

Campaign Effects on Presidential Voting, 1992 – 2000

Scott L. Althaus

Assistant Professor, Department of Speech Communication and Department of Political Science
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
702 South Wright Street, Room 361
Urbana, IL 61801
Phone: (217) 333-8968; Fax: (217) 244-1598
Email: salthaus@uiuc.edu

Peter F. Nardulli

Professor, Department of Political Science
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
702 South Wright Street, Room 361
Urbana, IL 61801
Phone: (217) 333-3880; Fax: (217) 244-5712
Email: nardulli@uiuc.edu

Daron R. Shaw

Associate Professor, Department of Government
University of Texas at Austin
Burdine Hall 536
Austin, TX 78712-1087
Phone: (512) 232-7275; Fax: (512) 471-1061
E-Mail: dshaw@mail.la.utexas.edu

Abstract

Political scientists and communication scholars have given renewed attention in recent years to questions of whether and how presidential campaigning influences the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of voters. Despite a good deal of progress, research into the electoral impact of campaign activity has been hindered by limitations of standard research designs and by difficulties in measuring exposure to campaign activity. This study uses deviations from normal county-level voting tendencies to gauge the effects of locally-broadcast television advertisements and candidate appearances in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 presidential elections. The results suggest that these activities produce statistically significant effects, but that they are often quite small substantively and tend to be counteracted by the compensatory activities of the opposition.

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Scholars have long viewed the outcome of U.S. presidential elections as the result of three factors: voters' partisan loyalties, the stewardship of incumbents and the relative attractiveness of challengers, and the campaign-specific activities of political parties. The relative importance of these factors in determining electoral outcomes has important implications for assessing the state of American democracy. However, generating a refined and empirically supportable understanding of the independent effects of these various factors has proven challenging. Many scholars have argued that partisan affiliations are rooted in historical factors that have little to do with the performance of the incumbent party. It is also asserted that campaign-specific activities of political parties distort citizens' assessments of stewardship, enhance the impact of partisan ties, and accentuate the importance of frivolous concerns. Taken as a whole, however, academic research on the impact of campaign activities has been largely inconclusive on the question of whether campaigns affect electoral outcomes.

This article aims to clarify the impact of two key indicators of campaign effort (candidate appearances and television ad buys) in each of the past three U.S. presidential elections. Our ability to join three unique data sets enables us to examine campaign effects in a new and unusually comprehensive way. First, we have unprecedented access to data on major party ad buys, by media market, for the presidential campaigns in 1992, 1996, and 2000. Second, we have comprehensive and verified data on the campaign appearances made by presidential candidates, by media market, for these same elections. Third, we have a unique and comprehensive presidential data archive that details the normal voting patterns for every county and most major cities in the U.S. from 1828 to 2000. Because the boundaries of media markets are drawn at the county level, combining these three data sets allows us to estimate whether the local intensity of a candidate's spot advertising and personal appearances is related to the size of a candidate's vote share on election day.

Do Presidential Campaigns Have an Impact on the Vote?

Journalists and political pundits give exhaustive attention to the likely impact of campaign strategies and tactics on electoral outcomes. However, the prevailing view among political scientists has long been that campaigns do little to influence voter behavior, aside from reminding voters of the opinions they

already hold. This surprising conclusion was reached in several early and influential studies of electoral behavior (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; for more recent studies reaching the same conclusion, see Finkel 1993; Patterson 1980). Subsequent research confirmed the importance of party identification and the minimal effects of election campaigns (Converse 1962; Campbell et al. 1960). Moreover, an extensive body of communications research appearing in the years following World War II confirmed that information from the mass media usually had little independent power to change the opinions of citizens. The rare instances of attitude conversion produced by media exposure occurred under conditions that are rarely found in national election campaigns (for a summary of this literature, see Klapper 1960).

In light of these findings, research on electoral behavior over the past several decades has focused on the explanatory power of non-campaign factors. This work has detailed how election outcomes can be explained by the stable distribution of political partisans in the electorate (Campbell et al. 1960; Sundquist 1973; Burnham 1970; Nardulli 1994), the track record of the incumbent president or party (Fiorina 1981), variations in personal and national economic conditions (Erikson 1989; Finkel 1993; Markus 1988; Markus 1992), and environmental factors such as presidential popularity and consumer sentiment (Holbrook 1994). These factors can account for a great deal of the variance in individual vote choices and aggregate vote totals. Thus, researchers working in the field of electoral behavior have had little reason to revisit the possibility that campaign activity might be an important determinant of the vote.

But three factors have changed over the years to generate renewed interest in campaign effects: changes in the target of campaigns, innovations in the way campaigns are conducted, and advances in our understanding of how information exposure can affect behavior. The first development was driven by declining levels of partisanship among voters. According to the American National Election Studies, the percentage of American adults identifying themselves as either Democrats or Republicans declined from 75% in 1952 to 63% in 1998. Also, many have argued that the strength of party attachments among contemporary partisans has declined somewhat. In an electorate with weakened party loyalties, the standard model of vote choice (known as the “Michigan Model,” see Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954;

Campbell et al. 1960) predicts that characteristics of individual candidates and campaign-specific issues should weigh more heavily in the vote decision. Thus, as a consequence of declining partisanship, there should be more persuadable voters today than in the past (see Bartels 2000 for a contrary view).

Enhancing the potential significance of a larger pool of unaligned or weakly aligned voters is a set of changes in how election campaigns are conducted. Campaign activities organized by political parties have played a major role in U.S. presidential contests since 1840. But they have evolved considerably over time. Indeed, some of the most profound changes in electioneering since the introduction of the “military model” of political parties in the Gilded Age have occurred since the end of World War II. These changes have been driven by the on-going revolutions in transportation, communications, and information technology that have transformed virtually every sector of modern life. The most notable of these changes are intensive personal campaigning by the candidates, the widespread use of televised advertisements and the emergence of specialized campaign consultants. These consultants develop and promote campaign themes and candidate images, use sophisticated survey instruments and focus groups, create and test television ads, and develop integrated election strategies (Johnson 2001). Because these information-age innovations have refined the precision and expanded the reach of election campaigns, they have ignited an interest in campaign effects not seen since the Progressive Era.

A final reason for the growing interest in campaign effects comes from recent advances in the field of political communication. While the ability of campaign communications to change attitudes is still thought to be limited, research today emphasizes how priming, agenda-setting, and framing effects brought about by campaign messages can selectively reinforce attitudes in ways that influence turnout and vote choices (e.g., Iyengar and Simon 2000; Zaller 1996, 1992). In particular, this work has demonstrated that political judgments can be heavily influenced by the particular bits of information to which people are most recently and frequently exposed (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Miller and Krosnick 1996). A vast and growing literature on agenda-setting, priming, and framing effects (for recent reviews, see Bryant and Zillmann 1994; Mutz, Sniderman, and Brody 1996; Ferejohn and Kuklinski 1990; Fiske and Taylor 1991;

Lupia, McCubbins, and Popkin 2000) suggests that differential reinforcement of attitudes by the mass media can produce important kinds of campaign effects.

Methodological Problems in Measuring Campaign Effects

The renewed interest in campaign effects has produced a large number of recent publications, including a special forum devoted to the impact of negative advertising in the December 1999 issue of the *American Political Science Review*. Yet what many observers find most notable about this recent work is the variety of contradictory findings it reports, particularly with respect to the effect of campaign advertising. For example, a team of scholars recently conducted a meta-analysis of all 52 reported studies of negative advertising (Lau et al. 1999). They concluded that, while most of these studies claimed to show significant effects of negative advertising, there is no consistent evidence that negative ads are any more or less influential than positive ads when it comes to candidate assessment or voter turnout. Two problems in particular seem, in our view, to contribute to this confusing array of contradictory results: shortcomings in research designs and problems in operationalizing the independent variables.

Shortcomings in Research Design

These contradictory findings are driven first by limitations in the different methodological approaches used to study campaign effects. Studies using experimental designs (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Ansolabehere et al. 1994) typically test for short-term effects, often measured just minutes after exposure to a single advertisement or news story. Moreover, these results are generated from laboratory settings far removed from the actual context of vote decisions. Such studies tend to find effects, but their limited external validity makes it difficult to generalize from them.

