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THE CONVENTION BUMP

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Do the national conventions of the Democratic and Republican parties affect the poll standings of the presidential candidates they nominate? This study investigates whether these poll standings are bumped upwards following the party conventions. The convention bump is examined with Gallup and Harris time series data of presidential trial-heats throughout the course of seven campaigns from 1964 to 1988. We find that (1) with few exceptions, there is a convention bump; (2) the bump typically adds about 5 to 7 percentage points to the nominee's postconvention poll standing; (3) the effects of conventions carry well into the general election campaign; (4) the first convention in the campaign sequence, held by the out-party, generates an additional but temporary increase in the nominee's support; and (5) convention bumps may be greater for harmonious conventions following divisive nomination contests.

Given the '76 experiences it was clear that Reagan should and would get a very big boost in July at his convention. . . . We knew that once we had our convention there was going to be a bounce back for the incumbent [Carter], as there had been in '76. . . . It was predictable.
— Patrick J. Caddell[1]

Over the years, the national party conventions have lost many of whatever deliberative functions they once had. Although they still write platforms, officially bestow the party nomination on a previously determined nominee, and provide an audience for the announcement of the vice-presidential nominee, they have not served as a forum in which the presidential nomination is actually decided for some time (see Carleton 1964; Parris 1972; and Marshall 1981). The last major party national convention to have gone to a second presidential nomination

ballot was the 1952 Democratic convention that took three ballots to nominate Adlai Stevenson (Congressional Quarterly 1985). Even in the close nomination fights of Republicans in 1976 and the Democrats in 1980, battles over delegate votes were decided before the delegates ever assembled at their parties' conventions. Although conventions no longer provide an assembly that actively decides the parties' nominees, they continue to serve several functions for the parties.

Perhaps the most important remaining function of party conventions is what David, Goldman, and Bain (1964, 339) refer to as the "rally function." Conventions mark an important transition in campaigns and set the tone for the parties' fall campaigns (see Kessel 1988). As Crotty and Jackson (1985) more recently put it,

> The party is well positioned for the race if the convention has been successful in creating enthusiasm for the candidate and in creating or ratifying a consensus; if the party has adopted positions that promise to be attractive to the voters; and if the party has successfully avoided alienating its activists and voters. If problems remain evident after the convention, or if the problems are actually exacerbated by the events of the convention itself, then the nominee and his party are likely to be in trouble in November. (P. 206)

The impact of the national convention as the campaign kick-off rally appears in the "trial-heat" polls now commonly conducted throughout the course of the campaign. Pollsters and political commentators have observed what has become known as "the convention bump" in these polls (see Breglio and Harrison 1989; Caddell and Wirthlin 1981; Hart and Wirthlin 1985; and Cook 1988). The conventional wisdom is that a nominee's poll standing improves a bit — is bumped upwards — following his party's convention. This article systematically assesses the "convention bump."

REASONS FOR THE CONVENTION BUMP

There are several possible reasons why candidates might benefit directly from their conventions. The first reason is that the convention may help to heal internal party divisions. Supporters of candidates who did not win the party's nomination may feel uncomfortable immediately casting their support with the nominated candidate that they had

opposed just a short time ago. They may resent the nominee. Many may initially indicate indecision about their general election vote decision. For a time, some may even contemplate a vote for the opposition party. Although some of the wounds of internal party battles may heal with time alone, the convention may speed the process. Conventions allow factional leaders to come together in a show of unity, sending the message that differences with the opposing party outweigh any differences remaining within. As a result, although some disgruntled and disappointed partisans may sit out the election or even bolt to the opposition, the convention encourages many who might have contemplated these options to return to the fold.[2]

Second, related to their possible healing effects, national conventions may also give an extra push to their nominee's bandwagon.[3] The official investing of a candidate as the party's standard-bearer may draw less attentive voters to declare their support. Once nominated, a candidate may also gain greater respect from the more wary partisans who held off committing to any candidate.

