PSC 344, Presidential Campaigns
Second Half of the Course
T-Th. 3:30 to 4:50pm
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115 Talbert Hall

E-mail: jcampbel@buffalo.edu
Office Hours: 1 to 2:30pm, T-Th
and by appointment
Do Presidential Campaigns Affect Election Results?
6 Questions about Campaign Effects

1. Why are there real doubts about the net effect of presidential campaigns on the presidential vote?

2. Given the reasons to doubt campaign effects, how might campaigns have an impact on the vote?

3. How do campaigns affect the vote?

4. How does partisanship affect the campaign (and how does the campaign affect partisanship)?
6 Questions about Campaign Effects (continued)

5. How important is a candidate’s *partisan base* and how important are *swing voters*? Who are the swing voters and does their vote split decide elections?

6. How large are the net effects of presidential campaigns and how often do they decide presidential election outcomes?
Question 1:
Why are there real doubts about the net effect of presidential campaigns on the presidential vote?
Is this a real question? Is it really in doubt? If they don’t then why would...

Candidates devote endless hours criss-crossing the country on the campaign trail

The campaigns spend tens of millions of dollars on the campaign

The media devote untold hours and print covering the campaign

Strategists work tirelessly devising and revising campaign messages and strategies
So campaigns must have effects, but do they have much of a NET effect?

There is no question that if one of the candidate’s campaign failed to make an effort or was run very poorly, the other would win – but barring that, Some suggest that their effects simply cancel each other out.
Reason #2 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

The Stability of the Individual Vote Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-election Vote Intention</th>
<th>Post-Election Reported Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided/Other</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With just major-party voters --

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-election Vote Intention</th>
<th>Obama</th>
<th>Romney</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided/Other</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depending on whether you include third-party voters and non-voters in the mix: between 77% and 94% of possible voters were unchanged from their vote intention after the campaign.
Only 2% changed their vote intention from Romney to a vote for Obama or from Obama to Romney. Including

With those indicating a preference and then not voting or voting for a third-party candidate, the percentage of “changers” typically increases to about 20%.
Reason #3 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

A Large Percentage of the Electorate has essentially decided how they will vote BEFORE the Campaign really begins.

Early Vote Decisions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported Time of Decision</th>
<th>% of Voters (mean 1952-2004)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before or During the Conventions</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the conventions</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reason #4 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

A Stable Partisan Electorate
The average change in “macropartisanship” of voters between elections is only about 2 percentage points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reason #4 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

A Stable Partisan Electorate

And we have already seen that about 90% of partisans vote for their party’s presidential candidate

In the 2008 election
91% of Democrats voted for Obama
90% of Republicans voted for McCain
Reason #5 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

The Minimal Effects Conundrum

Those who are attentive are difficult to influence and
Those who are easier to influence are not attentive to the campaign
The Minimal Effects Theory of Political Campaigns

Political Interest → Stored Political Knowledge

Stored Political Knowledge → Opinion Change

Political Interest → Acquisition of New Information

Acquisition of New Information → Opinion Change
Reason #6 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

Retrospective Issue Voting

Much of what voters react to is already known to them before the campaign – especially the in-party’s record and whether they approve of it or not.

Much of the vote decision is based on pre-campaign experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Campaign Presidential Job Performance</th>
<th>Presidential Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve (51%)</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove (49%)</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reason #7 for Doubts about the Impact of Campaigns

Predictable Election Results

If election results can be quite accurately predicted before the campaign takes place, some interpret this as meaning that the Intervening campaign (between the forecast and election day) does not make any appreciable difference.
Two Conventional Views of Campaign Effects and the National Vote

1. The Journalistic View
   Obsessed with campaign minutiae

2. The Conventional Political Science View
   Oblivious to real effects
An Overview of a Third Perspective

The Theory of the Predictable Campaign

Campaigns have **MORE** of an impact that Political Scientists had believed

but

**LESS** of an Impact than Journalists believed

and Much of the Impact of Presidential Campaigns are **SYSTEMATIC** or **PREDICTABLE**
The Theory of the Predictable Campaign

Elections are Predictable, NOT because Presidential Campaigns do not have an effect, but because the effects of Campaigns are (a.) limited and (b.) largely themselves predictable or systematic.
The Theory of the Predictable Campaign
An Overview of the 3 Components

1. The Stable Context of the Campaign: Limited Campaign Effects
   a. Easy Decisions can be Early Decisions
      The Consistency of Voting Cues
   b. The Partisan Electorate
   c. Ideology, Values and the Vote (now Polarization)
   d. Perennial Issues
   e. The Known Record
   f. Known and Familiar Candidates
   g. Perceptual Screens to the Campaign
The Theory of the Predictable Campaign

3 Components

2. The Variable Context of the Campaign:
   Systematic Factors Incorporated Over the Campaign
   a. Presidential Incumbency
   b. The Election Year Economy
The Theory of the Predictable Campaign

3 Components

3. The Competitive Context of the Campaign:
   The Narrowing Effect
   a. Bringing the Disenchanted Back to the Fold
   b. Evenly Matched Campaigns
   c. The Font-runner as Target
   d. The Front-runner Plays it Safe
   e. Late Deciders Divide Evenly
The Theory of the Predictable Campaign

Fundamental NationalPolitical & EconomicConditions

Effect of Incumbency and Election-Year Economy

The Stable Context

The Campaign

Narrowing Effect with the tilt of Incumbency and the Economy

Unsystematic Campaign Events

Election Results
Figure 2.1. The Development of the Typical Campaign According to the Theory of the Predictable Campaign

Note: The impact of the variable context of presidential incumbency and the election-year economy on the course of the campaign depends on whether an incumbent president is seeking election, the party of the incumbent, and the growth rate in the economy.
2. What are the Systematic Effects of the Campaign on the election and what are the Unsystematic Effects of the Campaign?