Studies of campaign effects that rely on survey data (e.g., Wattenberg and Briens 1999; Kahn and Kenney 1999) have the benefit of testing for such effects in populations that have been exposed to campaign messages in “natural” settings. However, survey researchers are forced to use self-reported voting behavior or vote intentions as their dependent variable. As is well known, these self-reported

turnout percentages are much higher than those found in official records.¹ There is also the tendency for post-election surveys to inflate the victor's margin. For example, the 1992 NES post-election survey had Clinton defeating Bush by 14 points, 9 more than the actual margin. Thus, conclusions drawn from self-reported voting data are likely to be biased systematically in a variety of ways (for a discussion of these biases, see Presser and Traugott 1992; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986; Abelson, Loftus, and Greenwald 1992).

Studies of campaign effects that use aggregate electoral data from official sources can overcome some of the limitations of experimental and survey designs, but they have suffered from two other shortcomings. First, they have tested for campaign effects using only a small number of cases. For instance, a recent study (Finkel and Geer 1998) based its conclusions on an analysis of every presidential election in which the campaigns aired television ads, amounting to just nine observations. Similarly, aggregate studies of TV ad effects in Senate races have been limited to about 30 cases (Ansolabehere et al. 1994; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999; see also Kahn and Kenney 1999). Studies examining state-level data in national elections must draw conclusions from just 51 cases per election (Shaw 1999). The upshot is that the small number of cases in such studies makes it difficult to generalize their findings with much confidence.

Another shortcoming of this approach is that all aggregate studies to date have obscured important spatial variations in the distribution of campaign efforts. These studies relate aggregate variation in state- or national-level vote returns to aggregate variation in state- or national-level campaign activities. But such approaches overlook the important fact that campaign news coverage and television advertising in the United States are rarely broadcast at the national or state levels. Rather, news media and television ad exposure take place within each of over 200 media markets dividing the United States. A single television

¹ For instance, self-reported voting levels for House elections in National Election Studies data from 1988 to 1998 averaged 57.1%, while the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* shows the average turnout in House elections to be only 40.1% across these years.

market serves only three states—Hawaii, Utah, and Rhode Island. Illinois is served by 10 markets, California by 15, and Texas by 20. Since appearances and advertising tend to be targeted at persuadable voters and/or densely populated regions, the amount of campaign news and TV advertising broadcast within a state is usually not spread evenly across its population. For instance, our data from the 1996 general election show that a combined total of \$557,080 was spent on television ads in the state of Illinois. Ninety-two percent of that money was spent in the Chicago media market, and no advertising from either campaign was broadcast in seven of the 10 markets covering the state. In a case like this, studies looking for the effects of campaigning in statewide voting patterns would almost certainly generate misleading conclusions.

Problems in Operationalizing the Independent Variable

A second problem contributing to contradictory findings stems from the manner in which campaign efforts have been operationalized. When examining television ad effects, survey-based studies typically rely on recall measures (for exceptions, see Goldstein and Freedman 2001; Freedman and Goldstein 1999). For instance, respondents who recall seeing a negative ad are presumed to have been exposed to one, while respondents who recall no negative ads are presumed not to have been exposed (e.g., Wattenberg and Briens 1999). Yet, self-reported recall measures such as these are known to be highly inaccurate indicators of actual exposure to media content (Price and Zaller 1993; Bartels 1993; Shaw 1999: 346). One problem with such measures is that respondents who intend to vote are more likely to recall being exposed to political ads. A recent study has demonstrated that once this spurious relationship is controlled for, the apparent impact of ad exposure can change dramatically (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999).²

² Another way of estimating the effects of different TV ads is to (1) content-analyze the entire population of ads, or (2) content-analyze a sample of advertisements produced by a particular campaign (Kahn and Kenney 1999; Finkel and Geer 1998). While this has the obvious advantage of measuring directly the actual advertising content produced by a campaign, this approach can produce inaccurate estimates of the advertising content actually

Determining the effects of candidate appearances is plagued by a similar problem: it is difficult to figure out who has been exposed to a candidate's visit. Using respondent recall raises the same concerns noted earlier. Using news accounts of candidate appearances in conjunction with aggregate electoral data can also be troublesome. News media accounts of candidate schedules can be flawed as these schedules change at the last minute. Moreover, even the elite newspapers are prone to emphasize stops in certain locales. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* may be much more interested in a Los Angeles speech than in a brief stop in Las Vegas on the way back to the Midwest. Furthermore, even with a full and complete listing in hand, one may not want to weight all appearances equally. A full day's worth of campaigning in a critical media market may not be equivalent to a half-hour whistle-stop.

In short, the contradictory findings on the impact of campaign effects stem in large part from 1) design problems that have undermined efforts to accurately gauge the impact of campaign activities and 2) limitations in how key independent variables have been measured. Important gains have been made on one or another of these problems in recent research, but not both in the same study.³ What is needed to advance our understanding of campaign effects is a study that 1) defines campaign efforts broadly (i.e., more than just campaign advertisements), 2) looks for campaign effects in actual voting behavior rather

broadcast by a campaign. More ads are produced than are actually used, and some ads are used much more than others. For instance, one study (Freedman and Goldstein 1999) found that while 50% of ads produced by a Virginia gubernatorial campaign were positive in tone, less than a third of ads aired by that campaign were positive.

³ For instance, Freedman and Goldstein's survey-based work on advertising effects (Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Goldstein and Freedman 2001) uses a sophisticated measure of advertising exposure derived from commercial data on the timing and location of campaign advertising as well as questions assessing television viewing habits. While their work represents a step forward in measuring ad exposure, they must still measure ad impact using self-reported voting behavior. Shaw's aggregate data study (Shaw 1999) used a measure of advertising exposure derived from internal records of advertising buys in each of the 50 states for the 1988, 1992, and 1996 presidential campaigns. While the measure of ad exposure used in this study was particularly refined, its reliance on state-level vote returns provided a blunt measure for assessing impact.

than self-reported voting or intentions to vote, 3) measures campaign efforts and voter behavior at the local level to capture geographic variations in campaign intensity, and 4) employs a research design can generate generalizable conclusions about campaign effects with a high degree of confidence.

Data and Methods

This paper brings together unique sources of data on television ad buys, campaign appearances, and voter behavior in a way that allows us to draw general conclusions about campaign effects with an especially high degree of external validity. Our analysis of campaign effects hinges on the nearly perfect congruence of four kinds of data coded at the county level: the boundaries of television media markets, the intensity of campaign advertising within each media market (spot buys), the number of appearances made by presidential candidates, and electoral returns.

Media Markets

Every county in the United States is categorized by Nielsen Media Research as belonging to one of (currently) 210 television media markets. The geographic boundaries of these “designated market areas” (DMAs) are determined by the television viewing habits of each county’s population. County-level data on television viewing habits are routinely collected by Nielsen to determine the dominant television source for every county in the United States.⁴ Nielsen’s DMA boundaries account only for the audiences of commercial broadcast television stations; viewing patterns for cable, satellite, and public broadcasting stations are therefore excluded from these assessments. The boundaries of many DMAs change somewhat over time as Nielsen reapportions counties to different media markets in response to shifts in county populations and viewing habits. A complete listing of county assignments to DMAs is published each year in Nielsen’s *U.S. Television Household Estimates*, and we used the appropriate list for each election year to assign each county in the United States to its appropriate media market.

⁴ Nielsen Media Research splits some counties into two sections when the viewing habits within a single county diverge substantially. In such cases, we assigned the county to the DMA containing a majority of its population.

Advertising Intensity

Our data on advertising intensity comes from internal campaign documents supplied by the Bush/Quayle 1992, Dole/Kemp 1996, and Bush/Cheney 2000 campaigns. These documents detail advertising expenditures by both campaigns, by media market, during the general election campaign (September 1 through Election Day). The Republican campaigns acquired intelligence on Democratic ad spending from weekly inspections of local station ad logs in every market in the U.S.. Our advertising data for 1996 and 2000 were originally in the form of dollars spent over time within each media market. However, raw dollar amounts provide inappropriate measures of advertising intensity.⁵ We therefore transformed these dollars-per-market measures into market-level estimates of gross rating points, which measure the relative reach and frequency of ad exposures in a given population.⁶ Our data from 1992 are already in the form of gross rating points per media market, and require no transformation.

