology positing that rural inhabitants are often especially threatened by in-migration of 'outsiders' into their communities (Brennan & Cooper, 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that in rural states experiencing relatively high rates of population growth, candidates will be more likely to make place-based appeals to rural identity in order to capitalize on the unease of the rural constituency and secure their votes. Population growth is derived from U.S. Census data (2010).

My third hypothesis (H3), is that the data will exhibit a positive linear relationship between PBN and the number of farms per capita in the state that the ad appears in. As
with public land density, Grimmer’s study (2010) found that a high number of farms per capita is predictive of the attention that senators allocate to various issues. More specifically, Grimmer’s found that farms per capita is highly predictive of the amount of attention that senators allocate to agricultural issues. Including farms per capita as a predictor variable also makes sense due to prior empirical observation stemming from a pilot-test that I conducted on a small sub-set of advertisements from the 2012 campaign.² Moreover, in my own home state, Montana, I have noticed that many of the advertisements aired during congressional campaigns featuring PBN often include an agricultural component. I speculate that this is likely due to the saliency of agricultural-economic legacies in those states wherein agricultural production is a key driver of the economy. Such legacies likely play a part in shaping the identities and political culture of such states and, because of this, candidates may attempt to appeal to constituents by identifying with—implicitly or explicitly—agricultural production. States’ farms per capita are derived from relatively recent data compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture (2011).

A fourth and final hypothesis (H4) is that PBN is more likely in competitive elections. As demonstrated in previous scholarship, in competitive elections, candidate “image” and narrative can matter (Parker, 2014; Boulding, 1956; Campbell, et al., 1980). Therefore, I predict that a greater emphasis on narrative, including PBN, will be present in competitive elections; as campaigns try a broad range of strategies to appeal to voters. As is commonplace in political science research, I coded elections as being competitive if the winning candidate garnered less than 55% of the vote.

² For place-type frequencies from the pilot study, see the corresponding table located in Appendix B.
In addition to the hypotheses that will be tested above, there are several questions that are given attention in this study for which there are no theoretical bases for hypothesis testing. Such questions include discerning whether or not there is a significant difference in PBN usage between political parties; whether or not there is a significant difference in PBN usage between geographic regions of the U.S.; and, what type of effect PBN may have on voters. Answers to questions such as these are important in establishing a more complete knowledge of PBN as a phenomenon in political communication, and will also further bolster the foundation upon which further research on PBN can be built.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable in this study is the occurrence and level/degree of “place-based narrative” within U.S. Senatorial campaign advertisements during the 2012 and 2014 election cycles. Further, it is a ratio variable and was constructed by scaling together five other variables quantified during the content analysis stage. Confirmatory factor analysis, zero-order correlations and scale reliability tests were employed during this stage to ensure that the variable ‘holds together’ as a single measure.

Once the above listed tests indicated that it was appropriate to scale the five items into a single dependent variable, the “compute variable” function in SPSS was used to create the dependent variable. Further, a “summation” method was used that aggregated the five items into a single score. For the one interval item (number of seconds of place-based content in ad) used in creating the dependent variable, the number of seconds contributed to the score in a way directly equivalent to the second amount. For the other four items that were dichotomous-ordinal, one (1) additional “point” was added to the DV score if the various criteria the variables were measuring were present in that
particular individual case. So, for example, an advertisement featuring 27 seconds of place-based content that also meets the “yes” dichotomous criteria for the other four items would have an overall aggregated dependent variable score of 31 (27+1+1+1+1). Meanwhile, cases that featured no place-based content whatsoever would have a score of zero (0). Dependent variable scores in the data set ranged from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 64, while the mean score was 4.83 and the standard deviation 9.10. For some additional information regarding this process, specifically pertaining to the factor analysis portion, please see bottom of Appendix B.

Data

The data set analyzed in this study was constructed using available campaign advertisements from each of the campaigns in the 2012 and 2014 U.S. Senate elections. Advertisements were collected from YouTube, and, as the thesis is narrowly concerned with candidates’ narrative “construction of self”, only those advertisements officially endorsed and/or paid for by the candidate’s campaigns are included in the study. The phrase, “construction of self” refers to a campaign constructed ideal image of the candidate for dissemination to potential voters. The logic of the decision to only include such advertisements is that, because place-based narrative is here being explored as a potential candidate strategy for improving his or her electability, it is inappropriate to include ads from outside groups—irrespective of whether they incorporate place-based narrative or not—as candidates have little to no control over the content of such
advertisements. For each of elections examined, advertisements were coded for each of the major party candidates, as well as—when appropriate—Independents.\textsuperscript{3}

Both “positive” and “contrast” advertisements were coded by two research assistants unfamiliar with the details (e.g., hypotheses) of this study. Those advertisements that are purely “attack” ads were not coded. The reasoning for coding contrast ads, as compared to not coding attack ads, is that, while contrast ads may seek to discredit the candidate’s opponent(s), they still juxtapose those perceived bad traits or actions of the opponent with good ones of the candidate. So, in other words, by “contrasting” oneself with an opponent, the ad is still contributing to constructing one’s narrative self-image. Attack ads, on the other hand, are those ads that seek to only damage the image of the opposing candidate while lacking any explicit element of contrast. As such, because attack ads lack any \textit{explicit} material able to craft political candidate narrative (aside from the individual sign-off message indicating that the candidate is officially endorsing the ad), they were not included in the analysis. Positive or biographical ads were coded as their primary purpose—perhaps more so than any other ad types—is to define the image of a candidate's personal character. These categories proved to be easily distinguishable from one another for the coders, as can be seen by referencing the inter-coder reliability score for the “Ad Type” variable in Table 1, below.

\textit{Methods}

The primary methodology of this study is quantitative content analysis. All available campaign advertisements officially endorsed and released by the candidates from Senate elections in the 2012 and 2014 were systematically coded (for code sheet, see Appendix...\textsuperscript{3} The ads of independents who captured a considerable share of the vote, particularly those who outperformed major party candidates (e.g., Angus King in 2012), were coded—provided that they were available.
A). However, one potential limitation of this study is that the author cannot be certain that all of the political ads used during these elections were included in this study. A further limitation is that the author likewise does not account for the number of spots that each individual ad received. Moreover, it is not always clear which ads were televised vs. uploaded only to *YouTube*, and aired on other new media platforms. In order to attain the advertisements, official *YouTube* channels of the relevant candidates were searched for as a first step. Luckily, all of the candidates in this study still had active channels from which I compiled a list of available advertisements for later coding, however, there were several candidates whose advertisements had either been pulled from *YouTube*, or had never been uploaded in the first place. Additional keyword searches across *YouTube*'s extensive database were also undertaken in order to uncover additional advertisements, which yielded a few additional ads that were not present on the candidates’ official pages.