Third, the convention bump may also reflect the generally favorable publicity for the party generated by its convention. Certainly conventions focus a good deal of media attention on the party. Moreover, most of this attention is likely to be favorable. Convention speakers and the usually warm to enthusiastic receptions they receive from the delegates creates positive images of the party. As Richard Wirthlin, Reagan's campaign adviser, noted following the 1980 campaign: "We viewed the convention as the single best opportunity to present, almost unencumbered, our candidate to a very wide voter group" (Caddell and Wirthlin 1981, 4). Although voters may react differently to the content of the party's message, the message is usually unrebutted and the atmosphere surrounding its delivery is almost always favorable. With the notorious exception of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, parties generally have control over much of the information reported and use this control to their advantage. Many convention activities are now intentionally orchestrated for "external consumption" to place the party and its nominee in the most attractive light. With the withering of the deliberative functions of the convention, they have become even more carefully choreographed for their public relations value.[4] In this light, we should not be surprised that undecideds or those with weakly held preferences are swung by the convention in favor of the party's nominee.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Two recent studies find evidence of a convention bump by comparing polls before and after conventions. Shafer (1988, 232-35) examined Gallup trial-heat polls before and after each of the conventions in six campaigns from 1964 to 1984. He found fairly consistent evidence of the bump in these campaigns. The nominees' standings in the polls improved after their conventions in all but two cases. The improvement was typically on the order of about 5 percentage points. However, two candidates, McGovern in 1972 and Johnson in 1964, registered no gains following their conventions. In Johnson's case, his lead over Goldwater may have been so large before the convention that there was little room to add to his lead (Shafer 1988, 233). The results of Wayne's analysis of the 1976, 1980, and 1984 conventions, also based on Gallup results, indicated convention bumps of 4 to 10 percentage points in a candidate's standing (Wayne 1988, 140).

In addition to the Shafer and Wayne studies, there is circumstantial evidence of a convention bump. First, a sizable number of voters report making up their minds about their vote choice by the end of the parties' conventions. Although better than a third of the public normally report that they reached their decision prior to the conventions, another quarter of the electorate say that they decided how to vote at the time of the conventions (Davis 1983, 196). Second, presidential-election forecasting models have been found to be much more accurate when based on polling data immediately following the conventions rather than prior to them (Lewis-Beck 1985; Campbell and Wink 1990). Presumably, something happens to public opinion between preconvention and postconvention polls that makes the postconvention polls substantially more reliable predictors of the November vote.

THE CONVENTION BUMP QUESTIONS

In the analysis to follow, we address several questions about the bump. The first concerns the regularity and magnitude of the bump. Is there solid evidence of a systematic convention bump? Do presidential candidates regularly receive a boost in their share of supporters following their conventions? How large is this boost typically and does

it reflect the effects of the political convention or would it occur even in the absence of a convention? Second, is the convention bump of any lasting consequence in the campaign? Is it merely a temporary reaction to the convention that is soon forgotten or does it leave voters with impressions that stay with them through the course of the campaign? Third, what affects the magnitude of the convention bump? Presumably, not all conventions are equally beneficial to candidates. Some conventions are more unifying events than others. Certainly, the Democrats might have expected a bigger boost from relatively united conventions like their 1964 Atlantic City convention or their 1988 Atlanta convention than from their 1968 debacle in Chicago or their 1948 convention in which both the left and right wings of the party bolted to run their own candidates.

DATA

The data are drawn from the results of trial-heat polls conducted by the Gallup Poll and the Harris organizations in the seven elections from 1964 to 1988. These trial-heat questions ask respondents during the campaign which of the presidential candidates they would vote for if the convention were held at the time of the poll. Although the polls may ask preferences between various pairing of major party candidates early in campaigns (before the nominations are clearly settled), we examine only those polls that pair the eventual nominees. From these polls we constructed the dependent variable of this analysis: the Democratic presidential candidate's share of major-party supporters.

There were several obstacles to the analysis that deserve note. Prior to 1964, polls were taken too infrequently to be of use in evaluating convention effects. Moreover, prior to 1964, it was especially rare to find polls conducted in the 3 to 5 weeks between the two national conventions. Between-convention polls as well as pre- and post-convention polls are necessary in order to distinguish the effects of one convention from the other.[5]

Even after limiting the analysis to the seven campaigns from 1964 to 1988, not all the polls conducted in these campaigns are appropriate for examining convention effects. Three criteria are used to ensure that polls are appropriate for our purposes. First, because of the notorious

volatility of early polls (Crespi 1988), we decided not to include in this analysis any poll conducted prior to March of the election year. Second, polls conducted within a few days of the official convening of the convention or actually during the convention are excluded because it is unclear whether they may have been influenced by the conventions. These polls occupy a no-man's-land, neither clearly pre- nor postconvention. Because the inclusion of these polls as either pre- or postconvention might have clouded estimates of convention effects, we decided simply to exclude them.[6] Third, some polls were excluded because the candidate options offered in the trial-heat question dif- fered from those generally offered in that particular campaign. In most campaigns, polls were excluded (for reasons of comparability) if they explicitly offered an option to support a third-party candidate. How- ever, in the 1968 and 1980 campaigns, third-party trial-heat options were the rule rather than the exception. In 1968, most post-March polls included George Wallace as an option for respondents, and in 1980, most post-March polls included John Anderson as an option. In these two elections, for the sake of consistency and comparability, polls were excluded if they offered only the two major party candidates as the choice.