⁵ Raw dollar amounts are unacceptable measures of advertising intensity for two reasons. First, the cost of advertising varies across media markets partly as a function of how many households each market contains. For instance, the Champaign-Springfield-Decatur market in Illinois contains just over 300,000 households with televisions, compared to just over 3 million television households in the Chicago media market. Because advertising rates are partly a function of market size, \$50,000 worth of advertising in Champaign will buy much more airtime than it will in the Chicago market. Second, the cost of advertising also varies within each market depending on the time of day, network and program in which an ad is aired. For instance, primetime advertising is generally more expensive than daytime advertising, in large part because more people watch television during primetime hours.

⁶ This transformation is accomplished by dividing the amount of money spent in a market by the average cost per rating point for that market, which is available from several sources (our average cost estimates were provided by Maverick Media). These average cost per point estimates take into account market size and within-market cost fluctuations to produce a measure of advertising exposure that can be compared across markets.

Because we do not incorporate national advertising into our analysis, we underestimate the percentage of counties, markets, and individuals exposed to presidential ads. Furthermore, we disproportionately underestimate the amount of Republican advertising in 1992 and 1996, since Bush and Dole respectively purchased more national air

Candidate Appearances

While studies of television advertising in presidential campaigns have become common, empirical analyses of candidate appearances are still rare. The geographical distribution of public appearances by presidential candidates is relevant to a proper understanding of campaign effects because such visits stimulate local news outlets to produce their own coverage of the campaigns. When a presidential candidate visits a media market, local coverage becomes economically feasible and such stories are likely to attract audience interest (Kaniss 1991). Local television news broadcasts are the most trusted (Newport and Saad 1998) and most widely followed source of news in the United States (Pew 2000). Because presidential candidate visits drive local news attention to the campaign, estimating appearances and their effects is an important component to a credible understanding of campaign impact. Our analysis uses the number of candidate visits to a media market as a proxy for local news attention to each campaign.

We defined a candidate appearance as any discrete public event held by a presidential candidate from September 1 until Election Day. We compiled appearance data for 1992 and 1996 by examining the Annenberg/Pew Archive of Presidential Campaign Discourse CD-ROM (Annenberg 2000) and recording the dates and locations of every major-party candidate speech. Because speeches are sometimes scheduled but then cancelled at the last minute, we verified these data by confirming the dates and locations of candidate appearances. For 1992 and 1996, this was done through a detailed NEXIS search of *New York Times*, *CNN*, and Associated Press coverage. These news searches also identified appearances where candidates made no formal statements and, hence, did not appear in the Annenberg/Pew archive.⁷

time than Clinton. In the logic of our model (explained below), the effects of national advertising (and national news broadcasts) are presumed to be uniform across counties and are thus picked up in the constants and election-specific dummy variables.

⁷ Nonetheless, it was usually the case that candidates said something at campaign stops, and that candidates kept their scheduled appearances. For those reasons, the counts from our validated appearance data were only somewhat higher than the number of appearances recorded in the Annenberg/Pew archive. For instance, in 1996 the

Since the Annenberg/Pew archive has not yet compiled speech data from the 2000 campaign, we compiled a record of scheduled appearances from the daily campaign logs published independently by *CNN* and the *New York Times*. We then searched *CNN* and *New York Times* coverage for every day of the general election to confirm that the candidates actually showed up for scheduled appearances and to identify unscheduled appearances. Knowing that these national news outlets would give only limited attention to local campaign stops, we used a second confirmatory NEXIS search to analyze coverage from local and regional newspapers on the day following each scheduled campaign stop. This provided a more detailed record of the number and location of appearances in those areas.

For the 2000 election we also compiled data on campaign appearances by the vice-presidential candidates. Appearances for all candidates and all elections were recorded at the county level and then aggregated to the DMA level.

The Normal Voting Patterns of Local Electorates

The dependent variable for this study comes from a study of the normal voting patterns of local electorates (Nardulli 2002) that represent a macro-level extension of the Michigan model of voting behavior. The local electorate is the unit of analysis for this data set, which includes election returns for all counties and most major cities⁸ in the continental United States (excluding the District of Columbia) for all presidential elections from 1828 to 2000. To operationalize the Michigan model at the local level, normal partisan voting patterns (Converse 1966) were estimated by averaging voting data across elections. The key presumptions in this approach are that the average proportion of the eligible electorate

Annenberg/Pew Archive of Presidential Campaign Discourse contains 111 speeches made by Clinton and 78 speeches by Dole between September 1 and Election Day, while our records identify 138 Clinton appearances and 101 Dole appearances.

⁸ This definition of counties includes the county-equivalent subdivisions of Louisiana (“parishes”) and other states that do not designate these subdivisions as “counties.”

that actually votes across a series of elections provides a good estimate of the size of a locale's core electorate, and that the average proportion of the core electorate that supports Democrat and Republican candidates provides a good estimate of the size of each party's electoral base.

To address the various theoretical and methodological issues involved in operationalizing the Michigan model, a modified, multi-stage moving average procedure was used.⁹ In particular, county-level voting patterns for each election were decomposed into a long-term, "normal vote" component—constructed from a five-year moving average—and a short-term, campaign-specific component.¹⁰ The

⁹ A *moving average* procedure was adopted to allow for the possibility of secular change. A *modified* moving average process was used because the moving average process had to deal with the effects of outlier elections and it had to be conducted within electoral eras (i.e., time frames demarcated by critical elections). A *multi-stage process* was used to insure that the moving average procedure was reliable comparable across units.

¹⁰ Normal vote estimates for each county were constructed from a five-election moving average procedure, where the normal vote in 1984, for instance, is estimated by averaging the two-party vote proportions for 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, and 1992. A truncated version of this procedure, however, had to be used for years at the beginning and end-points of the time series, as well as the beginning and end-points of distinct electoral eras (i.e., electoral sequences demarcated by critical elections). We emphasize this point because this truncated procedure was used to produce normal vote estimates for two of the three elections analyzed here (1996 and 2000). Normal vote estimates for 1996 average the returns for 1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000, while normal vote estimates for 2000 average the returns for 1992, 1996, and 2000.

While it would be better to have had election returns for 2004 and 2008 to estimate the normal votes for 1996 and 2000, visual examinations of the data suggest that the truncated version of the moving average procedure produced acceptable normal vote estimates for 1996 and 2000. When judged by historical standards the differences between 1996 and 2000 were not large. Comparing the mean and standard deviation of the absolute value of the electoral perturbations for 1996 (M=.08, SD=.05) and 2000 (M=.11, SD=.08) with those in recent elections — 1992 (M=.09, SD=.05), 1988 (M=.06, SD=.05), 1984 (M=.15, SD=.06), 1980 (M=.09, SD=.07), 1976 (M=.17, SD=.11) — illustrates this point.

design and implementation of the moving average procedure, which is detailed elsewhere (*citations removed*), accommodated critical and secular changes in the estimation of normal voting patterns and dealt with several biasing factors that distort the estimation of long-term normal vote trends.¹¹ The variable of interest for this study is a measure of electoral perturbation, which is defined as follows:

$$(D_{vi} - R_{vi}) - (D_{nv} - R_{nv}),$$

where D_{vi} and R_{vi} are the Democratic and Republican proportions, respectively, of the county vote in election_{*i*}, and D_{nv} and R_{nv} are the Democratic and Republican proportions, respectively, of the normal vote in the county.¹² In other words, the campaign-specific component of the vote is defined as the

¹¹ A complete description of how the normal vote estimates were derived—a process which took more than a year to implement across more than 3,000 counties and 43 elections—[REDACTED] is too elaborate to explain here in detail. The complexity of the moving average process stems from (1) the need to purge from normal vote estimates the biasing influence of peripheral voters who are drawn temporarily into the active electorate in unusually high-stimulus elections, (2) periods of electoral realignment that introduce sudden but enduring shifts in the level of the two-party normal vote, and (3) the occurrence of “outlier” election results influenced by local, short-term factors that would inordinately distort the long-term normal vote estimates.