### Table 1. Note: A subset of 200 ads (16.8% of the total; N=1194), were sampled. One hundred (50%) were taken from each election cycle in the data set. The scores presented here are Krippendorff’s Alpha (KALPHA) scores, considered to be amongst the most conservative reliability tests for content analysis researchers. I calculated these scores in SPSS, utilizing Andrew F Hayes’ KALPHA SPSS macro.

<p>| Inter-coder Reliability of Relevant Advertisement Content |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Type</th>
<th>PBN Place Type</th>
<th>Place Type</th>
<th>Candidate in Place</th>
<th>PBN Time Category</th>
<th>PBN Time in Seconds</th>
<th>Narration</th>
<th>Place Discourse</th>
<th>Populism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Widely accepted content analysis protocol was followed. Most importantly, two undergraduate research assistants were responsible for coding the advertisements to ensure that bias could be eliminated to the greatest extent possible. The research assistants were not familiar with the project beyond the level necessary to complete their

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4 Candidates whose ads were not available tended to be those who had lost the election. This seemed to be especially true of candidates who had lost in particularly uncompetitive states.
tasks, and had no knowledge of the researcher hypotheses. Inter-coder reliability scores were calculated using Krippendorff’s Alpha (KALPHA). KALPHA is, “in essence…a measurement of the reliability of a variable” that accounts for “the combination of the clarity of the variable description and the categories, the information and background in the codebook and the instructions given during training” (De Swert, 2012, p. 5). Inter-coder reliability scores for each of the coded items met acceptable levels (with several far exceeding them), except for the “populism” variable (see Table 1). One possible reason for the populism variable having such a low KALPHA score is due to the nebulous nature of the term; meaning that there is little consensus over what populism is. Moreover, although I provided a more thorough and specific definition of populism during the training session that I held with the research assistants, the brief definition that I left on the code-sheet for their reference was likely overly broad. If this code-sheet were to be used in the future, a narrower definition of populism should replace the broad one that I used in this study. As populism is not an integral concept within the context of this study, I decided to cautiously retain the data collected on this variable, rather than discard it.

Following the ad collection and coding processes, the results were tabulated into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Next, zero-order correlations and multiple regression were ran on the data in order to determine whether or not hypothesized relationships between the variables exist and which, if any, of the hypothesized predictor variables are able to explain/predict the occurrence of place-based narrative in campaign ads. Finally, two-sample t-testing and simple one-way analysis of

5 While .80 is often considered the norm for “good” variable reliability, the minimum is considered to be .60, or by more conservative standards, .67. As noted on this page, save one, the reliability scores for all of my variables fall above the less conservative minimum. One variable, “Place Discourse,” exhibits a KALPHA score (.6439) that falls between the more liberal and conservative minimum. As this is exploratory research, I have elected to retain this variable. For more on this, see page 5 of De Swert (2012).
variance (ANOVA) was employed to discern whether or not, and to what degree, place-based narrative in political advertising varied between ads aired by different political parties, and within differing geographical regions (as designated by the U.S. Census).

Logic of the Analysis

There are a number of assumptions associated with each of the statistical techniques employed in this study. In multiple OLS regression, key assumptions made about the data, in no particular order, include: normal distribution of error, that the model is linear, constant error variance, and variable reliability. In ANOVA, there are four primary assumptions made regarding the data: 1. Independent random sampling features 2. Interval-ratio measurement of variables 3. Normal population distribution 4. Equal population variances.
III. Rhetorical Analysis

Owing to the exploratory nature of this study and its related purpose as to provide a (cursory) theoretical and empirical foundation for future research, it is beneficial to include some qualitative analysis in addition to the various statistical analyses to be presented later in this study. More specifically, a politolinguistic rhetorical analysis of *Alaska’s Son* (2014), an advertisement ran by 2014 Alaskan candidate for the U.S. Senate, Mark Begich, is presented here. This advertisement was chosen due to the large degree of PBN that it contains. The primary purpose of the analysis is to provide an example of what linguistic processes may be likely to occur in advertisements featuring PBN. The rhetorical analysis presented below is, necessarily, not as thorough as it ideally should be. In addition to lacking the proper depth of a full-blown politolinguistic rhetorical analysis, more than one case would be ideal. A complete qualitative analysis of PBN is beyond the scope of this master’s thesis; however, I have done my best to be as thorough as possible while bearing in mind the importance of concision for the purposes of this study.

*Discourse, Text, Genre and Rhetoric: A Brief Overview*

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is helpful to review the foundation from which it springs forth. The most fundamental concepts of this type of work are those of (1) discourse, (2) text, (3) genre, and (4) rhetoric. The first of these terms, discourse, is one that has witnessed an abundance of differing definitions and forms of operationalization. As Ruth Wodak observes, “discourse means anything from a historical monument, a *lieu de memoire*, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations, to language *per se*” (Wodak, 2008,
Due to such a vast array of meanings, discourse in any given study is highly contingent upon the context of said study (p. 6), and is held here to be the chief way of meaning-making.6

Text, meanwhile, is that which is being communicated in a particular discursive event. Rather than being confined, as we typically think of text in the lexicon of our daily lives, to various forms of print media, text in discourse studies is understood as being comprised of written, verbal, and visual aspects the meanings of which are shaped by the context in which they operate. As argued by Sanders and Sanders, texts are “constituted” by cohesion and coherence, which “language users establish by relating different information units in the text” (Sanders & Sanders, 2006, p. 599). Texts may achieve cohesion by a number of strategies, including incorporating lexical features that are repeated throughout (recurrence); directing attention to information that temporally preceded the current text—such as by referring to an idea that has been previously introduced—(anaphora), or, looking the other direction, by reference and/or allusion to what is to come next (cataphora); by drawing on the shared knowledge and experience of those sharing the communicative event (ellipsis); or, by drawing on relations between events and different contexts (e.g. conjunctions) (Wodak, 2008, p. 8).

Texts achieve coherence (i.e. make sense) in relation to the knowledge of the context in which it is produced and disseminated. Central to this is that all texts are intertextual, meaning that each text is related to every other text by varying degree. Another important aspect of coherence of texts is to consider texts as “dialogic,” meaning that all texts address and audience (Bahktin, 1982). Directly related to the dialogicality of texts are

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6 As discussed in the theoretical portion of this text, narrative is also a primary form of semiosis. I hold that narrative is a particular, albeit broad, form of discourse.
their intentionality (e.g., the purpose of the producer) and acceptability (e.g., the ability of the receiver to understand the text in some relevant fashion). The situationality of a text is a final element that is of utmost importance to the coherence of texts. Situationality is essentially the speech context out of which the text emerges, and without it, would not make sense (Wodak, 2008, p. 9).