The application of these criteria leaves between 15 and 40 polls available in each of the seven presidential campaigns. In each election, there are at least 3 polls prior to the first convention, at least 1 poll (and usually 3 to 6 polls) between the two conventions, and at least 8 and as many as 23 polls following the second convention. The entire series across all seven campaigns consists of 185 polls.

METHODS

The effects of party conventions are examined in two ways. Like the previous studies of Shafer and Wayne, we examined the change in trial-heat poll standings from before to after each party's respective convention. Polls conducted between 14 and 6 days prior to a conven- tion were compared to polls in the week following the convention or the first available postconvention poll.

Beyond examining simple differences between preconvention and postconvention polls, we conducted a pooled time series regression

analysis. The pooled time series analysis places the bump within the context of the full campaign and permits convention effects to be distinguished from more general trends of a campaign.[7] Because of the common problem of autocorrelation in time series data and the bias it introduces in the estimation of the standard errors of coefficients, convention effects within the time series were estimated with a variant of generalized least squares (GLS) or regression on generalized differences (Ostrom 1978, 35-40; Wonnacott and Wonnacott 1970, 140-143).[8] This GLS technique initially estimates first-order autocorrelation, corrects for it by the partial differencing of all variables (e.g., $X_t' = X_t - pX_{t-1}$, where p is the first-order autocorrelation parameter), and then estimates the equation with OLS using the partial differences.

The convention bump was estimated with two pairs of principal independent variables, one pair of variables for Democratic conventions and one for Republican conventions. The first variable of each pair is a simple postconvention dummy variable, taking a value of 0 for all polls conducted before the convention and 1 for polls after the convention. The coefficients of these dummy variables indicate intercept changes or changes in the level of support for the Democratic candidate. Convention bumps should appear as a positive value for the Democratic convention dummy variable and a negative value for the Republican convention dummy variable (less support for the Democratic candidate following the Republican convention). The second variable of each pair is the number of days between the end of the Democratic or Republican convention and when the poll was taken.[9] This variable permits the slope to change following a convention, measuring any trend following a bump.[10] We expected that there would be a decay over time in the effects of the conventions. As conventions become more distant events and as the campaign moves on to other things, the conventions should play a diminished role in voter preferences. The decay of convention effects should be reflected in a negative trend coefficient for the Democratic party (further from the convention, less Democratic support) and a positive trend coefficient for the Republican party. In addition to these principal independent variables, the equation includes a set of dummy variables to control for the general level of partisan support in each election and counter variables to control for any preconvention trends in the campaigns.[11]

FINDINGS

THE BASIC BUMP

The simple computation of the convention bump confirmed the earlier findings of Shafer (1988) and Wayne (1988). In most cases, presidential candidates get a boost in the polls with their parties' national conventions. The change in the trial-heat standing of presidential nominees between the preconvention and postconvention polls are reported in Table 1. As these differences indicate, a presidential candidate can expect typically to receive a boost in the polls of about 6 percentage points. However, it is not at all unusual for the convention bump to be in excess of 10 percentage points. Candidates received double-digit boosts following 4 of the 14 conventions held since 1964.

As the previous studies found, among recent elections, there were only two instances in which candidates failed to improve their standing after their party's convention. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson's standing was unchanged after the Democratic convention. As Shafer suggested, the Johnson exception may be due to a "ceiling effect" on the support for a then very popular and well known incumbent president. The second exception also involves the Democrats. McGovern actually dropped two points in the polls following his 1972 Democratic nomination. The 1972 Democratic convention was apparently unusually ineffective in pulling disaffected partisans back into the Democratic fold. That convention, the first Democratic convention conducted under the McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms, was highly controversial, contentious, and disorganized.[12] If that were not enough, it was capped off by the controversial nomination of McGovern's initial running mate, Senator Thomas Eagleton.[13] Whether the result of the representation groups outside the mainstream, the Eagleton fiasco, lingering hostilities from the 1968 Chicago convention, or the apparently unpopular turn to the left by McGovern Democrats, the usual benefits of the convention bump simply did not materialize for the Democrats in 1972.