The Total Effect of the Campaign =
Poll% (adj. for bias) for Candidate X at the start of the campaign minus Actual Vote% for Candidate X at the end of the campaign

The Systematic Effect of the Campaign =
Poll% (adj. for bias) for Candidate X at the start of the campaign minus the Predicted Vote% for Cand. X at the end of the campaign

The Unsystematic Effect of the Campaign =
The Predicted Vote% for Candidate X at the end of the campaign minus the Actual Vote% for Candidate X at the end of the campaign
Total Effect = Systematic Effect + Unsystematic Effect

(Poll – Vote) = (Poll – Prediction) + (Prediction – Vote)
The Stable Context of the Campaign: Limited Campaign Effects

a. Easy Decisions can be Early Decisions: The Consistency of Voting Cues

Evidence from the Likes/Dislikes Questions in the American National Election Study Surveys
Table. Percentage of Considerations (Likes/Dislikes) that Supported the Vote Choice for Democrat Al Gore in the 2000 Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Mentions Consistent with Vote Choice</th>
<th>% of Voters for the Candidate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Considerations Favored the Selected Candidate (NO BRAINER)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 out of 4 Mentions Favored the Selected Candidate (EASY)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 3 out of 4 Mentions Favored the Selected Candidate (MORE DIFFICULT)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roughly 75% to 80% of voters have an easy time deciding how they will vote.

More than 60% see NO real reason AT ALL to vote for one of the candidates.

The votes for these voters are settled BEFORE the campaign.
b. The Partisan Electorate and Ideology, Values and the Vote

Long-term partisan commitments are pervasive and important.

They are more and more cemented in place, invigorated and reinforced by consistent political ideologies.
The Median Voter is an Independent Moderate
But Most Voters are Not Independents and Not Moderates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Ideology</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderates/Don’t Knows</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partisanship and the Stable Context of the Presidential Campaign

Pervasive Partisanship (90% of voters are partisans)

+ Consistent Party Loyalty (90% of partisans vote for their party’s presidential candidate)

+ Stability of Partisanship (party ID distributions typically only change among voters by about 3% or so from one presidential election to another (some temporary change in PID and some turnout variation)

Many Easy Partisan Vote Decisions (see point “a”) can be made BEFORE the General Election Campaign Begins
A Detour
Side Questions about Party ID in the Stable Context –

1. If Partisanship is SO important to the individual vote choice and so pervasive and stable in the electorate, why doesn’t the political party with the most partisans win every presidential election?

2. Does Partisanship affect Election Results and, if so, HOW?

3. Why isn’t Partisanship included in any of the Election Forecasting Models?
1. If Partisanship is SO important to the individual vote choice and so pervasive and stable in the electorate, why doesn’t the political party with the most partisans win every presidential election?

The majority party once did have a “lock” on the White House

1860 to 1928, Republicans normally won

1932 to 1964, Democrats normally won

But no longer –

1968 to 2012, the Presidency is up for grabs, no party “lock”
Table. Presidential Election Outcomes and the Political Parties, 1860-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Era</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860-1928</td>
<td>14 (78%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Cleveland &amp; Wilson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-1964</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Eisenhower)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-2012</td>
<td>7 (58%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. If Partisanship is SO important to the individual vote choice and so pervasive and stable in the electorate, why doesn’t the political party with the most partisans win every presidential election?

Answer: The parties are now too closely divided for either party to dominate the other.
A Detour
Side Questions about Party ID in the Stable Context –

2. Does Partisanship affect Election Results and, if so, HOW?
**HOW PARTISANSHIP AFFECTS ELECTION RESULTS:**

$$DVOTE_T = (PID_D \times DVOTE_D) + (PID_I \times DVOTE_I) + (PID_R \times DVOTE_R)$$

Where,

- $DVOTE$ is the percentage of the national two-party vote for the Democratic Party's presidential candidate,

- $PID$ is the proportion of the electorate composed of a group of party identifiers, and

    - the subscripts T, D, I, and R refer to the total, Democratic Party Identifiers, Independents, and Republican Party Identifiers respectively.

Essentially, total Democratic Candidate’s Vote is made up of:
Votes from Democrats, Votes from Independents, and Votes from Republicans.
Table 4.1. The Partisan Composition of the Electorate, Partisan Defection Rates, Independent Voting and the National Popular Vote, 1952-2004

Dependent variable: The two-party national popular vote for the Democratic Party's presidential candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of the electorate with Democratic Party Identification</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party Identifiers' loyalty rate on the presidential vote</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote percentage among Pure Independents</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of the electorate with Republican Party Identification</td>
<td>−.396</td>
<td>−.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party Identifiers' defection rate on the presidential vote</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constant | .883 |

| N | 14 |
| R² | .996 |
| Adjusted R² | .994 |
| Standard error | .476 |
| Durbin-Watson | 1.364 |

Note: The coefficients in parentheses are t-ratios. All coefficients are statistically significant at the p<.01 level, one-tailed. The data are from NES and have been adjusted (rewighted by the presidential vote) to correspond to the actual presidential vote division. Republican defection, the Independent vote percentage for the Democratic candidate, and the Democratic loyalty rates only count votes for the presidential candidates of the two major parties. The percentage of pure independents is the baseline omitted category. It is omitted to prevent perfect multicollinearity among the independent variables.
The parties’ competition is itself a factor in the determining the vote PLUS

There is enough variation in defection and turnout rates within the parties to make a difference to the national vote

The most important factor – for the elections since 1952 -- was the loyalty rate of Democratic Party Identifiers. This was more variable or fluid before the 1990s and was of the majority party’s base before the 1980s.
A Detour
Side Questions about Party ID in the Stable Context –

3. Why isn’t Partisanship included in any of the Election Forecasting Models?

Partisan loyalties and turnout rates are built into the public opinion measures used in the forecasting models – presidential preference polls and presidential approval ratings.
Back to the Stable Context --