Breaking down the contents of a text typically yields three constituent parts. The first of these is, of course, the direct language—including visual and symbolic cues—that speak to the subject of the particular communicative event at hand. The second element is the intertextual relationship (as mentioned above) that the text shares with others. This, again, helps to establish the text in relation to those that already exist, and lends to coherence and, possibly, semiosis. Third, moving from the micro level occupied by the first two elements to that of the macro level, the broad political and historical contexts in which the text is situated is also formative of its content and degree of coherence.7

The third major linguistic element to be considered is genre. Essentially, genre is expected language pertaining to a context, event or scenario. In other words, the type and form of communication (for instance, the degree of formality in one's speech) that comes to be accepted and acknowledged as being appropriate and associated with a given event can be said to be its genre. For example, consider the policy writing process; if one were to submit a policy proposal written in everyday or lay language to a legislative body, then that person would hardly be taken seriously. This lack of serious consideration on behalf of the legislative body to which the laymen’s policy was proposed would likely be rooted in the perception that the policy proposal's casual language violates the genre (i.e.,

7 These elements are outlined in the article that I have cited by Ruth Wodak (2008) on p. 13. I have adapted and expanded upon them here.
policy/legalistic language) associated with the policy making process. Of course, policy writing is an overtly formalized institutional process, and genre is not delimited to such processes. Indeed, there are infinite genres that are a part of our typical, everyday social processes. In essence, as Norman Fairclough observes, genre “is a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity” (Fairclough, 1995).

The final major linguistic concept under examination, rhetoric, is a major form of communication and one that has been given extensive attention in political science. Indeed, if text is discourse in a specific context, rhetoric is a specific type or form of text. Rhetoric, simply put, “is the science and art of persuasive language use,” and is typically used in the vein of pathos, ethos, and/or logos (Reisigl, 2008, pp. 96-97). Logos oriented rhetoric involves the act of trying to persuade others via rational and evidence based argumentation. Ethos and pathos related rhetoric, on the other hand, tend to be more emotionally driven (as opposed to rational), with the end goal to incite intense and often 'negative' emotions such as anger (pathos), or to engender a sense of comfort and degree of pleasantness (ethos). In light of the above information, the analysis of political rhetoric can be said to involve, “analyzing the employment and effects of linguistic (including nonverbal) and other semiotic means of persuasion in rhetorical terms” in a political context (p. 97).8

8 Emphasis is Reisigl’s. Additionally, I should note here that Reisigl limits political rhetoric to that which is delivered by “professional politicians,” however, I feel that this is criteria is too narrow, given that political rhetoric is commonplace throughout social interaction, including those between ‘ordinary’ citizens. However, in the context of this study, the political rhetoric under examination is, clearly, that of professional politicians.

Application to Place-based Narrative

When one begins to apply these concepts to PBN, a greater understanding, not only of what PBN is, but of what effects it may have on voter opinion is achieved. For instance,
each advertisement—irrespective of whether or not it features PBN—is a particular text. Like other types of text, political ads are intertextual; the degree to which is, of course, variable. Theoretically speaking, ads may even use PBN as the intertextual conduit; perhaps explicitly contrasting one candidate's personal narrative of place to another candidate who has not established such a narrative in his/her advertisements (nor elsewhere). Speaking to the cohesion of political advertisements as texts, PBN can be immensely helpful in this regard. More specifically, place-based imagery and verbiage is especially amenable to ellipsis, that is, drawing on shared experience and understanding through reference to place. Similarly, ads featuring PBN are also likely to be coherent to constituents via shared place-based experience and knowledge.

Multiple rhetorical strategies may also be pursued through a place-based lens. Ads that contrast the preferred candidate's place-based connections to his or her constituency with an opponent framed as a “career politician,” “outsider” (or, DC insider as it were who does not have place-based connections as “one of us”9) pursue a pathos oriented goal. More common, however, are ads featuring PBN that use ethos driven appeals at conciliare; seeking to establish trust and preference through an image that is relatable (Boulding, 1956). Ads featuring PBN may also utilize logos rhetoric. As an example, should a candidate argue that he or she would be a more ideal representative on the basis that he or she is more relatable as a result of a shared place-based connection, then this could be thought of as an attempt to persuade voters via rational argumentation—though, arguably of a populist stripe; see section on populism below.

Genre is perhaps the most interesting linguistic concept to apply to PBN. As stated above, genre is the expected particular type of language associated with a particular

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9 See Fenno's, Homestyles (1978).
event. During political campaigns (the event) political advertising is an expected type of communication (genre). One could reasonably speculate, however, that most people would tend to expect candidates appearing in political advertisements (particularly when running for as high an office at the U.S. Senate) to be rather formal and stately. Indeed, recalling Leland's work, there is some prior research suggesting that appearing (e.g., style of dress and/or setting, amongst other things) like a governor (or, ostensibly, a senator) can be key to electoral success (Leland, 1991, p. 75). Candidates who pursue PBN, however, tend to not do what is expected—including dressing down *ala* Senator Tester—thus disrupting the genre. Indeed, if PBN is an effective strategy under any conditions, it may very well be due, in part, to the fact that it 'cuts against the grain' so much as to be memorable, relatable and, thus, likeable to voters. As with the hypothetical *logos* scenario above, there seems to be an element of populism at play here, which will be expanded upon below.

*Case Study: Analysis of an Alaskan Ad*

Now that I have outlined briefly some of the considerations in political rhetorical analysis, and several other linguistic constructs, as well as having applied them generally to PBN, a more detailed analysis of an advertisement will now be conducted. The particular advertisement under analysis here is *Alaska's Son*; a campaign ad released in the early stages of Mark Begich's failed 2014 re-election bid for U.S. Senate. This particular ad is just one of several ads featuring PBN that Begich ran during the 2014 election. Moreover, a brief look at his ads during his successful 2008 election shows that PBN was a major part of his advertising strategy then too. I have chosen to analyze this ad for two primary reasons: (1) it is a particularly good example of an advertisement
featuring an abundance of PBN; (2) it is embedded within a state, Alaska, that produces relatively little agriculturally, both absolutely and on a per capita basis, yet ranks high on and satisfies all of the other independent variables used in the quantitative analysis (highly competitive election; high public-land density; rural state with respectable rural population growth).