The results from the time series analyses were generally in accord with those of the simple before-and-after convention differences. The GLS regressions for the pooled series with the Democratic presidential candidate's share of the two-party trial-heats as the dependent variable

TABLE 1
Change in the Two-Candidate Trial-Heat
Standings of Presidential Nominees between their
Preconvention and the Postconvention Polls, 1964-1988

Year	Democrat			Republican		
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Change (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Change (%)
1964	69.1	69.1	0.0	20.8	33.7	+12.9[a]
1968 (t)[b]	39.2	41.9	+2.7	46.8	60.8	+14.1[a]
1972	41.3	39.3	−2.0[a]	64.8	65.5	+0.7
1976	59.6	68.1	+8.6[a]	35.2	42.5	+7.3
1980 (t)[b]	36.0	48.4	+12.4	54.9	67.1	+12.2[a]
1984	44.3	50.0	+5.7[a]	56.0	57.9	+1.8
1988	53.4	59.3	+5.9[a]	46.5	52.7	+6.2

Mean percentage change		
	All conventions	6.3
	First conventions	8.2
	Second conventions	4.4
	Democratic conventions	4.8
	Republican conventions	7.9
Percentage with gains		86 (12 of 14)
Median percentage change		6.1

NOTE: The percentages are based on only supporters of the two major party candidates. The percentage point gains are the differences between the percentage of respondents indicating a preference for the party's candidate in the last preconvention and postconvention polls. Preconvention polls were completed at least 6 days prior to the convention. In cases in which more than one poll was conducted between 14 and 6 days before the convention, poll results were averaged. The postconvention poll was the first postconvention poll or the average of postconvention polls if there were more than one poll in the week following the convention. The specific dates of the polls are available from the author.
a. Indicates the party had the first convention in the campaign.
b. (t) indicates that original polls included an explicit option of a third-party candidate.

are presented in Table 2. The estimates of Equation 1 indicate the expected significant shifts in the intercept or level of Democratic support following both Democratic and Republican conventions. Convention bumps for Republicans are a fairly healthy 7 to 8 percentage points. The estimate of the bump for Democrats indicates a much more modest effect, of less than half the magnitude of the Republican bump. It would also appear from the estimates of Equation 1 that neither party's bump deteriorates with time. The effects suggest a simple process of "bump" and "bump back," with Republicans typically gaining an advantage of more than 4 percentage points. This is a

TABLE 2
GLS Estimates of Democratic and
Republican Party Convention Bump Effects, 1964-1988

Independent Variables	Equation 1		Equation 2	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	52.148*	0.647	51.216*	0.645
Democratic convention bump	3.192*	0.986	5.211*	1.086
Democratic bump in 1964, 1968, and 1972	—	—	−6.767*	1.785
Days since Democratic convention	−0.038	0.036	−0.096*	0.038
Republican convention bump	−7.430*	1.372	−6.698*	1.332
Days since Republican convention	0.052	0.035	0.113*	0.037
Number of cases	176		176	
R^2 (adjusted R^2)	.80 (.78)		.82 (.80)	
Standard error of estimate	3.03		2.91	
Durbin-Watson	1.98		2.12	

NOTE: The dependent variable is the percentage of two-candidate trial-heat support for the Democratic party. The "bump" variables are scored 1 for polls following the convention and 0 prior to the convention. "Days since the convention" are the number of days since the last day of the respective convention. The equation also includes a set of dummy variables for the election years and interactions of these dummy variables with the number of days before the first convention of a year to control for preconvention trends, whenever these trends were statistically significant in the initial saturated OLS estimate of the model (included for 1964, 1968, 1976, and 1980). The coefficient of the first-order autocorrelation used in computing "generalized differences" in the GLS estimate was .296. The first case in each year was dropped in computing the generalized differences (Wonnacott and Wonnacott 1970, 142). Two cases identified by diagnostic statistics as outliers with high "leverage" were also dropped from the final estimates.
*$p < .01$ (one-tailed).

substantively significant advantage given the competitive range of the presidential vote.

As the simple difference analysis of Table 1 suggests, convention bumps are not automatic. For various reasons, the Democrats apparently failed to win a bump in 1964 and in 1972. The simple differences do not indicate it as clearly, but the Democrats also appear not to have received much of a bump following their raucous 1968 convention.[14] Equation 2 takes these exceptions into account by including a separate variable for these apparent nonbump Democratic conventions. The results of including this variable are quite positive. Its inclusion clarifies the estimated effects of other variables (all are now statisti-

cally significant), strengthens the equation's fit and locates where much of the partisan difference in the magnitude of convention effects occurs. Although the typical Democratic bump (5.2%) still appears somewhat smaller than the typical Republican bump (6.7%), they are now in the same ballpark.