1. The Stable Context of the Campaign: Limited Campaign Effects
   a. Easy Decisions can be Early Decisions
      The Consistency of Voting Cues
   b. The Partisan Electorate
   c. Ideology, Values and the Vote (now Polarization)
   d. Perennial Issues
   e. The Known Record
   f. Known and Familiar Candidates
   g. Perceptual Screens to the Campaign
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Democratic Position</th>
<th>Republican Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income Tax Cuts</td>
<td>Opposition, more limited, targeted to middle and lower income citizens</td>
<td>Supportive, larger, across the board, also favor capital gains tax cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Program Spending</td>
<td>More spending or smaller cuts</td>
<td>Hold the line or larger cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Defense Spending</td>
<td>Hold the line or larger cuts</td>
<td>More spending or smaller cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Policy</td>
<td>Aggressive environmentalism or no roll back</td>
<td>More business and development oriented, reduce government regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights &amp; Affirmative Action</td>
<td>Supportive, aggressive enforcement Pro-active policy of “diversity”</td>
<td>Opposes quotas and reverse discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Policy</td>
<td>Rehabilitation, address societal reasons for criminal behavior</td>
<td>Emphasize swift, sure punishment that “fits” the crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>Supports</td>
<td>Opposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Democratic Position</td>
<td>Republican Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion Rights</td>
<td>Pro-Choice</td>
<td>Pro-Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td>Keep or increase</td>
<td>Reduce or oppose increase because it would increase unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>More spending on education</td>
<td>More parental choice, vouchers for public or private schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>Greater government involvement in and funding for</td>
<td>Hold steady or reduce government role in, Protect private health care system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to state and local governments</td>
<td>More, targeted to poorer communities, require compliance with national standards &amp; policies</td>
<td>Less, general aid to communities &amp; states and let them determine best use more reticent about attaching strings to the assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Known Record

The incumbent’s (and by association, the in-party’s) record is certainly well known and can be evaluated well before the campaign.

Candidate’s generally have some records that they or their nomination opponents made known to voters in the nomination campaigns (eg., 1988, the Massachusetts’ Miracle).
Since 1948, there have been 17 presidential elections and 34 major party presidential candidates.

20 of the 34 (58%) were either the incumbent or had either previously run for president or VP.

Of the 14 who had not, many were nationally well known prior to the campaign (eg., Eisenhower, Reagan, McCain, Romney) as a celebrity, national hero, or a serious nomination contender in a previous election.
1. The Stable Context of the Campaign: Limited Campaign Effects
   a. Easy Decisions can be Early Decisions
      The Consistency of Voting Cues
   b. The Partisan Electorate
   c. Ideology, Values and the Vote (now Polarization)
   d. Perennial Issues
   e. The Known Record
   f. Known and Familiar Candidates
   g. Perceptual Screens to the Campaign
Predispositions – partisan, ideological, towards candidates, etc. – place great impediments to campaigns changing a voter’s evaluations

-- The Minimal Effects Conundrum, hard to break through to change opinions
The Consequence of the Stable Context

Campaigns make small (but potentially very important) changes in opinions:

- Some Reinforcement of Opinions
- Some Reinvigoration of Partisan Inclinations
  Helps to bring home disgruntled partisans
- Some Activation or Mobilization Effects
- Minor Amount of Creation of Opinions
- Very Little Persuasion
The Theory of the Predictable Campaign

3 Components

2. The Variable Context of the Campaign:
   Systematic Factors Incorporated Over the Campaign
   a. Presidential Incumbency
   b. The Election Year Economy
Presidential Incumbency

Is presidential incumbency an asset or a liability?

Not so long ago, the value of presidential incumbency was in doubt.

- LBJ wouldn’t even run in 1968
- Ford defeated in 1976
- Carter defeated in 1980
- G.H.W. Bush defeated in 1992

Some thought
- that the job was too big/demanding to succeed in,
- that public expectations were too high,
- that cooperation from Congress was too lacking, and
- that the media were too critical
Presidential Incumbency

On the other hand
- Ike had been re-elected in a landslide in 1956
- LBJ had been re-elected in a landslide in 1964
- Nixon had been re-elected in a landslide in 1972
- Reagan had been re-elected in a landslide in 1984
- Clinton was re-elected (54.7%) in 1996
- G.W. Bush was narrowly re-elected (51.2%) in 2004, and
- Obama was narrowly re-elected (52.0%) in 2012

It appears to be a significant asset in campaigns.
Presidents can use the office to get re-elected.
They can engage in a “Permanent Campaign”
Presidential Incumbency

Is Incumbency only a factor when the incumbent is personally seeking reelection?

Is there an in-party advantage so that the in-party gets a boost even when the in-party candidate is NOT the incumbent?

Is the incumbency advantage linked to the number of terms that the in-party has occupied The White House?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate and Circumstance</th>
<th>Election Results</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate and Circumstance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Won</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lost</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mean 2-Party Vote%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All In-Party Candidates</td>
<td>23 (62%)</td>
<td>14 (38%)</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent President:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Reelection</td>
<td>17 (77%)</td>
<td>5 (23%)</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Running</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Party Seeking:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Consecutive Term</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Term or More</td>
<td>11 (46%)</td>
<td>13 (54%)</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* An in-party win is a majority of the 2-party popular vote (not electoral votes). Because of T. Roosevelt’s bid in 1912, the 1912 vote is not included in calculating the mean votes, though it is counted as a loss for the in-party and the incumbent.
The Record of Consecutive Victories

Given that a party has held the presidency for one term, what is the probability that it will win a second term?

Since 1860, there have been 16 first-term administrations

By Popular Vote Standards of Reelection
13 (81%) were elected to a second party-term
3 (19%) were defeated for a second-party term

By chance, 50-50. So the record indicates that a party seeking a second term has a considerable advantage.
The Record of Consecutive Victories

Given that a party has held the presidency for more than one term, what is the probability that it will win another term?