*Alaska’s Son* is a sixty second advertisement, and so represents the longer of the two traditional ad lengths permitted for television spots (the other being thirty seconds). As sixty second advertisements tend to be more expensive, from production to the purchase of the television spot itself, that the Begich campaign dedicated a lengthy biographical ad to establishing a narrative so firmly rooted to place is indicative that the campaign likely figured this Alaskan identity to matter in the election. A major theme throughout the ad, narrated by Begich's wife, Deborah, is Begich’s family history in Alaska. This theme is driven home both visually and verbally. The ad quickly (at around the seven second mark) establishes the saliency of family life, as a scene featuring Mark and Deborah helping one another in the kitchen while their son beckons them from across the room, comes into focus. As the ad transitions into the next shot, one that features all three happy family members sitting at the dinner table, with snowy foliage visible outside the window behind them, Nancy narrates, “...and, while we love having Mark at home, we know we share him with every Alaskan; like his father before him.” The ad then, at about the fourteen second mark, transitions to some old footage of Mark’s father, the late Congressman Nick Begich, boarding and flying about in the infamous “bush planes” commonly associated with Alaska. Seconds later, the viewer discovers that the elder Begich, along with then House Majority Leader Hale Boggs and others, was killed in a
plane crash while on route to Juneau from Anchorage on October 16, 1972. “We’ve lost too many Alaskans this way,” Nancy remarks, and, as a flurry of shots portraying Mark boarding a bush plane, departing a small airport, and landing in what appears to be a remote Alaskan village flash across the screen, she continues, “but Mark is clearly his father’s son, and there is nowhere he won’t go to listen and stand-up for Alaskans.”

This emotionally charged twenty seconds of political advertising serves to tie Begich to Alaska at the most intimate of levels. More specifically, by presenting Begich’s personal narrative as an Alaskan boy who lost his father to a tragic fate that far “too many (other) Alaskans” have also met, the ad successfully wed Begich to place through profound hardship and difficulty that other Alaskans will be able to understand and identify with. Moreover, that Begich did not let his father’s passing defeat him, and is now himself (or at least before his electoral loss in November, 2014) flying bush planes to the remotest stretches of Alaska to visit constituents only serves to further cement his connection to place and that he is, as his campaign slogan suggested, “true Alaska.”

This form of place-based identity often associated with “rugged individualism” has been observed in other Western states, including Montana (Parker, 2015; Parker, 2014, p. 14; Stegner, 1997; Munis, 2015). In terms of the linguistic concepts discussed above, the Begich campaign’s decision to portray his narrative in this light is an attempt to win over (conciliare) the hearts—and votes—of constituents by appealing to a common identity via place (ethos).

Conciliatory efforts via ethos based means are also present in other facets of the ad. On the economic front, for example, Begich is portrayed as a senator who is not afraid to stand up for Alaska’s historic economic mainstay, resource extraction, by, amongst other

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10 Mark Begich’s campaign slogan for his failed 2014 U.S. Senate re-election bid was, “True Alaska.”
things, “forc(ing) Washington to open up the Arctic Ocean to oil drilling.” This was likely a wise choice on behalf of his campaign, given the political context in 2014, as Begich needed to show that despite being a Democrat running during a midterm election while the White House is occupied by a very unpopular president of his own party, he understood what it means to be an Alaskan, and that he would fight for her interests—even if that meant going against the mainstream policy preferences of his party on issues like the environment and industry. Again, though this was largely a symbolic gesture, it was a potentially powerful one and served to connect him to Alaska the place and her people.

Finally, the symbolic and archetypal imagery abundant within this advertisement is worth underscoring here. In a remarkably synergetic wedding of narration and visual, the ad opens with a panning shot of a breathtakingly beautiful mountainous shoreline and the words, “in Alaska…” This combination immediately evokes a sense of Alaska a distinct and wild place, unlike any other in the United States; a fact that, presumably, most Alaskans are cognizant of and take pride in. Likewise, many of the shots mentioned above involving air travel are similarly stunning and symbolic of the Alaskan wilderness. Finally, about three fourths of the way through the ad, Begich is depicted walking with another man down a dark beach. The weather is overcast, the beach a far cry from the white sands of southern California, yet wholly Alaskan. The next shot shows Begich and the other man, now accompanied by whom are presumably friends or family, huddled around a small fire burning on the rugged and forested coastline. This subtle, yet powerful portrayal of a form of passive recreation is something that, ostensibly, most Alaskans have participated in and enjoy. By referencing a shared place-based experience,
such as the simple recreational enjoyment that a beachside bonfire provides, candidates may be able to appeal to some of the latent identity traits of their constituents and thereby improve perception of themselves held by voters.

A Note on PBN and Populism

On its face, it may seem to many that PBN is, in many respects, akin to a sort of generic populism. Indeed, to some it may even appear to be a particular type of populism. First, in order to determine whether or not place-based narrative approximates populism, one must first define populism. Though the definition and explanation of key terms and concepts is always important when conducting research, it is particularly so when dealing with terms such as populism, for which there is no definition approaching unanimous agreement amongst social scientists. The definition of populism that I will be using hinges on populism as a representational style and mobilization strategy (Arditi, 2005). As Reisigl notes, the “core of all populism is a generalized claim of representation…often discursively realized by the linguistic reference to the imagined community of ‘the people’.” References to the people as a rhetorical trope/synecdoche typically fall into three types; (1) the people as nation; (2) the people as socio-economic class; (3) the people as political sovereign (Reisigl, 2008, p. 103). Lastly, because populist appeal tends to pander to the supposed interests of the “common” or “ordinary” man versus those of more particular and powerful sub-groups (especially economic, social and political elites), it can be said to take a bottom-up, or ‘worms-eye’ perspective of politics.
In light of the definition in the preceding paragraph, it is reasonable to conclude that PBN is, in the abstract, indeed a form of populism. Luckily, in the developing stages of this thesis project, I included an item on the code sheet pertaining to populism. As with all of other criteria coded for during the content analysis portion of this project, my research assistants were given instruction on what populism is in the context of this study; essentially mirroring that provided here. As can be seen in Figure 1, ads featuring PBN contained populist content 14% more often than ads not featuring PBN. This suggests that PBN ads are more likely to include overt populist appeals than ads that do not feature PBN. Moreover, it should be noted here that bivariate correlation statistics indicate that there is a weak positive relationship between populism and the occurrence of

\[\text{Note: 51% of PBN ads } \sim 167 \text{ (N=329); 37% of non-PBN ads } \sim 230 \text{ (N=630)}\]

\[\text{Figure 1. Populism in PBN vs. Non-PBN Ads}\
\begin{align*}
\text{Expressed as a % of the Category Total} \\
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\hline
 & \text{PBN Ads} & \text{Non-PBN Ads} \\
\hline
51 & 37 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{11 Many thanks to Dr. Rob Saldin for convincing me to include and, in later conversations, retain an item on populism in the content coding stage.}\]
PBN. As discussed in the methods section of this study, however, the numbers discussed in this paragraph (including, Figure 1) should not be taken as definitive, as there was a relatively low inter-coder reliability score for this variable (KALPHA = .4585).\textsuperscript{12}