Perhaps most important, Equation 2 clarifies postconvention trends. The estimates of these trends indicates the expected decay of convention bumps as the campaign progresses. Moreover, the decay process for the two parties is of nearly equal length. The length of the decay process can be calculated by how many days it takes to eliminate the candidate's initial rise in the polls. These calculations suggest that the direct effects of conventions on poll standings last about 2 months, 54 days for the Democratic bump ($[5.211/.096] = 54.3$) and 59 days for the Republican bump ($[6.698/.113] = 59.3$).[15] Of course, both parties normally receive convention bumps and, thus, one party's bump is at least partially offset by the effects of the opposing party's convention. However, to the extent that the bumps are unequal, the party receiving the greater bump would appear to gain a real advantage for the campaign.

VARIATION IN THE BUMP

As both the simple differences and time series analyses suggest, there is considerable variation in the magnitude of the convention bump. In some elections, as discussed above, candidates may be denied any bump at all (e.g., the Democrats in 1972). Although candidates generally operate in the gain column following their conventions, a few do not, a few receive a slight bump, and others receive a rather considerable boost. There are bumps and then there are *bumps*. Although there are undoubtedly many idiosyncrasies in any convention (e.g., the conflict on the streets of Chicago during the 1968 Democratic convention) and although our set of conventions is small in number, we consider two possible systematic sources of variation in convention bumps: the order of the convention in the campaign and the nature of conflict in the nomination contest leading up to and including the convention.[16]

Convention bumps may vary according to the sequence of the convention in the campaign. First conventions in campaigns differ in two potentially important respects from second conventions. Most obviously, they reach voters earlier in their decision process when voters might be more open to influence or volatile in their preference. Also, since the 1936 campaign, the first convention has been held by the out-party. Unlike the in-party which often nominates the incumbent president or vice president, the out-party more often nominates a candidate who may not be as well-known to all voters. Voter impressions of the out-party candidate may thus be more fluid and, again, more open to influence. Thus both the simple time difference and the incumbency difference between first and second conventions suggest a larger bump from first conventions in a campaign.

The convention bump may also vary according to the level of internal party conflict before and during the convention. We might expect a larger bump for parties that had a divisive nomination contest but a harmonious, healing convention. In such a case, many partisans may be disgruntled during the nomination battle but may also be won back to support the party's nominee. Under these circumstances, there is the potential for relatively large convention gains. Conversely, we might expect a smaller bump for parties that had a divisive nomination contest that carried into the convention. A convention presents an opportunity to bring the party together. If factions are still doing battle at the convention, the opportunity for nurturing party unity is lost and the eventual nominee may see little, if any, bump in his poll standings.

Convention Sequence

The initial examination of convention bumps in Table 1 suggests that convention sequence matters, that the bump from the first convention of a campaign is generally greater than from the second convention. The average first convention bump was almost twice the size of the average second convention bump. A more systematic time series analysis is presented in Table 3. Although also finding differences between first and second conventions, the time series analysis finds these differences to be more temporary than the basic convention bumps.

TABLE 3
GLS Estimates of Convention Sequence Effects on
Democratic and Republican Convention Bumps, 1964-1988

	Equation 1		Equation 2	
Independent Variables	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	50.239**	0.666	51.501**	0.622
Democratic convention bump	9.598**	2.324	2.260*	1.131
Democratic first-convention bump	−7.839	3.785	—	—
Democratic first-convention blip	—	—	3.339**	1.373
Days since Democratic convention	−0.057	0.068	−0.063*	0.034
Democratic bump in 1964, 1968, and 1972	−7.759**	1.729	−4.824**	1.517
Republican convention bump	−5.816**	1.834	−4.870**	1.222
Republican first-convention bump	−6.324*	4.005	—	—
Republican first-convention blip	—	—	−8.621**	2.218
Days since Republican convention	0.059	0.069	0.075*	0.033
Number of cases	177		173	
R^2 (adjusted R^2)	.86 (.84)		.87 (.86)	
Standard error of estimate	2.87		2.76	
Durbin-Watson	2.09		2.00	

NOTE: The dependent variable is the percentage of two-candidate trial-heat support for the Democratic party. See Table 2 for descriptions of the "bump" and "days since convention" variables. The "first bump" variables are scored like the "bump" variables but only when a party's convention is held first in a campaign. The first-convention "blip" variables are scored 1 for polls in the week following a campaign's first convention and 0 otherwise. These equations also include election dummy variables and controls for preconvention trends (for 1964, 1968, 1976, and 1980). The first-order autocorrelation coefficients used in computing generalized differences in the GLS was .238 in Equation 1 and .142 in Equation 2. Cases identified by diagnostic statistics as outliers with high "leverage" were dropped from the final estimates (one case from Equation 1 and five cases from Equation 2).
$*p < .06; **p < .01$ (one-tailed).