Since 1860, there have been 23 second-term PLUS administrations

By Popular Vote Standards of Reelection
  11 (48%) were elected to another term
  12 (52%) were defeated for another term

By chance, 50-50. That is about what we see. There is no general in-party advantage.
Table. Presidential Incumbency, Pre-Campaign Poll Leads, and Election Results, 1948-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Campaign Poll Leader</th>
<th>From After Conventions to Election Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incumbency</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent President (6)</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger (3)</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Seat (6)</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Party Term</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking 2nd Term (6)</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking 3rd+ Term (9)</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A frontrunner had to have a lead of at least 51 to 49. There were no frontrunners in two elections in the series, 1980 and 2004.
1. Incumbents are more likely to be the frontrunner than their challengers.

2. Frontrunning Incumbents tend to have a larger lead to begin the campaign.

3. Frontrunning Incumbents are likely to lose less of their lead during the campaign.
1. In-party candidates seeking only a second term are more likely to start campaign with a larger lead than in-party candidates seeking more than a second term.

2. They are also likely to lose less of their lead during the campaign.
Presidential approval is strongly related to an incumbent’s vote and the in-party’s vote

Presidential Approval (July) and In-Party Incumbent Vote  \[ b = .36 \ (N=11) \]

President Approval (July) and In-Party NON-incumbent Vote  \[ b = .23 \ (N=6) \]
Do Presidential Incumbents have an Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

Yes, but...

1. The Advantage is Variable, Depending on the Performance of the Incumbent
   Incumbency is an Opportunity, but one that Most Incumbents can and do Exploit Successfully
Do Presidential Incumbents have an Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

2. Incumbents seeking a Second Consecutive Term for their party have a much larger advantage than an Incumbent seeking a Third Party-term or more.
Do Presidential Incumbents have an Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

3. Most of the Incumbent's advantage is felt BEFORE the Campaign Itself. Incumbents tend to start of the campaigns as Frontrunners and by Wider Margins.
Why Do Presidential Incumbents Have an Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?
Why Do Presidential Incumbents Have an Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

1. Political Inertia

Despite Public Cynicism, the Public Gives the President the Benefit of the Doubt.

Already Comfortable Voting for the President

The Positivity Bias of the Public
2. **Self-Selection**

Incumbent Presidents who are clearly in trouble politically know this early enough that they can decide not to run.

Rare, but it happens: LBJ in 1968. Maybe Buchanan in 1860?
3. The Rose Garden Strategy

Campaigning without Appearing to Campaign

President has an advantage as being seen as “The President rather than as One of 2 Politicians Campaigning for Presidency

Being Seen as Doing His Job scores points with Voters

The Best Politics is being seen as being Non-political, Above Politics

Link the Image of the Candidate with the Image of the Office in the Public’s Mind
4. The Value of Experience

Voters Value Experience

Incumbents as Candidates Learn from Experience
-- having run and won, they are better candidates
-- they should have learned from mistakes

Incumbents as Presidents Learn from Experience
-- increase popularity from serving in office
-- can reposition on the issues to increase popularity
-- have time to recover from mistakes
5. A Unified Party Base

Incumbents usually have an easy road to the nomination. They can focus on the general election, while their opponent must spend time and resources capturing a nomination and suffers attacks from within his party.

As we have seen – early party unity is very important.

With the base unified and energized, the incumbent’s campaign can work on expanding its appeal to centrist swing voters.
6. Some Control of the Campaign’s Agenda

Presidents have some control over Events (trips, bills, meetings, staged events, etc.) and may influence the Media’s and the Public’s attention to their Stronger Issues.
7. **The Disadvantages of the Challenger**

As the Challenger becomes better known, voters become more aware of their flaws.

Candidates look best before they are candidates and then after they get elected.

Most Challengers must Attack the Incumbent. It is easy to look Unfair and Mean-spirited as an attacking candidate. Many voters, particularly swing voters, do not like Negative Politics.
Why Do First Party-Term Presidents Have a Particularly Big Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?
Why Do First Party-Term Presidents Have a Particularly Big Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

1. Theme Flexibility

They are the only candidates who have the option of selecting between the two major themes of presidential elections.

These themes are...
A. Stability or Continuity

The “insider” strategy
Taking Credit for Good Times

“Stay the Course” (G.H.W. Bush 1988)
“Leave Well Enough Alone” (McKinley 1900)
“Don’t Swap Horses in the Middle of the Stream” (Lincoln 1864)

Examples:    Johnson in 1964
              Nixon in 1972
              Reagan in 1984
B. Change

The “outside” strategy
Highlighting bad conditions

“Let’s Get American Moving Again” (Kennedy 1960)
“A Leader for a Change” (Carter 1976)
“It’s Time for a Change America” (Clinton 1992)
“Change You Can Believe In” (Obama 2008)

Examples: Kennedy in 1960
           Nixon in 1968
           Carter in 1976
           Reagan 1980
           Clinton 1992
           Obama 2008
What kind of candidates can use either of these themes?

- Challengers can use the “Change” theme, but not the “Stability” theme.

- Incumbents of a party in office for two terms or more can use the “Stability” theme, but cannot plausibly use the “Change” theme. They’ve been “in” too long to be considered outsiders.

- First party-term Incumbents are the only candidates who can use either theme:
  - *Stability* since they are Incumbents
  - *Change* since their party has not been in office for very long
Why Do First Party-Term Presidents Have a Particularly Big Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

2. Greater Early Party Unity
A party that has held the presidency for just one term is usually still quite united. They have not been in power so long that they take it for granted.