It is also worth noting that not all forms of populism are created equal, and that there is often considerable variability in the tone and explicit saliency of populist rhetoric. For instance, while most populist rhetoric is \textit{pathos} oriented, seeking to stir up emotions and potential animosity (Reisigl, 2008, p. 103), PBN featuring explicitly populist rhetoric tends to not do this, and is instead more \textit{ethos} oriented. There are exceptions, however, such as, for example, several of Republican U.S. Senator Deborah Fischer’s 2012 advertisements that derided Democratic candidate Bob Kerrey for an alleged estrangement from Nebraska (as a place) due to several years spent living in New York City.\textsuperscript{13}

Lastly, it is necessary to mention that not all advertisements featuring PBN, particularly those exclusively featuring symbolic place-based imagery sans place-based discourse, are populist in any explicit sense. Consider, for example, the Begich ad analyzed above. While said ad is a very good example of nuanced PBN, it is not explicitly populist in the sense that Begich never makes a concerted effort to pass himself off \textit{as} one of the common people. While the ad does take pains to make him appear relatable, Begich never makes the populist leap, which may have been a calculated decision, owing that he himself the son of a former congressman.

\textsuperscript{12} See Table 1, on page 20.
\textsuperscript{13} Regrettably, since the time that the advertisements were coded, nearly all of Senator Fischer’s ads have been pulled from \textit{YouTube}. 

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IV. Quantitative Analyses

Descriptive Statistics of the Content Analysis

Moving on to quantitative analyses, there are two forms of statistics that will be used in order to further illustrate the scope of PBN in the 2012 and 2014 U.S. Senate elections; descriptive and inferential. First, various descriptive statistics will be presented and discussed in order to summarize the occurrence of PBN in these elections, while providing further context for the inferential analyses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>498</td>
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<td>41.7</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, over one thousand ads aired during the 2012 and 2014 cycles were coded. Further, considerably more ads (nearly 17%, or 198 additional ads) from the 2014 cycle were available. The disparity between the number of ads available is likely due in large part to the deletion of a substantial number of ads from the YouTube servers during the roughly two year period that has passed since the conclusion of the 2012 election cycle. Meanwhile, since the 2014 advertisements were coded within the first three months of the election’s conclusion, I am quite confident that I was able to attain nearly all-available ads from the cycle. If this difference in the number of ads available can be partially explained by temporal factors, it serves to underscore the
importance of content coding advertisements as closely to the time that they are created and made available as possible.

Of the 1,194 coded ads aired over both cycles, 234 were “attack” ads (See Table 3, below). As discussed above in the methods portion of this study, attack ads were not coded for PBN content, as they do not directly contribute to candidates’ personal narrative construction. These attack ads were later extracted from the data set, leaving only the “contrast” and “bio” ads (N=960) for further analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attack</td>
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<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.

Speaking directly to PBN, of the ads left in the analysis after the attack ads had been extracted, 329 (33.4%) contained explicit place-based imagery, discourse or both. This is a remarkable figure, especially when considering the paucity of attention that these elements have received in prior research on political advertising. As can be seen in Table 4 (located on page 37), the types of places featured in these ads were quite varied; each being reasonably well represented. Two particular place types, “agriculture” and “wild lands”, were featured considerably more than the others. Combined, these categories account for some 77.7% of PBN ads. While there were no formal a priori hypotheses developed pertaining to frequency of various place types, these results were essentially in line with what I had expected, based upon the pilot project. As the attentive reader has likely noticed, two of my independent variables, farms per capita and public-land density
are, at least on an intuitive level, related to these the “agriculture” and “wild lands” place types. Inferential analyses, particularly the multiple regression component, will speak more directly to the relationship between these variables and PBN in political advertisements, of which agriculture and wild lands are featured so prominently.

*Inferential Statistics*

Data analyses proceeded in several steps. First, the researcher tested whether or not the hypothesized relationships exist between place-based narrative in political ads and the independent/predictor variables. Zero-order correlations were used to determine these relationships. Secondly, the researcher explored how well the predictor variables were able to predict the occurrence and scores of place-based narrative in political advertising. Ordinary least squares multiple regression was the statistical method employed during this stage of the analysis. Next, the prevalence of place-based narrative within each region of the U.S. was analyzed. A simple one-way ANOVA model was used during this stage. Lastly, simple one-way ANOVA was again utilized in order to assess the variation of PBN scores between political parties (Republican, Democrat, and, independent). All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software.

*Zero-Order Correlations*

Table 5 shows the zero-order correlations between each of predictor variables (public-land density, rural population growth, farms per capita, and election competitiveness) and the scaled PBN dependent variable. As hypothesized, zero-order correlations demonstrate that positive associations exist between PBN and public-land density ($r=.232^{**}$); farms per capita ($r=.188^{**}$); rural population growth ($r=.065^{*}$); and election competitiveness ($r=.047$). Further, three of the four associations meet widely
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture*</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag. &amp; Wild Lands</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag. &amp; Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag. &amp; Rural Communities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag. &amp; Urban Landmarks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Total</td>
<td>112**</td>
<td>34.0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Lands*</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Lands &amp; Agriculture</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Lands &amp; Outdoor Rec.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Lands &amp; Rural Community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Lands &amp; Urban Landmarks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Lands Total</td>
<td>144**</td>
<td>43.7**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Recreation*</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Rec. &amp; Agriculture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Rec. &amp; Wild Lands</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Rec. &amp; Rural Community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Rec. &amp; Urban Landmarks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Recreation Total</td>
<td>63**</td>
<td>19.1**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Communities*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural &amp; Agriculture</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural &amp; Wild Lands</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural &amp; Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural &amp; Urban Landmarks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Communities Total</td>
<td>52**</td>
<td>15.8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Landmarks</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban &amp; Agriculture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban &amp; Wild Lands</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban &amp; Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban &amp; Rural Communities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Landmarks Total</td>
<td>52**</td>
<td>10.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or More Place Types</td>
<td>12**</td>
<td>1.0**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Total Ads featuring PBN N=329. The number of ads (and corresponding percentage) featuring each individual place type exclusively, and in combination with others, are displayed. * denotes that this place type was the exclusive place type used in a particular advertisement. ** denotes category total figure for that place-type.
accepted standards of statistical significance. The p-value for the variable that does not meet these standards, election competitiveness (p=.071), is just under the requirements and can be said to meet the level of ‘practical significance’ (i.e., the p value is close to the traditional standard of significance). Despite exhibiting relationships in the directions hypothesized, none of these correlation coefficients are particularly strong, suggesting that the relationships between the each variable and PBN is relatively weak. As no further conclusions can be drawn about these relationships based on the correlations coefficients alone, further statistical testing was desired. In order to develop a further understanding of the relationship between these four variables and place-based narrative, a multiple regression was conducted on the data.