The first equation in Table 3 is identical to the second equation in Table 2, except that it also includes two variables to estimate the extra bump of first Democratic and Republican conventions, gains made over and above any bump associated with conventions held second in the campaign season. The results here are mixed. The coefficients suggest no extra impact of first conventions for Democrats (the coefficient takes the "wrong" sign) but finds the expected larger first convention bump for Republicans (although its statistical significance is not as impressive as one might like, $p < .06$, one-tailed).

Equation 2 in Table 3 examines the effects of convention sequence from a different light. Rather than specifying first convention effects as a permanent boost above and beyond that of second conventions, the equation's first convention variable suggests a very temporary additional boost following first conventions, a first convention "blip" beyond the bump. This convention "blip" is scored 1 in the week following a party's convention if that convention is first in the campaign and 0 otherwise. The equation finds strong evidence of this temporary first convention bump or "blip" for both parties. First conventions have provided the Democratic party with a 3.3% temporary bump above its normal 2.3% bump and have provided the Republican party with a hefty 8.6% temporary bump above its normal 4.9% bump.

Intraparty Conflict and Conventions

A good portion of the convention bump is presumably based on the convention's healing of internal party divisions. Two conditions are implied in the healing of these divisions: that there have been significant internal party conflicts that require healing and that the convention serves as a forum for reconciliation. These two conditions suggest three types of conventions: (1) those in which both the nomination and convention were conflictual, (2) those in which neither the nomination nor the convention were conflictual, and (3) those in which the nomination was a matter of serious conflict ending prior to the convention. We expect high conflict nominations and conventions to provide the smallest bump to the nominee. The opportunity to unite the party is lost in these tumultuous conventions. Conversely, we expect the largest convention bumps to follow what might be called "healing conventions." If a party has had a highly divisive nomination battle, there is likely to be a great deal of healing to do following the determination of the nominee.

Although the assignment of conventions to the above three categories is admittedly impressionistic, each of the 14 conventions was classified into a category and then assigned an index value: a value of 1 if classified as a high conflict convention, 2 if it followed a low conflict nomination, or 3 if it was a healing convention.[17] The 1968,

1972, and 1980 Democratic conventions along with the 1964, 1976, and 1980 Republican conventions were coded as high conflict conventions. The 1976 and 1984 Democratic conventions and both 1988 conventions were identified as healing conventions. The remaining conventions were assigned to the middle category of low conflict nominations (the 1964 Democratic and the 1968, 1972, and 1984 Republican).

The effect of nomination divisiveness on the convention bump was estimated with an interaction term of the convention bump dummy variable and the three-category divisiveness index. Like the dummy convention bump variables themselves, the effects of nomination divisiveness should be reflected in a positive coefficient for the Democrats (a healing Democratic convention particularly increases Democratic support) and a negative coefficient for the Republican (a healing Republican convention particularly reduces Democratic support).

One complication had to be addressed in calculating the effects of a nomination divisiveness: the 1964 Democratic convention. As noted above, there was no appreciable bump for Johnson following the relatively uneventful 1964 Democratic convention because Johnson's preconvention support was already overwhelming. This complication is taken into account by estimating the effects of nomination divisiveness both with and without a separate 1964 Democratic convention bump variable. The regression results of divisiveness effects are reported in Table 4.

Evidence regarding the effects of intraparty conflict on the convention bump is weak but positive. In Equation 1 the expected effects of healing versus conflictual conventions are found for the Republican party but not for the Democratic party, where the coefficient actually took the sign opposite the one predicted but did not reach statistical significance. When the 1964 Democratic convention anomaly is taken into account in Equation 2, the evidence appears a bit more consistent. The interaction coefficient takes the expected sign for both parties. Although the divisiveness coefficient is not statistically significant in the case of Democratic conventions, it appears that the difference between a high conflict and a healing Republican convention produces a 4 percentage point intercept shift in Republican support following the convention.

GLS Estimates of Nomination Divisiveness Effects on
Democratic and Republican Convention Bumps, 1964-1988.

Independent Variables	Equation 1		Equation 2	
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error
Constant	52.959***	0.755	52.455***	0.763
Democratic convention bump	5.913**	2.762	3.223*	2.433
Interaction with nomination divisiveness	−1.711	1.546	0.564	1.334
Democratic bump in 1964	—	—	−11.199***	3.505
Days since Democratic convention	0.040	0.042	−0.072	0.044
Republican convention bump	−5.145**	2.594	−4.385**	2.516
Interaction with nomination divisiveness	−2.066*	1.605	−2.063*	1.452
Days since Republican convention	−0.034	0.042	0.097**	0.045
Number of cases	175		177	
R^2 (adjusted R^2)	.81 (.81)		.84 (.83)	
Standard error of estimate	2.97		2.97	
Durbin-Watson	2.12		2.01	