The out-party is not yet so desperate to set aside internal party differences to unite early and enthusiastically behind one candidate.
Why Do First Party-Term Presidents Have a Particularly Big Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

3. Their Agenda is Usually Not Exhausted

A party seeking a second term still has some of its policy agenda to pass through Congress and to implement – it still has a reason to be elected.

A party seeking more than a second term has probably passed most of its policy proposals that are “passable” and has little reason to be reelected – while the out-party has developed a pent-up supply of policy proposals.
Why Do First Party-Term Presidents Have a Particularly Big Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

4. Less Time for Big Problems to Have Developed

Eventually, some things “go wrong” (scandals, policy failures) in an administration and things that “go wrong” become the focus in evaluating an administration.

After just one term, failings are less likely or, at least, less likely to be publicly known.
Why Do First Party-Term Presidents Have a Particularly Big Advantage in Presidential Campaigns?

5. Asymmetric Attribution of Responsibility

If things are going well, the incumbent accepts the credit

If things are going badly, the buck stops back there. It is often possible to place the blame plausibly on the incumbent’s predecessor.
The Election-Year Economy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Real GDP Growth</th>
<th>In-Party Vote%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>50.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>59.2</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>54.7</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>49.6</td>
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<td>1948</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>53.9</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>61.3</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>46.5</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>57.8</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>52.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>44.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>-7.9</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. The Election Year Economy and the Incumbent Party's Two-Party Presidential Vote, 1948-2012

Slope = .76

Note: The correlation is .59.
Why Does the Election-Year Economy Affect the General Election Campaign?
1. The Economy is Important to People’s Lives

In the immortal words of James Carville, “It’s the economy, stupid!”

It is not the statistics on the economy, it is the real economy. Election statistics only measure what the public is experiencing in the economy.

Unemployment, inflation, and interest rates affect daily lives in important ways.

The Economy, in some form (inflation, jobs, growth, etc.) routinely ranks among the public’s most important issues.
2. Voters Expect Some Economic Growth

Most studies identify the politically neutral point of economic growth at about 3 percent (annualized).
3. The Economy is Significant, but NOT all important
The Pre-election economy is related to Preference Polls and the Vote for In-Party Candidates, but it is not determinative.

GDP growth in 1\textsuperscript{st} Half of election year:
correlation with July approval = .29
correlation with Preconvention preference poll = .22
correlation with the vote % = .60

The election-year economy is a factor in shaping the campaign (the movement from the polls to the vote), but it is not the most important factor.
4. The Economy Affects the Public’s Mood

The Election-Year Economy is Important for both Economic and Non-economic Reasons

_Voters are not cash registers_

The Economy affects the Public’s General Mood toward the In-Party Candidate

When the economy is good, voters are _more_ receptive to and forgiving of the in-party _on all issues._

When the economy is bad, voters are _less_ receptive to and forgiving of the in-party _on all issues._
5. Incumbents and the Attribution of Economic Responsibility

Incumbents generally receive the full credit or blame for economic conditions.

Successor candidates of the in-party generally receive only partial credit or blame for economic conditions.

First party-term incumbents receive full credit for a good economy, but only partial blame for a bad economy.
6. The Effect of the Election-Year Economy
is largely from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} quarter (not the 1\textsuperscript{st} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} qtrs)

This is because of the lagged effect of the economy

From Real economic activity to Perception of it
and then
From Perception to Political Responsibility

And the tendency for many voters to reach an early decision.
6. The Effect of the Election-Year Economy is largely from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} quarter (not the 1\textsuperscript{st} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} qtrs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incumbents Only</th>
<th>Quarter 1</th>
<th>Quarter 2</th>
<th>Quarter 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Quarter, however, is a fairly good indication of how the economy will be doing in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Quarter \((r = .48)\).
7. The Pre-Election Year Economy affects Public Opinion about the Incumbent Prior to the Campaign

3rd Year GDP growth correlated with
  Preconvention poll for incumbent \( (r = .69) \)
  July approval rating of incumbent \( (r = .72) \)

But NO effect on non-incumbent’s preconvention or Labor Day poll standing
The Economy and the Campaign in SUM
Of course, the economy matters –
But How much, Why, and When Does It Matter

The Economy is Important, but NOT All important

The Economy matters because of economics, but it also matters more generally in setting the public’s mood toward the in-party.

The Economy matters mostly to Incumbents, but Successor In-party candidates are affected by it as well.

The Election-Year Economy matters most, particularly the 2nd quarter, but the earlier economy matters as well for incumbents – voters are not amnesiacs.
Dispelling a Common Misunderstanding

Two Equal Campaigns don’t cancel each other to no effect.

Their effect is to make the election closer.
Dispelling a Common Misunderstanding

The Vote is the result of:

(A.) Pre-campaign decisions by voters and
(B.) Decisions by voters made during the campaign (presumably influenced by the campaign)
\[ \text{Vote}_c = (b \times \text{pre-campaign}_c) + ((1-b) \times \text{campaign}_c) \]

Where,

- \( b \) = the % of pre-campaign or early decisions
  - and
- Pre-campaign and campaign are the % of the vote for a candidate \( c \)

The vote is a weighted average of vote decisions made before the campaign was underway and those made during the campaign.
Case A:
So, 70% of voters decide before the campaign begins a
25% decide during the campaign
and
Candidate c has a 67% to 33% lead over his/her
opponent among pre-campaign deciders and the
Campaign deciders are evenly split 50-50 because of the
candidates’ evenly balanced campaigns, then the vote is:

\[ \text{Vote}_c = (b \times \text{pre-campaign}_c) + ((1- b) \times \text{campaign}_c) \]

\[ \text{Vote}_c = (.7 \times 67) + (.3 \times 50) \]

\[ \text{Vote}_c = 42 + 15 = 57\% \]
Case B:
If the campaign did not matter, 100% of voters would have decided before the campaign began. Using the same predispositions.