¹² Put another way, in the terminology employed by Nardulli (2002), our analysis is based on a measure of the margin of victory in the election of interest, where

$$\text{MARGIN OF VICTORY} = \text{DEMOCRATIC PROPORTION}_v - \text{REPUBLICAN PROPORTION}_v.$$

$\text{DEMOCRATIC PROPORTION}_v$ and $\text{REPUBLICAN PROPORTION}_v$ are the proportions of total votes cast that were received by the Democratic and Republican candidates, respectively, in a given election for a specific locale. Because of the manner in which this variable is defined positive values indicate Democratic pluralities and negative values indicate Republican pluralities. Thus, it is technically a measure of the Democratic margin of victory. The “averaged” version of this variable (i.e., the normalized variable produced by the five-year moving average procedure) is $\text{NORMAL PARTISAN BALANCE}$. Because the focus of this analysis is with the short term component of the vote, the dependent variable is $\text{NORMAL PARTISAN BALANCE}_{\text{DEV}}$, where

difference between a county's normal Democratic margin of victory in the two-party vote for a given year and its actual Democratic margin of victory on Election Day.

Data Limitations

Although the data we have integrated to examine the impact of campaign activities are truly unique, there are several limitations that should be noted. First, our measures of campaign effort do not account for the full range of activities that constitute a presidential campaign. While we have measures of television advertising and candidate appearances, we do not have locale-specific measures of direct mail campaigns, phone bank operations, or door-to-door campaigning. Second, the measures of campaign effort we do have are admittedly crude, and they do not allow us to take into account qualitative differences among appearances or spot ads. Third, we do not have comprehensive data on independent expenditures or cable television buys.¹³ Independent expenditures are especially problematic: they increased considerably across our time frame, disproportionately benefited the Democrats,¹⁴ and may have been allocated across media markets differently than candidate advertising. Fourth, we have no means of accounting for soft money expenditures in 1992 or 1996.¹⁵ Fifth, we cannot address the volume

$$\text{NORMAL PARTISAN BALANCE}_{\text{DEV}} = \text{MARGIN OF VICTORY} - \text{NORMAL PARTISAN BALANCE}$$

¹³ Cable television buys are largely incorporated into the 2000 data. Still, the total cable buys are somewhat underestimated for 2000 because it was not possible to estimate total GRPs in markets where only cable was purchased (e.g., Las Cruces, NM, where Gore bought heavily on cable).

¹⁴ In particular, labor unions, teachers' associations, pro-choice groups, and environmental organizations aired TV ads advocating Democratic issue positions and agendas and championing Democratic candidates. This money abated somewhat in 2000, as Democratic groups moved money out of TV ad buys and into grassroots, get-out-the-vote drives.

¹⁵ For 1992, this is probably not a major issue since available data indicate soft money accounted for only a fraction of the total campaign expenditures in that election. Bush/Quayle spent \$10 million and Clinton/Gore spent \$9 million in party funds on general election advertising (Devlin 2001). By 1996, however, soft money expenditures

and tone of local news media coverage, which probably conditions the impact of television advertising and almost certainly conditions the impact of candidate appearances. Finally, as indicated in footnote 10 our normal vote estimates for 1996 and 2000 are necessarily truncated to four- and three-year moving averages, respectively. We suspect that this truncation could lead our estimates of effects to be more conservative than they otherwise might be, but we see no obvious anomalies in estimates of normal voting or deviations from normal voting produced for those years.

These limitations do not mean that we cannot conduct a rigorous examination of the electoral effects of campaign efforts. They do, however, underscore the limits of our analysis and suggest some problems that future research should address.

Results

Before venturing to assess the effects of presidential campaigning, it is important first to understand the scope and pattern of campaign activities. Given the distinctiveness of our data on television advertising and candidate appearances, it is particularly worthwhile for us to offer some basic descriptive results.

rivalled or exceeded hard money allocations for the general election campaigns; Dole/Kemp benefited from \$24 million in RNC advertising (in addition to nearly \$38 million in ads from their own campaign funds) and Clinton/Gore received \$42 million in party ads to complement the \$33 million spent by their campaign (campaign spending figures come from our data, while party spending figures come from Devlin 2001). By 2000, it becomes essential to consider soft money expenditures, both because of the total dollars involved and the discrepancies between the parties. The RNC significantly outspent the DNC over the fall campaign, partly because they raised more money overall and partly because the DNC exacerbated this disadvantage by outspending the RNC by \$11 million during the summer of 2000. Our data show that \$61 million in Bush/Cheney ads were complemented with \$53 million in RNC ads for the 2000 general election, while the Democrats relied on \$47 million in Gore/Lieberman ads together with \$31 million in DNC ads.

Patterns of Presidential Campaigning, 1992-2000

Table 1 shows the reach of candidate appearances and television “spot buys” by party and election. If we look first at these data by media markets we see that the presidential candidates made at least one appearance in one quarter to one third of all media markets per year. Spot ads were aired in about half of all media markets, but the range was quite large (33% to 59%). Clinton/Gore cast a particularly broad net in purchasing spot buys in 1996 and Bush/Cheney followed this pattern in 2000. In contrast, neither 1992 campaign bought spot ads in more than 36% of the markets. A somewhat different picture emerges if we examine exposure by looking at counties. Roughly 40% of counties in the U.S. were located in media markets that received a candidate appearance, and the percentage of counties in markets with spot buys was typically in the low fifties. Finally, a focus on voter exposure shows that candidates visited media markets in which about 60% of the voters reside. The percentage of voters in markets where spot buys aired averages about 55%. These data show that while the geographic targeting of modern campaign activities can be somewhat narrow, such activities are routinely communicated to a majority of voters.

[Table 1 about here]

The cross-party similarities contained in Table 1 raise questions about the independence of electoral strategies, which are addressed in Table 2. The upper section of this table reports correlations among various campaign activities. For example, the top two rows of Table 2 show the correlations between Democratic and Republican campaign activities for each of the past three elections. The main findings here are straightforward. The inter-party correlations for both sorts of campaign activities are quite high, ranging from a low of .62 to a high of .93. Moreover, these correlations may be on the upswing—they are at a high point in 2000. These data leave little doubt that the opposition’s activities heavily influenced a campaign’s appearance and television ad buy patterns. It is uncertain whether this was due to consistency in their respective reading of the polls and strategic context, or a common fear that the opposition might be campaigning somewhere uncontested. From an analytical standpoint, this introduces collinearity into our models that makes estimation more difficult. From a political perspective, the tendency for each

campaign to mirror the other's allocation of ads and visits suggests the difficulties of gaining an electoral advantage from targeted campaign activities.

[Table 2 about here]

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between partisan ad buy strategies by plotting the intensity of spot advertising per market (in thousands of gross rating points) purchased by both the Republican and Democratic campaigns for each general election season. Figure 1 illustrates several important points. First, in addition to showing a slight increase in the similarity of buy patterns over time, Figure 1 shows a significant increase in the volume of television spot advertising. This growth in spot advertising, it should be noted, is not due to an increase in money spent on television, but rather to a shift from national to local advertising buys.¹⁶ This shift, of course, emphasizes the importance of understanding the impact of these spot buys. One last point is that two outlier markets for campaign advertising are apparent in 2000—Madison, WI and Davenport, IA. We omit both of these in our regression analyses in order to properly estimate advertising effects.

[Figure 1 about here]

The remainder of the top section of Table 2 shows the correlations between (1) different aspects of the campaign's activities, and (2) television ads aired by different sponsors. The correlations between candidate appearances and television ads from the same campaign are significant but not overwhelming. They do not, for instance, approach the magnitude of the correlations between Republican and Democratic activities. This indicates that the strategic calculus changes slightly when the medium is

¹⁶ In 1992, largely in response to Ross Perot's heightened presence on national television, a total of \$72 million was spent by the presidential campaigns on national advertising, a figure that dropped to \$36 million in 1996 when only the Dole/Kemp campaign put significant resources into a national ad strategy (West 2001: 39). By 2000, all campaign money destined for broadcast television was put into targeted local buys, and neither the presidential campaigns nor the national parties ran any national advertising on broadcast television.

travel rather than television.¹⁷ For example, presidential candidates often pledge to make appearances for Senate or House candidates, but rarely air TV ads in a market strictly to benefit a congressional race. It is also possible that candidates tend more to their base when targeting appearances or that appearances are seen as compensatory (i.e., candidates visit places are not cost-effective to reach with television). The correlations between different aspects of a specific campaign's activities were also lower in 1996 and 2000 than they were in 1992. This could be due to the development and diffusion of strategic innovations or changes in strategic contexts across elections.