NOTE: The dependent variable is the percentage of two-candidate trial-heat support for the Democratic party. The "nomination divisiveness" index was scored 1 for high conflict conventions, 2 for conventions following less severely divisive nomination battles, and 3 for conventions following settled nominations after a divisive nomination battle (a "healing" convention). The codings of individual conventions are indicated in the text. See Tables 2 and 3 for descriptions of the other variables. These equations also include election dummy variables and controls for preconvention trends (for 1964, 1968, 1976, and 1980). The coefficients of the first-order autocorrelation used in computing generalized differences in the GLS was .289 in Equation 1 and .247 in Equation 2. Three cases in Equation 1 and one case in Equation 2 were identified by diagnostic statistics as outliers with high "leverage" and were dropped from the final estimates of the respective equations.
*$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$ (one-tailed).

CONCLUSIONS

There are four principal findings regarding the convention bump. First, it exists. In most cases, conventions continue to fulfill their "rally function" for the political parties and their presidential candidates. Presidential candidates usually increase their poll standings following their party's convention, typically by about 5 to 7 percentage points. The simple difference of pre- and postconvention polls as well as the time series analyses confirms the earlier analyses of Shafer (1988) and Wayne (1988). Like these previous studies, we found the Democratic

conventions of 1964 and 1972 to be exceptions to the usual conven-tion gains. However, unlike the analysis of simple differences (but consistent with conventional wisdom), the time series analysis indi-cated that the 1968 Democratic convention was also a "bumpless" convention. As these exceptions suggest, although candidates gener-ally are strengthened by their conventions, gains cannot be taken for granted. Conventions present a unique opportunity to reunite a party and attract uncommitted voters. It is up to the party to exploit this opportunity.

Second, the time series analyses suggest that convention bumps are not strictly short-lived. Convention effects generally do not disappear overnight. Typically, the effects of conventions carry well into the campaign. The way a candidate comes out of his convention is of some real consequence to the campaign and, perhaps, the ultimate election outcome.

Third, there is a more substantial change associated with first conventions in a campaign. Whether because the out-party tradition-ally holds their convention first or because first conventions reach voters when they are more impressionable, presidential candidates nominated in the first convention of a campaign typically receive a bigger boost in the polls than candidates nominated in a second convention. However, unlike the normal convention bump, the addi-tional or bonus support associated with a first convention is typically very short-lived.

Fourth, there is some evidence to suggest that convention bumps may be larger when parties are more divided in the nomination campaign but manage to hold a conciliatory convention. If there are wounds to heal and the battle has clearly ended, conventions can help to reunify a party before the fall campaign.

Aside from demonstrating the continued importance of political conventions to parties and their nominees and the fact that the benefits of conventions cannot be taken for granted, the above findings should inform poll watching during presidential campaigns. Polls should be read relative to the expected. Bumps in candidates' poll standings following their conventions are to be expected, especially following first conventions. The absence of a bump or an especially small bump should be read as a warning about the candidate's prospects (except

when a candidate is well ahead of the opposition as Johnson was in 1964). A much larger than normal bump, discounting the extra short-lived increase following first conventions, should be read as an optimistic sign for a candidate.

NOTES

1. The epigraph is taken from *Public Opinion*'s joint interview with the top-level campaign advisers to Carter's and Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign (Caddell and Wirthlin 1981, 5). Dukakis's pollster in 1988, "Tubby" Harrison, also acknowledged the effects of the convention bump in a postelection *Public Opinion* interview with Ben Wattenberg in the following exchange with Wattenberg about Dukakis's big lead in the polls following the Democratic convention:

> Wattenberg Q: So the plus-seventeen was a halo effect from the Democratic convention?
> Harrison A: Yes, and the campaign so understood it. (Breglio and Harrison 1989, 5)

2. As research by Southwell (1986), Stone (1986), and Kenney and Rice (1988) indicate, convention effects notwithstanding, many partisans who had supported candidates not receiving the party's nomination refuse to return to the fold for the general election.

3. Bartels (1988) offers an excellent analysis of the effects of bandwagons, campaign momentum, or candidate viability in presidential primaries. Although he finds evidence of early bandwagon effects among primary voters, we might expect later bandwagon effects from less attentive nonprimary voters who may vote in the general election.

4. Ironically, the greater orchestration of conventions for public consumption may have lead to the deemphasis of their coverage by the major television networks. All three networks previously offered viewers "gavel-to-gavel" coverage when conventions were more unpredictable and potentially more conflictual. More recently, however, the networks have reduced the on-air coverage, most probably as a consequence of stricter convention organization and an unwillingness to let the convention organizers dictate what receives media time.