\[ \text{Vote}_c = (b \times \text{pre-campaign}_c) + ((1-b) \times \text{campaign}_c) \]

\[ \text{Vote}_c = (1.0 \times 67) + (0 \times 50) \]

\[ \text{Vote}_c = 67 + 0 = 67\% \]
Comparing Cases A and B

Case A: Evenly divided campaign effects
(50% vote of campaign deciders)

Case B: No campaign effects

Case A: 57% vote for Candidate c
Case B: 67% vote for Candidate c

Balanced campaign ≠ No Campaign Effect
Balanced campaign = Closer to 50-50 vote
The Competitiveness (or Narrowing) Effect of Campaigns
A Regular Effect of the Highly Competitive Nature of Presidential Campaigns is to

Decrease Support for Frontrunning Candidates

and

Increase Support for Trailing Candidates

Presidential Campaigns are Great Levelers.
The Evidence of the Narrowing Effect

1. From Convention Bumps
2. From Post-Convention Polls
3. From Presidential Debates
The Parties’ National Nominating Conventions both REVEAL and AFFECT the degree of Unity and Enthusiasm for a Party’s Presidential Candidate by the Extent to which they boost their Candidate’s standing in the polls –

the Convention Bump.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Pre %</th>
<th>Post %</th>
<th>Change %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>+12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>+14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>+8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>+12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>+5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>+5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>+16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>+9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>+6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>+3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table. Preferences (2-Party) for the Presidential Nominees Pre & Post-Convention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Pre %</th>
<th>Post %</th>
<th>Change %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>+7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>+12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>+6.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>+2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>+5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>+9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>+5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>+1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Convention Bumps, 1964-2012

Positive Convention Bumps 22 (85%)
Negative or No Convention Bumps 4 (15%)

No Bumps: 1964 Dems (LBJ)
          1972 Dems (McGovern)
          2004 Dems (Kerry)
          2012 GOP (Romney)

Mean Percentage Bump: 5.5 percentage points
Why Do Conventions Help Their Candidates?

They hold the attention of the nation alone for a week.

They are an opportunity for a party to heal its wounds from a nomination battle.

Would expect biggest bumps when
1. The nomination contest was bitterly divided and
2. The convention was successfully reunifying
Questions about Convention Bumps

1. Is there a convention bump difference between
   A. the Democratic and Republican parties?
   B. 1\textsuperscript{st} (out-party) and 2\textsuperscript{nd} (in-party) conventions?
   C. the frontrunning and trailing candidates?
   D. recent years and the past?

2. When don’t conventions help their candidates? Why?

3. How much of the net convention bumps survive to affect the election?
Questions about Convention Bumps

1. Is there a convention bump difference between A. the Democratic and Republican parties?

   Average Convention Bumps
   Democrats  5.0%
   Republicans 6.1%

   GOP > Dems, 6 times
   Dems > GOP, 4 times
   Virtually tied, 3 times

   Not a significant difference
Questions about Convention Bumps

1. Is there a convention bump difference between
   B. 1\textsuperscript{st} (out-party) and 2\textsuperscript{nd} (in-party) conventions?

   Average Convention Bumps
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Type</th>
<th>Average Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out-Party’s</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Party’s</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   In > Out, 4 times
   Out > In, 6 times
   Virtually tied, 3 times

   Not a significant difference
Questions about Convention Bumps

1. Is there a convention bump difference between C. the frontrunning and trailing candidates? 2 elections had no clear frontrunners (2008 & 2012)

Average Convention Bump
Frontrunner 5.1%
Trailing 7.3%

with 1968 & 1972 excluded the Trailing Candidate’s average bump was 8.8%

With those excluded, a significant difference
Why do trailing candidates do better than frontrunners in their Convention Bumps?

Put differently, why are Conventions part of the Narrowing or Competitiveness Effect of Campaigns?

Answer:
Trailing Candidates have generally had a more bruising nomination contest. They have more to gain from a reunifying convention.

Frontrunners have more often coasted to their nominations. Their parties are already unified around them BEFORE the convention takes place.
Questions about Convention Bumps

1. Is there a convention bump difference between D. recent years and the past?

   Average Convention Bumps
   1964 – 1996   6.7%
   2000 – 2012   2.8%

   A significant difference
Questions about Convention Bumps

2. When don’t conventions help their candidates? Why? When have conventions NOT helped their candidates much?

1964  Democrats – No bump for LBJ

1968  Democrats – Almost No Bump for Humphrey

1972  Democrats – Negative Bump for McGovern

1972  Republicans – Almost No Bump for Nixon

1984  Republicans -- Almost No Bump for Reagan
1992  Republicans – Almost No Bump for G.H.W. Bush

2004  Democrats – Negative Bump for Kerry

2004  Republicans – Almost No Bump for G.W. Bush

2012  Democrats – Almost No Bump for Obama

2012  Republicans – Negative Bump for Romney
Questions about Convention Bumps

Why haven’t these conventions helped their candidates?

1. Divisive and/or Chaotic Conventions
   1968 Democratic Convention debacle in Chicago
   1972 Democratic Convention chaos (McGovern) to some extent –
   1992 Republican Convention (controversy over Pat Buchanan’s speech)
Why haven’t these conventions helped their candidates?

2. The Ceiling Effect
   With high initial poll numbers, there is not much room for improvement

   1964 Democratic Convention: LBJ was at 69% pre-con

   1972 Republican Convention: Nixon was at 65% pre-con
Why haven’t these conventions helped their candidates?

3. Incumbent – more fixed public perceptions
   1964  Democratic Convention: LBJ
   1972  Republican Convention: Nixon
   1984  Republican Convention: Reagan
   2004  Republican Convention: G.W. Bush
   2012  Democratic Convention: Obama
Why haven’t these conventions helped their candidates?