Multiple Regression

A standard OLS multiple regression was performed between the occurrence and degree of place-based narrative in political advertisements as the dependent variable and public-land density, farms per capita, rural population growth, and election competitiveness as independent variables. By illuminating the degree to which each of the predictor variables contributes unique variance to the dependent variable (PBN), a better understanding of the conditions under which PBN occurs will be ascertained. This analysis was performed using SPSS.

Various diagnostic procedures were ran in order to evaluate the assumptions of multiple OLS regression. With the use of a p < .001 criterion for Mahalanobis distance, three outliers among the cases were found. As the Mahalanobis statistic for these three variables (82.195) were much higher than the Chi Square critical value (18.467), these

---

14 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1 tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1 tailed).
variables were removed from the dataset.\textsuperscript{15} Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) tests produced scores that were the acceptable range, indicating that collinearity is not a concern. Likewise, Durbin-Watson testing indicated that there autocorrelation is not a concern.

Table 5 displays the zero-order correlations between variables, the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), the intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β), the semi-partial correlations (sr\textsuperscript{2}), and the adjusted coefficient of determination (R\textsuperscript{2}). The results displayed in the regression model output allow the researcher to reject the null claim that the coefficient of determination is not significantly different from zero, F (2,364) = 32.25, P < .001. Ninety-five percent (95\%) confidence limits were calculated for the two regression coefficients that differed significantly from zero. For farms per capita, the confidence limits were 154.809 to 257.656, while those for public-land density were .098 to .159.

Again, only two of the independent variables significantly contributed to prediction of the occurrence and degree of place-based narrative in political ads aired during the 2012 and 2014 elections. The sr\textsuperscript{2} for public lands density is .254, and the sr\textsuperscript{2} for farms per capita is .239. Combined (0.239\textsuperscript{2} + 0.254\textsuperscript{2}), these two variables account for 0.635 (6.3\%) of the variation in the R\textsuperscript{2} score. In combination with the two other independent variables, election competitiveness and rural population growth, the whole model contributes an additional 5.3\% of the variation. Overall, scores on these four independent variables account for 11.6\% of the variation in scores on the dependent variable.

\textsuperscript{15} Running the regression model without these three cases improved the overall R\textsuperscript{2} slightly, from .104 to .116
### The Occurrence Degree of PBN in Political Ads related to structural factors (N = 957).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Rural Population Growth</th>
<th>Farms Per Capita</th>
<th>Election Competitiveness</th>
<th>Public Land Density</th>
<th>PBN</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>sr²</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.232**</td>
<td>.322**</td>
<td>.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Comp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.138**</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>-.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms per Capita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>-.250**</td>
<td>.188**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Pop. Growth</td>
<td>.525*</td>
<td>-.331*</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td>.065*</td>
<td></td>
<td>.254</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>18.73</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>22.78</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R² =  .116**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. *p < .05; **p < .01

These results suggest that, while farms per capita and public-land density do significantly account for variation in PBN scores, the extent to which they do so is rather limited. Meanwhile, election competitiveness and rural population growth do not significantly predict PBN. In addition to not having included the optimal independent variables, the low model R² score may also suggest that predicting PBN is highly complex, even when compared to predicting other geographically related political phenomenon. For instance, whereas Grimmer’s (2010, pp. 22-23) “expressed agenda model” on the “geographic clustering of issues” in senators’ agendas was “able to retrieve geographic and interest-based clustering in expressed agendas” that confirm “an intuitive property of explanations well established in the qualitative literature on Congressional communication,” independent variables related to the PBN in a logically
similar fashion achieved only modest predictive success. In light of these results, it is clear that variables better able to account for the variation and degree of PBN in political advertising need to be identified. Additionally, future studies bringing a higher degree of methodological sophistication to bear on this problem may also achieve better results.

Comparison of Means (two-sample t-test and ANOVA)

In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of PBN, several means based comparisons were conducted on the data. More specifically, these tests seek to discern whether or not there is a significant partisan, geographic, and/or temporal difference in PBN usage on average. No specific a priori researcher hypotheses were developed for these tests, and, as such, only tests of the null hypotheses (e.g., that there is no significant difference in PBN scores on average between groups) will be tested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Frequencies by Political Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.

First, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare PBN scores in partisan conditions, Republican and Democrat. The decision to conduct a t-test focusing on the two major parties, to the exclusion of independents, was made due to the particular

---

16 For those interested, it is perhaps worth mentioning that statistical analyses (bivariate correlations and simple bivariate linear regression) were conducted controlling for “place type” in order to test the relationships between specific independent variables (e.g., farms per capita) and their (logically) corresponding place type (e.g., agriculture). The results were statistically insignificant, and the effect sizes small (for example, R² = .03).
sensitivity of ANOVA to large disparity among groups in the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p. 46). As can be witnessed by partisan ad frequencies presented in Table 6, the number of ads aired by independent candidates comprise a mere 3% (N = 32) of the total dataset (N = 957), thus validating the decision to exclude independent ads from means comparison analysis in order to not compromise the generizability of the results.17 Returning to the t-test comparing PBN scores in partisan conditions, there was not a significant difference in the scores for Republicans (μ = 4.80, σ = 8.49) and Democrats (μ = 4.77, σ = 9.46); t(923) = .048, p=.962. Therefore, we are not able to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference in mean PBN scores between Republicans and Democrats. These findings are interesting as they suggest that PBN is a potential strategy that both parties employ to a similar degree on average.

Next, a second independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare PBN scores in the 2012 election cycle versus the 2014 election cycle. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in PBN scores for the 2012 (μ = 3.55, σ = 6.93) and 2014 (μ = 5.76, σ = 10.32) election cycles; t (947.513) = -3.958, p = 0.000. In other words, official, candidate endorsed campaign ads aired during the 2014 election cycle scored higher in PBN on average than did those aired during the 2012 election cycle. Though one cannot be certain, a possible explanation for this may be due to candidates’ focuses being more local, constituency, and perhaps even place-based (versus nationally focused) during midterm elections (such as the 2014 cycle), while the opposite may be true during years

17 For those interested, the mean PBN score for ads aired by independents (n = 32) in the 2012 and 2014 election cycles was, 6.00 (σ = 12.95), which is higher than the means of the much larger Dem. and GOP samples.
corresponding with presidential elections, when campaign platforms and salient issues may tend to be more nationalized.\(^{18}\)

Lastly, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect geographical regions on the occurrence and degree of PBN in political advertisements. Geographic regions as designated by the U.S. Census were used. Results of the Levene’s test of equality of error variances indicated that there was a significant effect of geographical region on PBN scores at the \(p < .001\) level for the four conditions \([F(3, 953) = 47.869, p = .000]\). Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated the mean PBN score for Western U.S. \((\mu = 8.68, \sigma = 11.88)\) was significantly larger than all three of the other regions in the analysis. Meanwhile, the mean PBN score for the Midwestern U.S. \((\mu = 5.00, \sigma = 9.47)\), was found to be significantly larger than that of the Northeastern U.S. \((\mu = 1.83, \sigma = 4.56)\) in addition to being significantly smaller than that of the Western U.S. However, the Midwestern U.S. did not significantly differ from the Southern U.S. \((\mu = 3.36, \sigma = 6.80)\). Lastly, mean PBN scores of the Northeastern U.S. were significantly smaller than those of every region save the Southern U.S. These results are presented in Table 7.