5. The 1936 Gallup series, for instance, lacked a preconvention trial-heat poll and, therefore, is not useful for the purposes here. In 1940 there were no trial-heat polls prior to the Republican convention in June but the first trial-heat poll was conducted within a week of the start of the Democratic convention in July. Because this rules out analysis of the 1940 Republican convention bump and because the July trial-heat reading was so close to the Democratic convention, the 1940 case is excluded from the analysis. The requirement of a between-convention poll rules out the remaining trial-heat series prior to the 1964 campaign.

6. The explicit criteria was to exclude any poll completing its field work within 5 days of the convention. Eleven polls were excluded on these grounds. Most of these excluded polls were conducted either during the convention or within 3 days of the opening of the convention.

7. The analysis initially examined two versions of the trial-heat variables, one excluding undecideds and those indicating a preference for a third-party candidate (the two-candidate division of support) and one including these respondents. The initial results were quite similar for the two analyses.

8. In each election, autocorrelation was positive and in each election except 1984 it was in excess of .45. GLS estimates for slope coefficients are equivalent to the OLS coefficients. The

GLS constant, however, is not equal to the OLS constant. The constants reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4 are equivalent to the OLS constants. They have been calculated from the GLS estimates and the autocorrelation parameter. Also, we should note that the R-squares of GLS estimated equation are consistently smaller than those of OLS

    9. The conventions since 1964 have taken place anywhere from 68 to 113 days (measured from the last day of the convention) before election day. The final day of each convention and the number of days before election day are:

    1964, Republican July 16 (110) and Democrat August 27 (68)
    1968, Republican August 8 (89) and Democrat August 29 (68)
    1972, Democrat July 13 (113) and Republican August 23 (76)
    1976, Democrat July 15 (110) and Republican August 19 (75)
    1980, Republican July 17 (110) and Democrat August 14 (82)
    1984, Democrat July 19 (110) and Republican August 23 (75)
    1988, Democrat July 21 (110) and Republican August 18 (82).

    10. This specification essentially follows the interrupted time series strategy employed by Lewis-Beck and Alford (1980).

    11. The preconvention trend variables are coded as the number of days from the date of the poll to election day for polls conducted before the first convention of the campaign and they are coded 0 for polls conducted after the first convention. These trend variables were included only in years in which initial OLS estimates indicated a significant preconvention trend (i.e., 1964, 1968, 1976, and 1980).

    12. Several bitterly fought delegate credentials disputes combined with the decidedly noncentrist platform planks, contributed to the poor image many Americans carried away from this convention. Probably the most graphic evidence of the convention's disarray is the fact that McGovern gave his nomination acceptance speech in the wee hours of the morning, long after the large prime-time television audience had gone to bed.

    13. Public concern about Eagleton's mental health history eventually led to his taking himself off the ticket a little more than 2 weeks following the convention. McGovern's image may have also been damaged at the convention by the widely publicized refusal of Senator Edward Kennedy to accept the vice-presidential nomination.

    14. These three conventions also appeared to be exceptions in a preliminary year-by-year time series analysis under numerous different specifications of convention effects. Also, although the 1972 Republican bump appears negligible in the simple difference analysis of Table 1, it was stronger and statistically significant in the year-by-year time series analysis and was, therefore, not grouped with the three nonbump Democratic conventions.

    15. Given the GLS correction for autocorrelation, these decay estimates may be liberal. That is, convention effects may decay at a slower rate than estimated in Table 2. From one standpoint, autocorrelation in polls is real. Prior public opinion affects later public opinion. Therefore, there may be a theoretical argument for *not* correcting for autocorrelation. OLS estimates of Equation 2 in Table 2 indicates a Democratic bump of 4.8 with a decay of .011 percentage points per day and a Republican bump of 8.8 with a decay of .035 percentage points per day. These estimates suggest that less than half of the bump has decayed by election day.

    16. Initially, we considered a third possible source of variation in convention bumps, the democratization of the nomination process by the party reform movement of the late 1960s. Many argued that these reforms, although not uniform in their effects, had the net impact of impeding the party's principal goal of attracting support for its candidates by encouraging the

persistence of intraparty conflict (Ceaser 1979, 1982). If so, we might expect a smaller convention bump in the postreform era. We could not find this suspected effect. We suspect that the greater internal party conflict facilitated by reforms may have been off-set by the trend of earlier primaries and caucuses. The "front-end loading" of the process may allow most nomination conflicts to be settled early so that conventions can continue to function as unifying events (Marshall 1981).

17. We decided on the coding from 1 to 3 after experimenting with several alternative coding schemes.

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