4. Increased Polarization
   Low or No Bumps in Several Recent Elections

5. Chance Events
   (like Hurricanes and Perot Dropping Out and then Getting Back in the Race)
Summary of the Convention Bump

1. About 85% of Conventions produce positive convention bumps.

2. The average bump is about 5 or 6 points

3. There is significant variation in convention bumps

4. Low bump conventions
   Ceiling effect of a popular nominee/incumbent
   OR a divisive-dysfunctional convention

5. No difference in bumps for Democrats or Republicans
Summary of the Convention Bump

6. No difference between bumps for In-party or Out-party

7. Trailing Candidates tend to get a bigger Bump than Frontrunners.

8. Convention bumps appear to be getting smaller.

9. About a quarter of convention bumps survive to affect the election, three-quarters of the bumps are typically temporary.
The Post-Convention General Election Campaign

The Labor-Day Kick-off
Figure 1.3. Trial-Heat Poll Support in Early September for the Incumbent Party’s Presidential Candidate and the Incumbent Party’s Two-Party Presidential Vote, 1948-2012

Note: Both the popular vote for the incumbent party and the division of the early September trial heat poll are divisions of major two-party preferences. The trial heat poll is the division of registered voters. The estimated regression equation is: incumbent party vote = 23.86 + (.54 x trial heat poll for the incumbent party candidate). The adjusted R-square is .66. The t-ratio of the poll coefficient is 5.62. The standard error of the equation is 3.18.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year &amp; Party of Frontrunner</th>
<th>Frontrunner’s Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948 Republican</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 Republican</td>
<td>57.9</td>
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<td>1956 Republican</td>
<td>55.9</td>
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<td>1960 Republican?</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>1964 Democrat</td>
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<td>1968 Republican</td>
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<td>1972 Republican</td>
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<td>1976 Democrat</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 Republican</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table: Support and Vote for the Frontrunner, 1948-2012 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>September %</th>
<th>Vote %</th>
<th>Change %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Republican*</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>-6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>10 Repub/6 Dem</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Narrowing Effect in the Fall Campaign

Table. Election Outcomes for the Front-running Candidate, 1948-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Outcome for the Frontrunner in the Labor Day Poll</th>
<th>Number (%) of Elections*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Real Frontrunner (Lead &lt; 1%)</td>
<td>2 (12% of 17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of Elections With a Frontrunner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frontrunner Won the Popular Vote</th>
<th>13 (87%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontrunner Lost the Popular Vote</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total                                                      | 15 (100%)                |

*The elections with no real frontrunner were 1960 and 2004. The two elections lost by a Labor Day frontrunner were the 1948 and 2008 elections.
The Narrowing Effect in the Fall Campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change from Labor Day Poll to the Vote</th>
<th>Number (%) of Elections*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Real Frontrunner (Lead &lt; 1%)</td>
<td>2 (12% of 17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of Elections With a Frontrunner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number (%) of Elections*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased Lead (&gt;2%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change (-2% to 2%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining Lead (&lt;-2%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The elections with no real frontrunner were 1960 and 2004. The Only Significantly Increased Lead was in 1980.
The Narrowing Effect in the Fall Campaign

1. Most Elections have Frontrunning Candidates by Labor Day

2. Frontrunning Candidates Normally Hold on to Win the Popular Vote.

3. Support for Frontrunning Candidates Normally Holds Steady or Shrinks by Election Day. Their Leads Rarely Increase During the Campaign.

4. Frontrunning Candidates Normally Lose About Half their Labor Day Poll Lead – typically about 3% of the vote.
The Narrowing Effect in the Fall Campaign

Of course, Trailing Candidates are also common, normally lose the popular vote, and normally gain ground on the Frontrunner over the course of the campaign—usually about 3% of the vote.
The Narrowing Effect of the Campaign

WHY?

Why Do Frontrunners Generally Lose Ground and Trailing Candidates Generally Gain Ground Over the Course of the General Election Campaign?
Why Do Campaigns Narrow Leads?

1. Even Playing Field:
   - High-Intensity and Evenly Balanced Campaigns Both Have Many Strengths and Many Liabilities
   - Both Have Successes as well as make Mistakes
Why Do Campaigns Narrow Leads?

2. Party Competition & Partisans Coming Back to the Fold

A. Trailing Candidates tend to have more Late Deciding Partisans.

Mean % of Party Identifiers who were Late-Deciders (Decided after the Conventions OR Changed from Intention)
1952-2004

- Party of Frontrunner: 35%
- Party of Trailing Candidate: 44%
Why Do Campaigns Narrow Leads?

2. Party Competition & Partisans Coming Back to the Fold

   A. Trailing Candidates tend to have more Late Deciding Partisans.

   B. A Large Majority of Late-deciding Partisans Vote for Their Party’s Presidential Candidate
B. A Large Majority of Late-deciding Partisans Vote for Their Party’s Presidential Candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s Party</th>
<th>Loyalty in the Presidential Vote</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Deciders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-Runner’s’s</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trailing Candidate’s</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Late Deciders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower Party Loyalty of Late Deciders (During Campaign) but still well above 50%. Most come home to their Party’s Candidate.
Why Do Campaigns Narrow Leads?

3. The Cautious Frontrunner

The object is to win the election
Not to run-up the score

Candidates and their campaigns are willing
to trade a higher vote margin for a safer victory

“The Prevent Defense” – stay cautious, even if it means that the other side scores some points.
Why Do Campaigns Narrow Leads?

4. Increased Media Scrutiny of the Frontrunner

Covering the Horse Race.

The Media has a vested interest in keeping the race exciting. If the frontrunner gets too far out in front, the competitive interests of the media kick in.
Why Do Campaigns Narrow Leads?

5. Strategic Voting

The Withering of Minor Candidate Support (the cases of 1948, 1968, 1980 and 1996)

3rd party candidates often draw their support from out-party trailing candidates (opposition to the incumbent/in-party) and so when their support withers as it is seen as wasted votes, many of these votes go to the trailing candidate.
6. Fairly Even Split of Late Deciders

These Voters are torn by their decisions, otherwise they would have decided early.