The set of correlations between television ads aired by different sponsors demonstrate two things. First, the parties basically targeted the same DMAs with similar levels of advertising. Second, the DNC and RNC placed TV ads in roughly the same markets as the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. Put plainly, the parties shadowed the candidates, as well as each other.

We will have to await data from further elections to see if future patterns confirm the suspicion that different strategic considerations drive the allocation of appearances and spot buys. However, data reported in the second section of Table 2 sheds some light on this suspicion. It reports the correlation between the number of eligible voters in a media market and the intensity of campaign activities. These correlations support the notion that TV ads and appearances are considered different resources by the campaigns. Appearances correlate highly with eligible voters, meaning that campaigns sent candidates into markets where there were large audiences. The correlations between spot buys and eligible voters are much smaller than for candidate appearances (and even negatively signed in the 2000 election), indicating that television ads are more likely to be purchased in markets with relatively smaller audiences. This suggests that variations in the cost of airing television ads (which differ more than travel expenses) are a major consideration in the allocation of spot buys. Campaigns view it as cost effective to slate candidate appearances in large markets, thereby generating "free" television exposure. This allows them to conserve

¹⁷ The fact that television ad buys between parties are more highly correlated than appearance patterns (0.74 to 0.89) also supports the contention that campaigns view these activities as strategically distinct.

scarce campaign funds for strategically placed spot buys in smaller markets (i.e. spot buys that are driven by the closeness of the race rather than the number of voters reached).

Campaigning Efforts and Electoral Behavior

We used these data on targeted campaign efforts in conjunction with data on deviations from normal voting patterns to gauge the effects of campaign activities. Using a simple OLS estimator,¹⁸ we examined campaign effects using three different approaches: 1) a pooled analysis that employs data from all three elections; 2) an election-specific analysis that highlights differences across elections, and 3) an enhanced analysis of the 2000 results that takes advantage of a richer set of data on campaign efforts.

The results of the pooled analysis are reported in Table 3, which shows results from three different models.¹⁹ Model 1 contains only the four campaign effort variables. This model provides a straightforward look at the impact of campaign activities, but makes no allowance for election-specific effects and takes no account of state-level deviations from normal voting that might be spuriously correlated with appearances or ad intensity. In order to capture short-term effects that are common across all counties in a given election, Model 2 adds election-year dummy variables to the campaign effort variables. To control for the possibility for spatial variation in the election-specific effects identified in the second model, Model 3 adds 1) a vector of dummy variables to capture state-specific effects and 2) a set of interaction terms between the state and year dummy variables to capture state-specific deviations for

¹⁸ We experimented with a variety of transformations of the campaign variables, testing different functional forms. Surprisingly, these were not successful. We had, in particular, expected success with log and square root transformations of the independent variables, which capture the possibility of ceiling effects.

¹⁹ All of these analyses, as well as those that follow, exclude counties in the Washington D.C. media market which would generate misleading estimates of appearance effects due to the high numbers of non-campaign appearances made by incumbent presidents. These analyses also exclude counties in the Davenport and Madison media markets for the 2000 election only, since these markets were identified in Figure 1 as outliers having extremely high levels of advertising intensity relative to other markets in 2000.

each election. Because the election-specific movements at the state level are not of substantive interest to this analysis, we do not display the coefficients for them.

[Table 3 about here]

Looking first at model specification, it is clear that campaign activities alone can account for only a small portion of variance in deviations from normal voting (Model 1 $R^2=.11$). Adding election-year dummy variables does a much better job in explaining such perturbations (Model 2 $R^2=.59$), indicating that locale-specific deviations in normal voting tend to move in similar directions for a given election year. The election-specific dummy variables in Model 2 show that short-term deviations in 1992 and 1996 tended to advantage the Democrats, while the constant shows that the pendulum swung in the other direction for 2000, when the Republican ticket fared better than usual across the country. Model 3 demonstrates that election-specific effects vary by state, and the addition of state-level controls for each election year produces a one-third increase in explanatory power over Model 2 (.77 vs. .58). Indeed, so much variance is year- and state-specific that omitting the campaign activity variables altogether from Model 3 drops the R^2 by less than half a point, from .778 to .768. Because Model 3 is so superior at predicting short-term deviations from normal voting, we focus our discussion on estimates of campaign effects derived from this model.²⁰

Model 3 yields statistically significant coefficients for all four indicators of campaign effort. Substantively, the results are mixed. The impact of candidate appearances seems to be one-sided and fairly modest. Democratic appearances were more effective than Republican appearances. To illustrate

²⁰ Only two states in the continental U.S. are served by a single media market (Utah and Rhode Island) and neither of these states received any general election visits or advertising in the three elections considered here. Thus, we are confident that our introduction of state-level controls clarifies rather than obscures the impact of appearances and ads. Moreover, the differences in the regression coefficients for the campaign effort variables between Model 2 and Model 3 are trivial, as an examination of Table 3 documents.

this it is helpful to multiply the coefficients by 100, thereby translating them into percentage point values. Holding all else constant, a single Democratic appearance in county's media market was enough to increase the positive (pro-Democratic) deviation from the normal Democratic margin of victory by 0.4 points. In other words, for a county where Democratic presidential candidates usually win by two percentage points over their Republican opponents, we estimate that two Democratic appearances within that county's media market would increase the Democrat's margin of victory to 2.8 percentage points. In contrast, Republican candidate appearances are *positively* correlated with pro-Democratic deviations: each Republican appearance to a market increases the local Democratic margin of victory by 0.2 points. We are, of course, skeptical of the idea that campaigning hurts a candidate. Still, Franklin (2001) recently obtained a similar result for Republican appearances in the 2000 election, and we are intrigued by the dynamic that produced it.

Table 3 also demonstrates that both parties had limited success with their television advertising. A 1,000 GRP increase in Democratic advertising was worth, all else being equal, a one-tenth of a percentage point increase beyond the normal margin of victory for Democrats. The same increase in Republican advertising reduces the Democratic margin of victory by two-tenths of a point. While these increments seem small, presidential television advertisements tend to run in the range of several thousand GRPs over a campaign (as shown in Figure 1). Thus, large spot buys could generate substantively important effects. This is particularly likely for Republicans, who have tended to spend more money on targeted advertising and whose ad buys may be more effective than those of the Democrats.

The pooled data mask differences between and across elections, so Table 4 breaks down the relationships between campaigning and deviations from the normal vote by year.²¹ The election-specific findings reveal two important points. The first is that the effect of candidate appearances varies by

²¹ Most of the variance explained by the equations in Tables 4 and 5 reflect the impact of state-level controls—removing those controls from the models in table 4 drops the adjusted R-squared values for campaign variables alone down to roughly 0.10.

election. For example, Republican appearances were statistically unrelated to deviations in normal voting until 2000, when they produced pro-Democratic shifts. In a parallel vein, the 1992 analysis reveals that Clinton's appearances worked against him by generating pro-Republican deviations in the areas he visited. On the other hand, the appearances of Gore in 2000 and (especially) Clinton in 1996 produced pro-Democratic deviations. A single visit from Clinton in 1996, for example, generated a 0.7-point, pro-Democratic deviation from the normal margin of victory. A second point revealed by Table 4 is that the patterns of advertising effects reported in Table 3 are driven by the 1996 election. According to the 1996 data, 1,000 GRPs by Clinton increased pro-Democratic deviations by one-half of a percentage point, while a comparable buy from Dole increased pro-Republican (i.e., negative) deviations by three-tenths of a point. There were no comparable effects in 1992 or 2000.

[Table 4 about here]

Because we have a richer set of data on campaign activities for the 2000 presidential election (including television spot buys from the national parties and vice-presidential candidate appearances), we conducted a separate analysis for the 2000 data reported in Table 5. These enhanced data produce several important insights. Perhaps the most surprising results of the 2000 analysis are that the coefficients for vice-presidential appearances are larger than those for the presidential candidates. Consistent with the conventional wisdom about his impact on the race, Lieberman's effect is both significant and positive. More surprisingly, however, is that Cheney's appearances were also significant and positive. Indeed, Chaney's visits were twice as effective as Lieberman's at producing pro-Democratic deviations. The coefficients for Bush and Gore appearances, controlling for Lieberman and Cheney appearances, become indistinguishable from zero.

