The Lost Electorate: A Content Analysis of 2022 Democratic Senatorial Candidates' Video Commercials and **Their Appeals to the White Working-Class**

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RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: How are Democratic candidates trying to win back the white working-class? This study explored two 2022 Democratic senatorial candidates' TV commercials: Tim Ryan (OH) and John Fetterman (PA).

METHODOLOGY

- Hand-coded content analysis of ten TV commercials (five per candidate).
- Coded for both words & visuals for six topics including: the economy, dog whistle politics, populism, the elite, symbolic group appeals, and policy-oriented appeals.
- Created a code-book based on previous literature but added on during the coding process.
- Coded by sentence for words & by full video for visuals.
- Calculated total number & average of words per topic.
- Marked down the common visuals and symbols that appeared for each topic.

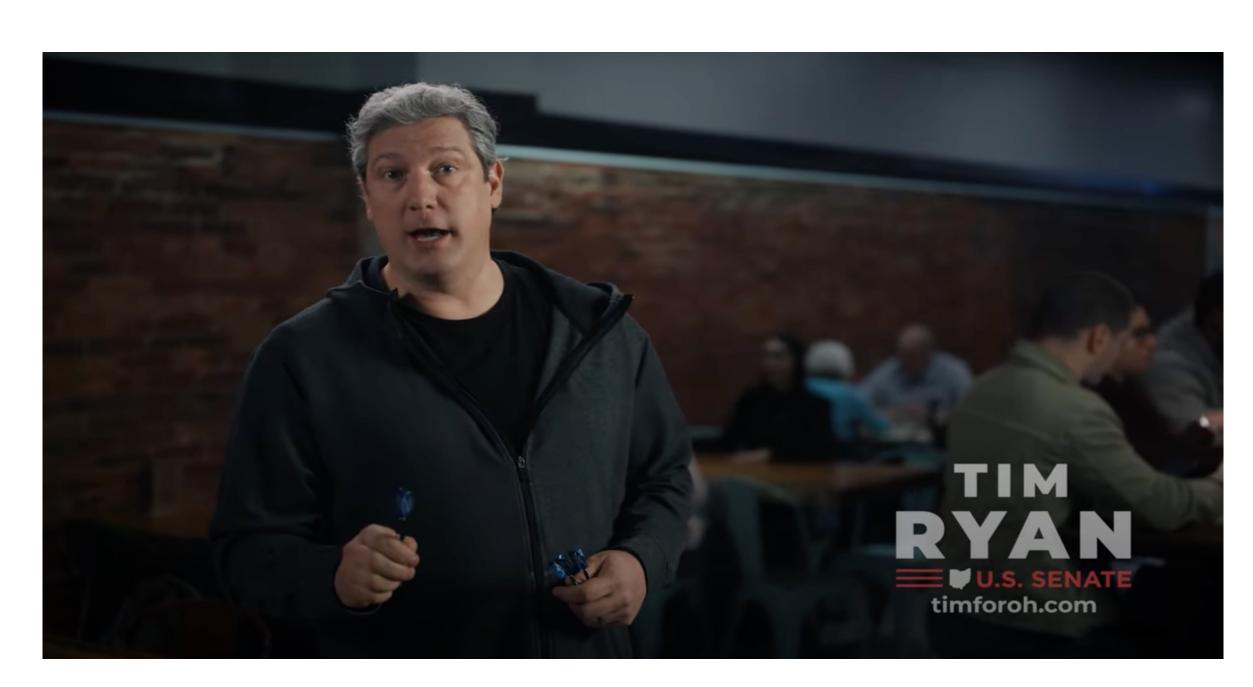
RESUITS

- Both Ryan & Fetterman used economic appeals, but no dog whistle appeals.
- Fetterman used both populist words & visuals, while Ryan only used populist visuals.
- Both candidates positioned their opponent as a member of "the elite."
- Both candidates featured symbolic group appeals, but Ryan used more policy-buzzwords.













Advised by: Dr. Bostdorff and Dr. Wrobel

The Economy:

Populism:

The Elite:

CNN analyst."

Symbolic Group Appeals:

with two men in a factory.

IMPLICATIONS

- their electorate ads.
- candidates.

EXAMPLES

Fetterman highlighted words like "inflation"; Ryan used the word "trade" seven times.

Fetterman dressed casually in the majority of his ads; Ryan used a setting in a bar playing darts.

• Fetterman called his opponent "out-of-state rich guy"; Ryan called his opponent "a celebrity and

Fetterman called out to "working families" or "working people"; Ryan showed himself walking

Democrats may face a conundrum that Republican candidates do not: appealing to the white workingclass while still considering people of color within

When appealing to the white working-class, Democratic candidates may need to feature populist rhetoric or position their opponent as "the elite," which may be difficult for incumbent

• Symbolic group appeals to the white workingclass may be a core appeal that Democrats need to use but again may be a drawback if candidates only focus on the white-working class. Finally, it may be attractive to utilize policybuzzwords by incumbents but may counteract their populist appeals by reminding voters that they are still apart of "the establishment."