Results of the one-way ANOVA test suggest that there are significant regional differences regarding the use of place in political advertising. Moreover, as Parker speculated, it does appear that place-based appeals are more prominent in the Western U.S. Perhaps more importantly, however, these results also speak directly to one of Parker’s questions posed in the conclusion of his book, namely, that of whether “demonstrating a connection to place (is) more important in certain places or more

\(^{18}\) Again, however, one must be careful not to draw any conclusions in this regard due to: 1. only two election cycles being covered in this study; 2. the possibility that there could be substantial data missing from the 2012 cycle that would have some effect on the results of the two-sample t-test.
widespread?” To answer this question, one merely needs to look at the data. As the results presented above clearly show, place-based appeals are not exclusive to the West and, indeed, are to be found in each of the country’s four regions. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this phenomenon is, in fact, widespread. Furthermore, these findings underscore the necessity for further research on the role of place in political representation, as the existing literature on this geographically widespread phenomenon is underdeveloped. This circumstance is nontrivial, given the possibility that PBN could play a role shaping election outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) U.S. Census Geographic Region</th>
<th>(J) U.S. Census Geographic Region</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western U.S.</td>
<td>midwest</td>
<td>3.6770*</td>
<td>.77741</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>northeast</td>
<td>6.8498*</td>
<td>.84048</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>south</td>
<td>5.3241*</td>
<td>.79932</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest U.S.</td>
<td>west</td>
<td>-3.6770*</td>
<td>.77741</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>northeast</td>
<td>3.1728*</td>
<td>.81480</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>south</td>
<td>1.6471</td>
<td>.77228</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern U.S.</td>
<td>west</td>
<td>-6.8498*</td>
<td>.84048</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>midwest</td>
<td>-3.1728*</td>
<td>.81480</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>south</td>
<td>-1.5257</td>
<td>.83573</td>
<td>.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern U.S.</td>
<td>west</td>
<td>-5.3241*</td>
<td>.79932</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>midwest</td>
<td>-1.6471</td>
<td>.77228</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>northeast</td>
<td>1.5257</td>
<td>.83573</td>
<td>.409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Multiple Comparisons of Mean PBN Scores between U.S. Regions
V. Conclusion

Summary and Implications

Place-based narrative, or appeals utilizing symbolic imagery and narration in order to link candidates to archetypal and symbolically charged landscapes and other sites within their constituencies, is a phenomenon that has been severely understudied. As this thesis has shown, PBN was very widespread in the 2012 and 2014 U.S. Senate election cycles. While PBN was, on average, more commonplace in Western states, the degree to which this style of political ad was present in all other regions of the U.S. is strongly suggestive that it is a phenomenon that transcends any singular regional focus, and, rather, is one that is of importance to the field of American politics more generally. Relating to the widespread nature of PBN, the task of discovering predictor variables able to account for its occurrence may prove particularly difficult. As the regression analysis in this study shows, while environmental factors such as farms per capita and public-land density are able to modestly predict PBN, it is likely that there are considerably more important factors that have yet to be determined. Overall, this study has been successful in its goal of fostering a preliminary understanding of place-based narrative as a specific form of political communication.

The implications of PBN as a wide-spread, yet (place) specific, means of appealing to voters are potentially far reaching, particularly if we accept Parker's conclusion that campaigns and their messages matter, and that “likeability can trump ideological or partisan kinship” (2014, p. 242). As Parker effectively demonstrates, this was likely the case in Montana in 2012. Speaking to this, among the most memorable lines in the book comes about midway through when, in findings of a series of focus group interviews,
Parker relates that, “even conservative Republicans unlikely to vote for Tester begrudgingly gave him marks for looking 'like a farmer' and the fact that he was from a rural community” (2014, p. 154). If place-based appeals are able to coax committed partisans into admitting that an opposing candidate is likeable, then, ostensibly, the effect that such appeals have on independents and those with weak partisan attachments may be significantly stronger. Indeed, in addition to lending to the capturing of a larger proportion of the independent vote than what would have been achieved otherwise, place-based appeals may also influence partisan defection, that is, the persuasion of voters typically identifying with one party (presumably weakly) to vote for the opposing party candidate. These effects could, in some cases, potentially prove to be the difference in the outcomes of highly competitive elections.19

As Parker also notes briefly, place-based connection and appeal may become increasingly important in the near future as threatened local identities seek to stay relevant in a continually globalizing and interconnected world (p. 243). Indeed, by my interpretation, this may explain, in part, why PBN scores are significantly higher in the West relative to others regions of U.S. Specifically, as the West has long been considered to be highly individualistic and provincial in the sense that local identity and issues are highly salient, the effects of globalism infringing upon Western identity may be further developed. In other words, globalization and Western individualism may be creating an interaction effect of significantly higher PBN. A further speculation is that globalization, in concurrence with heightened egoism caused in part by social networking (e.g., the so-

called “me”, or, “like” generations\textsuperscript{20}) across the U.S. may indirectly lead to increased place-based appeals issued by candidates seeking to capitalize on a potential aspect that contributes to making an increasingly egotistical public feel unique: the places in which they live, work, play, and Instagram about. Though these are only speculations as to the possible link between globalization and connections to place, future research should be conducted in order to illuminate what connection there might be (if any) in actuality.

These highly speculative ideas aside, there is more concrete evidence suggesting that place-based appeals could play a larger role in future congressional campaigns, particularly those of the Democratic Party candidates in the short-term. This is due to U.S. Senator Jon Tester (D-Montana) having recently been appointed chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. As highlighted in a recent post by David Parker appearing on the Washington Post’s, “Monkey Cage Blog,” appointing Tester to chair the committee is a reasonable choice given recent voting trends in the U.S., namely those of increasingly poor performance for Democrats in rural areas, particularly amongst white men. Due in part to Tester’s understanding of “homestyle,” Parker predicts that “he’ll recruit Senate candidates who fit the places they come from rather than imposing ideological litmus tests” (Parker, "Why it makes sense for Jon Tester to lead the DSCC", 2014). Returning to implications, if place-based appeals are on the rise—and irrespective of the reasons for why this may be—then their impact of American politics will likely increase as well.