[Table 5 about here]

Several observations are in order concerning the appearance effects reported in Table 5. First, while it is tempting to dismiss the vice-presidential results as idiosyncratic to the 2000 race, it should be stressed that the caliber of vice-presidential candidates has been an issue in many modern presidential campaigns. One only need think about the controversy surrounding Nixon in 1952, the importance of

Johnson to Southern voters in 1960, the positive reviews Muskie received in 1968, and the contrasts drawn between Bentsen and Quayle in 1988 to recognize that vice-presidential candidates may routinely have a significant electoral impact. A second general observation is that the results presented in Table 5, in conjunction with those presented in Table 4, suggest that the impact of candidate appearances is likely to vary. It is naïve to think that targeted candidate appearances will necessarily generate electoral benefits and that the only problem campaign strategists must address is how to maximize the electoral benefits of targeted visits. Electoral effects depend on the candidate, as well as the context, as the different coefficients for Clinton in 1992 and 1996 suggest.

The final point about the appearance results is a cautionary note. While the electoral effects of candidate appearances are likely to vary, they are also challenging to estimate. Many considerations shape appearance strategies and these strategies may vary across campaigns and across time within a campaign. For example, a frontrunner may aggressively target markets that lean towards the opposition and are unlikely to yield many additional votes. This could substantially reduce, or even reverse, the net effects of appearances in a given elections. Appearance effects may also be time dependent. That is, a particular candidate may generate more positive, or negative, effects over the course of a campaign. For example, Cheney may have been better received after his debate with Lieberman in the 2000 election.²² Compounding efforts to accurately gauge the effects of campaign appearance are local variations in the campaign coverage provided by local media, which is how most voters learn about candidates.

The more refined 2000 analysis also provides some insights into the impact of spot buys. The data reported in Table 5 suggest that only the Republican National Committee's ads were effective. An additional 1,000 GRPs from the RNC increased pro-Bush deviations from normal voting by six-tenths of

²² Indeed, a time series analysis of tracking polls across battleground states (Shaw 2001) suggests that Cheney's appearances were ineffective early in the campaign, but became much more effective after his strong showing in the vice-presidential debate. The same analysis shows that Lieberman's effect diminishes considerably after the debate, when he was deployed mostly in campaign-saturated Florida.

a percentage point. Neither Bush nor Gore, nor even the DNC, was comparably effective. One intriguing possibility is that this may bear on the current debate concerning the effects of negative advertising. Because the national parties tend to air a much higher proportion of negative ads in their media buys than the campaigns (see Jamieson, Slass, and Falk 2001; West 2001), the success of the RNC's efforts in 2000 suggest negative ads may have had a larger impact in that election. Of course, the DNC's ads did not elicit a comparably strong effect, and data from the Annenberg School argue that the DNC was even more negative than the RNC in 2000 (Jamieson, Slass, and Falk 2001). However, the Democrats pursued a different ad strategy in 2000 than the Republicans. The Democratic ad strategy emphasized different issues in different states, while Bush and the Republicans relied on a single ad strategy across states. Moreover, Gore and the DNC pursued a two-track message strategy much less than the Republicans, who consistently used campaign ads to bolster a positive image for Bush while employing RNC ads to criticize Gore (Devlin 2001). For these reasons, it may be that the effectiveness of the Democratic ad strategy varied across media markets, undermining its impact in the national analysis reported in Table 5. To examine this further, however, requires additional data and must be left to future analysis.

Campaign Efforts and Electoral Outcomes

The results presented above are important for understanding and assessing electoral behavior. But these empirical results also provide the basis for addressing normative concerns that speak to key issues in democratic theory: the impact of targeted campaign activities on election outcomes. The regression results presented above can be used as the basis for a simulation that estimates the impact of targeted campaign activities on state level elections for slates of presidential electors, as well as the national contest for Electoral College votes.

To simulate the effect of targeted campaign efforts, we took the regression coefficients from the third column of Table 3 and calculated predicted margins of victory under three hypothetical scenarios: no Democratic candidate appearances, no Republican visits, and no visits from either party's candidates. A second set of predicted values was generated to gauge the impact of spot buys: no Democratic spot

advertising (setting all Democratic gross rating point values to zero), no Republican spot advertising (setting all Republican gross rating point values to zero), and no spot ads from either party. These predicted margins of victory were then translated into the net number of county-level votes favoring Democratic or Republican presidential candidates and summed for every county in a state.

For each state, we then adjusted the actual vote totals from an election by the net number of Democratic or Republican votes generated by each type of campaign activity. For any given state, this net difference is revealed by comparing the predicted net vote totals generated by the generic regression model (see Table 3) to those generated by a model which sets the intensity of a particular campaign activity to zero. Such models produce estimates of the state-level vote under different levels of campaign effort, and these estimates can then be compared to actual vote totals to gauge the impact of campaign activities. A parallel analysis was run using predicted values from the election-specific equations (see Table 4) to allow the magnitude and direction of campaign effects to vary across years. A state's Electoral College votes were reallocated if either the pooled or the election-specific results predicted that a different candidate would win the state under a particular campaigning scenario.²³

The impact of candidate appearances on Electoral College votes (Table 6) reveals a pattern of typically small but potentially decisive effects. Appearances had a marginal effect in 1992. Our simulations show the Republicans gaining Georgia's 12 votes both when removing the effects of

²³ It should be stressed that this simulation does not necessarily eliminate the impact of advertising or appearances on election outcomes. To the extent that campaign activities provide the raw material for national news reporting about the campaign, influence the campaign's topical agenda, or shape the construction of candidate images, these and other "national effects" are captured in the constants and election year dummy variables in our model. What this simulation does is estimate the effects of geographically targeted appearances and ad buys. The period between 1992 and 2000 has witnessed a momentous shift in strategic emphasis from national-level to local-level advertising. This method allows us to determine the extent to which this reallocation of campaign resources may have influenced election outcomes.

Clinton's local appearances (because, as shown in table 4, these visits produced pro-Republican deviations in normal voting) and when removing the effects of Bush's local appearances (since Bush's visits also produced pro-Republican effects). In the event of no visits from either candidate, our model shows Georgia and New Jersey going to the Republicans for a net gain of 28 Electoral College votes.²⁴ The results for 1996 show that candidate appearances did not affect the allocation of Electoral College votes under any of the three scenarios.

In 2000, removing the local effects of Gore and Lieberman appearances shifts Iowa, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin into the Republican column, giving Bush an additional 30 Electoral College votes. Implausible though it may seem, removing the effects of Bush and Cheney appearances produces the same results and throws Pennsylvania to Bush as well, for a net Republican gain of 53 votes. The largest shift for 2000 comes in the scenario with no local candidate appearances at all, where our model predicts a lopsided Republican victory in the Electoral College by producing Bush wins in Iowa, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin for a net shift of 71 votes.²⁵ The implication of this analysis is that the large number of appearances made by Bush and Cheney nearly cost them the election, which ought to have been a clear Republican victory. Electoral impacts such as these could have been produced by any number of factors, including negative local news coverage, counter mobilizing by Democrats, or changes in turnout associated with local appearances. At this point in our research, however, we are unable to isolate the dynamics underlying these effects.

[Table 6 about here]

²⁴ All predicted changes in the 1992 electoral college voting come from the equation using data from all three elections. No changes were found in predictions made by the equation modeling 1992 voting separately from the other years.

²⁵ These differences follow predictions from the equation considering 2000 separately from the other years. In the equation using data from all three years, no shifts are registered for Michigan or Pennsylvania.