Sitting on the fence – some fall one way and some the other (with a tilt toward their party)

For some late deciders, the vote has a bit more of a random or idiosyncratic component to it.
The Debates

Another Campaign Leveler
Table. The Frequency of Presidential Debates, 1960-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Presidential Candidates</th>
<th>Number of Debates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Kennedy – Nixon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Johnson – Goldwater</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Nixon – Humphrey – Wallace</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Nixon – McGovern</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Carter – Ford</td>
<td>3 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Reagan – Carter – (Anderson)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Reagan – Mondale</td>
<td>2 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>G.H.W. Bush – Dukakis</td>
<td>2 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Clinton – Dole – (Perot)</td>
<td>2 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>G.W. Bush – Gore</td>
<td>3 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>G.W. Bush – Kerry</td>
<td>3 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Obama – McCain</td>
<td>3 + VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Obama – Romney</td>
<td>3 + VP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presidential Debate Effects

Often Small

Their effects are usually to REINFORCE existing preferences or REINVIGORATE preferences for the candidate of the voter’s party.

A large portion of debate effects are temporary

BUT

Some are Lasting and Significant.
Sometimes Debates can make a Difference, especially in an otherwise tight race.

What Limits the Effects of Presidential Debates?

1. Debates are Late in the Campaign
   Most Votes are already decided

2. Minimal Effects Conundrum
   Those who watch debates are the Most Interested in Politics
   The Most Interested in Politics already have firm vote choices by the time that the debates are held.

3. Rationalization of Supporters

4. Dismissal of Poor Performances
   Electing a Commander-in-Chief, Not a Debater-in-Chief
   (e.g., Reagan poor performance in 1984 debate – The Great Pacific Highway Meander)
When Can Debates Make a Difference and What is the Difference?

When the first-hand evidence in the debate either dispels or reinforces an image built-up of a candidate.

In General: The Challenger is seen as a REAL option to the Incumbent

1980  Reagan: Dispelled the trigger-happy dangerous image
1988  Dukakis: Reinforced the cold technocrat, policy-wonk image
1992  G.H.W. Bush: Reinforced the disengaged image
2000  Gore: Reinforced the inauthentic, slightly weird image
2012  Romney: Simply got his message out clearly & Obama appeared disengaged

■ Winning or Losing Debates is Unimportant
■ What is Important is **Improving a Candidate’s Image**
When Can Debates Make a Difference and What is the Difference?

In shaking up the campaign

the Frontrunner has the most to lose from debates &

the Trailing Candidate has the most to gain from them

-- the Advantage is to the Trailing Candidate.
Do Campaigns Matter?

Absolutely

The Real Questions are:

1. How Much Do Campaigns Matter?

2. How Have Campaigns affected the Vote?

3. How Often Are Campaigns Decisive?
1. How Much Do Campaigns Matter?

The Mean Absolute Effect of Campaigns
Abs.(Vote – Poll): **Mean of 3.7% (Median of 2.5%)**

Biggest Effects Since 1948
1976, Pro-Ford (R) closing in of 8.9%
1964, LBJ (D) drop of 7.8%
1968, pro-HHH (D) closing in of 7.7%
1948, Pro-Truman (D) comeback of 6.7%
2008, Pro-Obama (D) Wall Street Meltdown of 6.4%
1996, Clinton (D) drop back of 6.1%
2. How Have Campaigns affected the Vote?
Most of the Effect is Systematic
(Narrowing Lead, Economy, & Incumbency)

Table. Systematic Campaign Effects, 1948-2012

Dependent Variable: Effect of Campaign on the Democratic Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Candidate September Poll</td>
<td>−.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} Qtr GDP Growth (1/2 for Successors)</td>
<td>.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic First Party-Term Advantage</td>
<td>2.45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>33.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N                                                                 | 17           |
| Adjusted R\textsuperscript{2}                                    | .80          |
2. How Have Campaigns affected the Vote?

Most of the Effect is Systematic
(Narrowing Lead, Economy, & Incumbency)

Systematic Effects of the Campaign
Mean = ± 3.4%

Unsystematic Effects of the Campaign
Mean = ± 1.4%
Greater than 5%: 1 (2008)
3. How Often Are Campaigns Decisive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Category</th>
<th>2-Party Vote %</th>
<th>Number and % of Elections</th>
<th>Probably Decided by the Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near Dead-Heats</td>
<td>&lt;51.5%</td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
<td>4 or 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Contests</td>
<td>51.5% to 53.0%</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Competitive</td>
<td>53.1% to 57.0%</td>
<td>11 (30%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landslides</td>
<td>&gt; 57.1%</td>
<td>11 (30%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 to 8 (16% to 22%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. How Often Are Campaigns Decisive?
Some Likely Suspects as Decisive Campaigns

1. 1876: Hayes (R) v. Tilden (D)
   So close it had to go to an Electoral Commission

2. 1884: Cleveland (D) v. Blaine (R)
   “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion” and Rev. Burchard

3. 1916: Wilson (D) v. Hughes (R)
   “The Forgotten Handshake” Election, California
3. How Often Are Campaigns Decisive?  
Some Likely Suspects as Decisive Campaigns

4. 1948: Truman (D) v. Dewey (R)  
Truman’s miraculous comeback to defeat Dewey

5. 1960: Kennedy (D) v. Nixon (R)  
The debate and late-deciding Democrats

6. 2000: Bush (R) v. Gore (D)  
Close right down to the wire and to Florida recount
3. How Often Are Campaigns Decisive?
Some Likely Suspects as Decisive Campaigns

7. 2004: Bush (R) v. Kerry (D)
Razor thin in Ohio

8. 2008: Obama (D) v. McCain (R)
The Wall Street Meltdown turnaround