\textsuperscript{20} See, for example, on the millennial generation: Stein, Joel, “Millennials: The Me, Me, Me Generation,” Time Magazine, May 20, 2013; “Generation Like,” PBS Frontline, February 18, 2014;
Future Directions

In addition to the suggestions for future research relating to the implications of this study highlighted above, there are several other avenues for potential research pertaining to the role of place in politics. First and foremost, the larger *so what?* question pertaining to PBN should be answered; that is, what effect does PBN have on voter behavior and perception of candidates? This research question is particularly well suited to experimental design. Additionally, PBN should also be studied in comparative contexts; in a broad array of American elections aside from senatorial ones; and in advertisements issued by outside groups and special interests groups not officially affiliated with any candidate. Doing so will afford a more generalizable knowledge of PBN, while simultaneously contributing to our knowledge of how PBN functions in specific contexts.

Outside of the more obvious areas for potential research pertaining to place in the American and comparative subfields of political science, there are also opportunities to conduct research pertaining to place within the international relations, political theory, and policy subfields as well. In international relations, for instance, a constructivist lens applied to the role of place in constructing identity is one potential area yet to be thoroughly explored. A study such as this could, for example, build upon current liberal and neoliberal institutionalist work centering on the potential for transboundary ecosystem management (e.g. international “peace parks”) to promote peaceful relations between states. In the policy and administration fields, studies endeavoring further research specifically focusing on place as a conduit for collaborative, cross-jurisdictional governance, such that embodied by the Blackfoot Challenge in Southwest Montana, may

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be particularly fruitful. In political theory, meanwhile, exploration of how place may fit into participatory and collaborative democratic theory is one potential avenue of inquiry. Far from being an exhaustive list, the above are merely suggestions as to how the concept of place may be applied to a broad portion of the political science discipline.

Lastly, the limitations mentioned throughout this study should be addressed (if possible and deemed worthwhile); efforts should be made to further discern variables that are predictive of PBN; and, ads for future elections should continue to be coded in order to allow the possibility of tracking PBN levels in a time series analysis, which would, among other things, enable us to answer questions such as whether or not PBN is more common in midterm senate elections versus those concurrent with presidential elections. In sum, and echoing David Parker, “place shapes the narratives and manners in which candidates aim to connect with constituents”, and, as such, is worthy of our attention in future research (2014, p. 246).

Appendix A. Content Analysis Code Sheet

State:__________ Candidate:______________ Party:__________ Ad Title: ________________

Ad Length (circle one): 30 seconds; 60 seconds; other:_________ YEAR:_________

CONTRAST or BIO or ATTACK (circle one)

*** If attack ad, do not proceed further. ***

1. PLACE –BASED IMAGERY AND SYMBOLS. Is it there? YES OR NO
   if yes, which type? Circle the categories which are featured in the ad.

   1. AGRICULTURE. Are there shots of farm and/or ranchland and/or agricultural practice?
   2. WILD LAND. Are there shots of wild lands, such as forests, mountains, hills, rivers, lakes, streams, etc.?
   3. OUTDOOR RECREATION. Are there shots of people participating in outdoor recreational activities?
   4. RURAL COMMUNITIES. Are there shots of 'rural small towns'?
   5. URBAN LANDMARKS. Are there shots of noteworthy and/or famous urban landmarks? Note, shots of the White House/D.C. are not to be coded, unless candidate is from a state that borders DC and is appealing to DC area residents.
   6. CANDIDATE IN PLACE. Are there shots of the candidate physically present within places falling into any of the above categories? Yes or No

7. TIME-ELAPSED: In total, how many seconds of the ad are dedicated to the above categories of place-based imagery? *(reverse code)
   _5a. 20 seconds or more.
   _5b. 11-20 seconds
   _5c. 6-10 seconds
   _5d. 1-5 seconds
   _5e. none.

8. How long exactly (seconds)? __________

51
II. **NARRATION/DISCOURSE:**

9. **CANDIDATE DISCOURSE:** What is the candidate's role in narrating the ad's discourse?
   __ 6a. The candidate narrates nearly all of the advertisement.
   __ 6b. The candidate narrates some of the advertisement. Somewhat assisted.
   __ 6c. The candidate narrates very little of the advertisement. Mainly assisted.
   __ 6d. The candidate does not narrate at all during the ad, but is present.
   __ 6e. The candidate does not narrate or appear in the advertisement.

10. Are place, environmental, and/or other geospatial elements talked about? **YES or NO**

III. **POPULISM:**

11. Does the narrative explicitly suggest that the candidate is a “regular guy” who shares the values and concerns of his constituents? **YES or NO**

12. **IF YES,** is it mentioned or implied that the candidate will/does bring constituency values “to Washington/Senate? **YES or NO**
Appendix B. Miscellaneous Statistical Output Visuals

Frequencies of Place Types from Pilot Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Type(s) in the Pilot Study</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Basic Descriptive Statistics of the Items in Data Set

<table>
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<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Election Year</td>
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<td>.493</td>
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<td>89.22</td>
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<td>22.48851</td>
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<td>.0120849</td>
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<td>6.8808</td>
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<td>.495</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ad Identification #</td>
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<td>349.823</td>
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<td>.475</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.992</td>
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### Various Frequency Tables

**Frequency of Ads sorted by Election Competitiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid no</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>56.9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*"no" = not competitive; "yes" = competitive*

**Frequency of Ads sorted by Length**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid 30 sec</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 sec</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Frequency of Ads sorted by Advertisement Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid attack</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>contrast</td>
<td>285</td>
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<td>23.9</td>
<td>43.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>bio</td>
<td>675</td>
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<td>56.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Frequency of Ads sorted by Whether or not Candidate was Portrayed in ‘Place’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid no</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>10.1</td>
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<td>36.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>17.5</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>329</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>865</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency Tables, continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Ads sorted by # of seconds featuring PBN</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid 1-5 secs</td>
<td>171</td>
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<td>52.0</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-20 secs</td>
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<td>13.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>20+ secs</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>27.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>72.4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (pertaining to DV) Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.297</td>
<td>65.943</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>.734</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (pertaining to DV) Information (continued)

Scree Plot

![Scree Plot](image)

Axis labels:
- Y-axis: Eigenvalue
- X-axis: Component Number

Graph shows the eigenvalues for each component, with a clear drop after the second component, indicating that the data may be well-suited for a two-component model.
Bibliography


Senate, M. B. (Director). (2014). *Alaska’s Son* [Motion Picture].