Our simulations show that impact of advertising effects on the Electoral College (Table 7) was minimal in 1992 and 1996. In 1992 neither Clinton's nor Bush's spot advertising was found to be decisive for even a single state, though Republicans gained New Jersey in the scenario where neither campaign ran ads in any media markets. Likewise, in 1996, removing the effects of Clinton advertising gives Republicans Kentucky, Nevada, and Tennessee for a net gain of 23 votes, while removing the effects of Dole advertising pushes Colorado and Georgia into the Democratic column for a net shift of 21 votes. In the unlikely event of no spot advertising at all in 1996, our simulation shows that Electoral College totals would be identical to what they actually were.²⁶

In contrast to the earlier results, our simulation of the 2000 election suggest that the geographic distribution of spot advertising could have been decisive in the Electoral College. Table 7 shows that removing the effects of Gore and DNC spot advertising from state-level vote totals (column 2) shifts Iowa, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin over to the Republican column, increasing Bush's Electoral College lead to a more comfortable 301 votes. In contrast, removing the effects of Bush and RNC spot advertising (column 3) overturns the election in Gore's favor by adding Florida and Missouri to the

²⁶ However, these results all come from the equation that considers 1996 separately from the other years. In the effects analysis from the pooled equation, no changes in Electoral College allocations are observed in any of the three scenarios.

For 1996, the minimal changes in the Electoral College are puzzling given the relatively large estimated coefficients for advertising effects (see Table 4). However, the larger effects of advertising in that year may have been counterbalanced by relatively larger state-level popular vote margins in that election, which mitigated the impact of advertising on the Electoral College outcome.

Democratic column for a total of 299 Electoral College votes.²⁷ If neither campaign ran spot advertising in 2000, our simulation predicts a Democratic victory, with Florida going to Gore.

[Table 7 about here]

It is important to point out that except for Missouri, these Electoral College changes in 2000 come from states where the winner was decided by fewer than 10,000 votes, and in some cases fewer than 1,000 votes. With the closest presidential election in modern U.S. history depending on so many states with small margins of victory, it comes as no surprise that spot advertising could influence the outcome. It is more telling that in our three scenarios for 2000, the largest Electoral College shift—produced by removing the effects of all Republican spot advertising, while retaining the effects of all Democratic advertising—amounted to just 36 votes. Indeed, this is the largest shift in Electoral College voting among all of the advertising scenarios detailed in Table 7.

Conclusion

We began this work with a lament that, despite the marked changes in how presidential campaigns are run, the large amounts of money invested in them, and the normative issues generated by these developments, academic research on the impact of campaign activities on electoral behavior has remained largely inconclusive. We identified the methodological and data problems that have led to this situation, and offered a careful analysis of how presidential candidate appearances and television advertising from 1992-2000 affected deviations from normal voting at the local level.

The analyses yielded several sets of important results. One set deals with patterns of campaign resource allocation. First, campaign activities are highly correlated between presidential candidates in a given election. Bush and Gore, in particular, essentially stalked each other across media markets and

²⁷ For 2000, zeroing out Republican advertising does not cause Missouri to shift sides in predictions from the pooled equation. The pooled equation otherwise produces identical results to the year-specific equation that includes vice-presidential appearances and national committee advertising.

states during the 2000 general election campaign. This, of course, makes it difficult for a candidate to gain an electoral advantage through targeted campaign activities. Second, the data also indicate that television advertising and candidate appearances are not seen as interchangeable resources. Television ads aired by a particular campaign are more highly correlated with the opposition's television ads than they are with their own candidate's appearances. More specifically, television ads often ran in smaller markets while appearances were targeted at markets with larger audiences. Third, campaign resource allocation patterns have changed over the past three elections. There seems to be a trend towards narrower, more strategic targeting, starting with Clinton in 1996 and continuing with Bush and Gore in 2000. The up-tick is minor, however, and it is not clear whether it is driven by competitive positioning or by increased precision in targeting.²⁸

A second set of results deals with the electoral impact of targeted campaign activities. Our regression results suggest that the impact of appearances and spot buys on deviations from normal voting patterns is mixed and contextually dependent. Candidate appearances generated inconsistent effects over the past three elections, especially for Democrats. One anomalous result is the negative (pro-Democratic) effect of Republican candidate appearances in the 2000 election. We note a parallel finding for Clinton in 1992, when Democratic visits helped the Republican vote. In contrast, television ad effects have never been especially large, although minor effects were achieved by Clinton's ads in 1996 and the RNC's in 2000. Our Electoral College simulations suggest that targeted campaign activities rarely affected state level contests. But here again, context matters. The simulations indicate that no scenario we used would have made a difference for Bush in 1992 (despite his relatively close five-point loss in the popular vote to

²⁸ It should be noted here that an analysis of candidate appearances since 1972 shows that modern campaign practices seem to be broadening rather than narrowing the audience exposed to especially intense personal campaigning (Althaus et. al. 2002), but our data on candidate advertising are not yet broad enough in historical scope to give a clear sense of directional tendencies.

Clinton), while targeted campaign efforts were decisive in the 2000 election. This is largely due to the increased level of state-level electoral competitiveness in 2000. The last decade has evidenced a level of competitiveness in presidential elections not seen since the 1890's (Nardulli 2002), which suggests that the magnitude and decisiveness of effects reported for the 2000 may be seen again in the near future.

From the analyst's perspective, perhaps the most sobering implication of this analysis is that just as our data are improving and the importance of understanding campaign effects is becoming greater, the story is getting more complicated. Campaign targeting is getting more sophisticated, as are the means for delivery. Cable television, soft money, independent expenditures, the Internet, and old-fashioned "touch campaigning" are becoming impossible to ignore, and studies concentrating exclusively on television ads at the state level may simply be inadequate. So while we find modest effects across the 1992-2000 elections, we remain convinced that the need for further inquiry is more pronounced than ever.

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Table 1
Exposure to Campaign Activities:
Media Markets, Counties and Eligible Voters, 1992-2000

	1992	1996	2000
Media Markets			
% with One or More Democratic Appearances	34.8	27.9	24.0
% with One or More Republican Appearances	31.9	28.9	27.5
% with At Least Some Democratic Campaign Advertising	33.3	59.3	45.1
% with At Least Some Republican Campaign Advertising	35.3	48.5	56.4
% with At Least Some DNC Advertising			44.1
% with At Least Some RNC Advertising			48.0
Counties			
% in DMAs with One or More Democratic Appearances	45.9	36.9	33.0
% in DMAs with One or More Republican Appearances	46.6	39.4	34.6
% in DMAs with At Least Some Democratic Campaign Ads	44.3	65.8	45.0
% in DMAs with At Least Some Republican Campaign Ads	46.3	54.3	59.2
% in DMAs with At Least Some DNC Ads			45.5
% in DMAs with At Least Some RNC Ads			48.7
Eligible Voters			
% in DMAs with One or More Democratic Appearances	65.7	63.5	56.3
% in DMAs with One or More Republican Appearances	60.0	62.5	55.9
% in DMAs with At Least Some Democratic Campaign Ads	50.0	76.1	45.9
% in DMAs with At Least Some Republican Campaign Ads	51.2	65.8	64.6
% in DMAs with at Least Some DNC Advertising			44.0
% in DMAs with at Least Some RNC Advertising			53.0

Table 2
Media Market-Level Correlations among Campaign Activities, 1992-2000

	1992	1996	2000
Correlations between			
Democratic Appearances and Republican Appearances	.75	.62	.83
Dem. Campaign Advertising and Rep. Campaign Advertising	.87	.87	.93
Democratic Appearances and Democratic Campaign Advertising	.50	.17	.34
Republican Appearances and Republican Campaign Advertising	.46	.48	.25
DNC Advertising and RNC Advertising			.93
Democratic Campaign Advertising and DNC Advertising			.87
Republican Campaign Advertising and RNC Advertising			.92
Correlations between Number of Eligible Voters and			
Democratic Appearances	.56	.72	.50
Republican Appearances	.57	.76	.55
Democratic Campaign Advertising	.15	.11	-.05
Republican Campaign Advertising	.20	.21	-.05
DNC Advertising			-.04
RNC Advertising			-.02

Note: All correlations are for variables measured at the DMA level. Advertising is measured in gross rating points, while candidate appearances are measured in number of appearances. Appearances in this table include only the activities of presidential candidates. Campaign advertising refers only to spot ads purchased by the campaigns themselves; all national party advertising activity is categorized separately.

Figure 1
Levels of Parity in the Targeting of Campaign Advertising

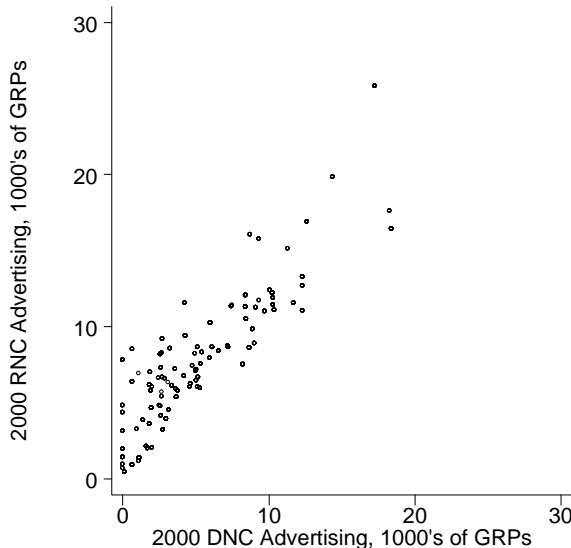
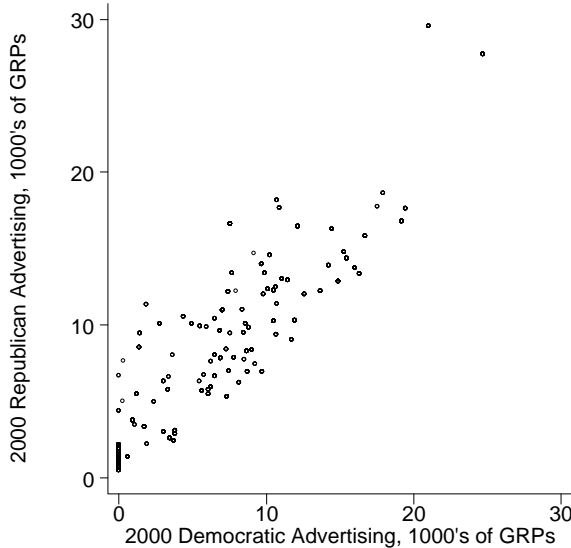
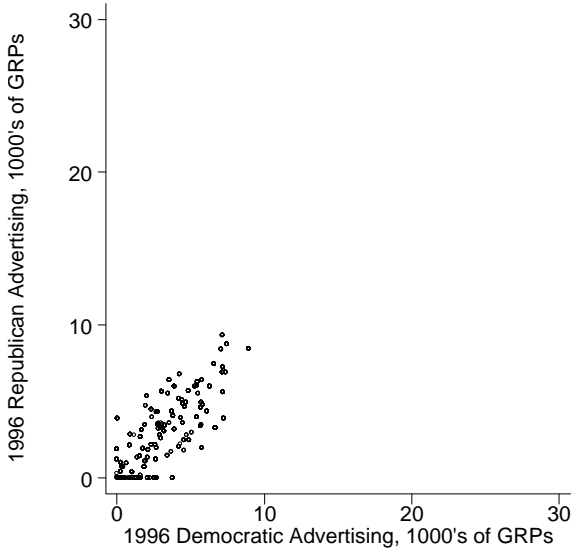
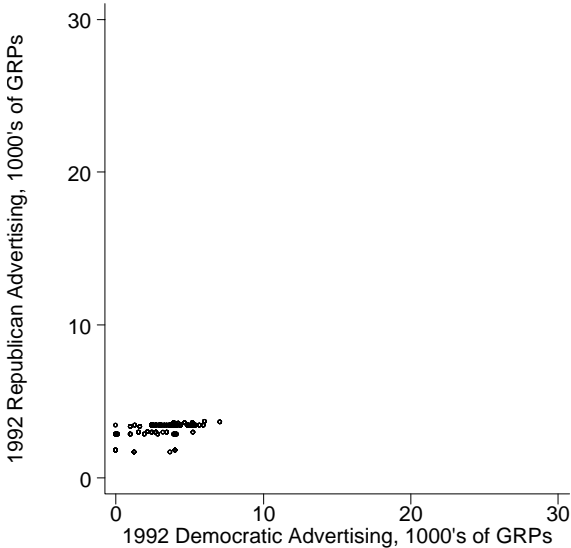


Table 3
The Impact of Campaign Activities on County-Level Deviations from Normal Democratic Margins of Victory

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	No Controls	Controls for Year	Controls for Year and State
Democratic Candidate Appearances	.002 (.001)	.009** (.001)	.004** (.001)
Republican Candidate Appearances	.015** (.001)	.002** (.001)	.002** (.001)
Democratic Spot Buys	.011** (.001)	.003** (.001)	.001** (.001)
Republican Spot Buys	-.017** (.001)	-.003** (.000)	-.002** (.000)
1992		.177** (.002)	.102** (.009)
1996		.167** (.002)	.109** (.009)
Constant	.030 (.001)	-.099** (.002)	-.058** (.006)
Adjusted R-squared	.11	.59	.77
N of Counties=	9242	9242	9242

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses. Coefficients for state-level dummy variables not shown. Counties in the Washington D.C. media market are omitted from these analyses, as are counties in the Davenport and Madison media markets for the 2000 election. Positive values for coefficients indicate deviations favoring Democratic candidates, while negative values indicate deviations favoring Republican candidates.

Table 4
Election-Year Differences in the Impact of Campaign Activities on County-Level Deviations from Normal Democratic Margins of Victory

	1992	1996	2000
Democratic Candidate Appearances	-.003** (.001)	.007** (.001)	.003* (.001)
Republican Candidate Appearances	.001 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	.010** (.002)
Democratic Campaign Spot Buys	.002 (.001)	.005** (.001)	-.000 (.001)
Republican Campaign Spot Buys	.000 (.001)	-.003** (.001)	-.001 (.001)
Constant	.046** (.004)	.051** (.005)	-.058** (.009)
Adjusted R-squared	.474	.488	.487
N of Counties=	3091	3091	3060

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses. Coefficients for state-level dummy variables not shown. Counties in the Washington D.C. media market are omitted from these analyses, as are counties in the Davenport and Madison media markets for the 2000 election. Positive values for coefficients indicate deviations favoring Democratic candidates, while negative values indicate deviations favoring Republican candidates.

Table 5
Enhanced Analysis of Campaign Effects on Deviations from Normal Voting in the 2000 Election

Gore Appearances	.003 (.001)
Lieberman Appearances	.006** (.001)
Bush Appearances	.002 (.002)
Cheney Appearances	.013** (.002)
Democratic Campaign Advertising	.001 (.001)
Republican Campaign Advertising	.002 (.001)
Democratic National Committee Advertising	.002 (.001)
Republican National Committee Advertising	-.006** (.001)
Constant	-.057** (.008)
Adjusted R-squared	.507
N of Counties=	3060

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses. Coefficients for state-level dummy variables not shown. Counties in the Washington D.C. media market are omitted from these analyses, as are counties in the Davenport and Madison media markets. Positive values for coefficients indicate deviations favoring Democratic candidates, while negative values indicate deviations favoring Republican candidates.

Table 6
The Electoral College Impact Of Candidate Appearances

		Electoral College Totals			
		Actual Count	No Local Democratic Appearances	No Local Republican Appearances	No Local Appearances from Either Campaign
2000	Bush/Cheney	271	301	324	342
	Gore/Lieberman	266	236	213	195
1996	Dole/Kemp	159	159	159	159
	Clinton/Gore	379	379	379	379
1992	Bush/Quayle	168	180	180	196
	Clinton/Gore	370	358	358	342

Note: A state's electoral college vote is considered switched if predictions from either the pooled data equation or the year-specific equation show a change in the state-level winner. 2000 estimates include appearances by both presidential and vice-presidential candidates; 1992 and 1996 estimates only count appearances made by the presidential candidates. All estimates retain patterns of spot advertising by the campaigns and, for 2000 only, the national committees.

Table 7
The Electoral College Impact Of Spot Buys

		Electoral College Totals			
		Actual Count	No Democratic Spot Ads	No Republican Spot Ads	No Spot Ads from Either Party
2000	Bush/Cheney	271	301	238	246
	Gore/Lieberman	266	236	299	291
1996	Dole/Kemp	159	182	138	159
	Clinton/Gore	379	356	400	379
1992	Bush/Quayle	168	168	168	184
	Clinton/Gore	370	370	370	354

Note: A state's electoral college vote is considered switched if predictions from either the pooled data equation or the year-specific equation show a change in the state-level winner. 2000 estimates include both campaign and national party advertising. All estimates retain patterns of appearances by candidates.