



Campaign Advertising: Partisan Convergence or Divergence?

Constantine J. Spiliotes; Lynn Vavreck

The Journal of Politics, Vol. 64, No. 1. (Feb., 2002), pp. 249-261.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28200202%2964%3A1%3C249%3ACAPCOD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>

The Journal of Politics is currently published by Southern Political Science Association.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/spsa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Campaign Advertising: Partisan Convergence or Divergence?

Constantine J. Spiliotes

Dartmouth College

Lynn Vavreck

University of California, Los Angeles

Prior research demonstrates that many citizens are unable to perceive differences between the two major political parties. In order to investigate whether candidate behavior in campaigns contributes to this perception, we test implications about partisan constraints on campaign rhetoric drawn from the literature on parties and policy convergence. Our results suggest that candidates of different parties do not highlight the same issues or positions in their campaign advertising. We find that campaign rhetoric is strongly motivated by party even when controlling for constituency characteristics and other factors. Thus, there is convergence among candidates of the same party across districts and states and divergence between opposing candidates within districts and states. Our results are based on a detailed content analysis of more than 1,000 campaign advertisements aired by 290 candidates in 153 elections in 37 states during the 1998 midterm elections.

A recent poll conducted for The Project on Campaign Conduct reports that 72% of Americans are “very” concerned about candidates for office saying one thing as a candidate and doing another once elected (Project on Campaign Conduct 1999). This result is augmented by the fact that during the 1998 midterm elections, roughly half of respondents to the National Election Study survey could find no differences between the two major political parties. In short, many voters believe that candidates from both parties talk about the same issues during their campaigns, but rarely act in accordance with their rhetoric once elected. In contrast to these beliefs, research suggests that voting in Congress is highly predictable along a single spatial dimension over which parties are highly polarized (Jacobson 2001; Poole and Rosenthal 1991). These con-

An early version of this research was presented at the 58th annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 2000, Chicago. We thank the following people for helpful comments: Jeff Cohen, Linda Fowler, Paul Goren, Bill Jacoby, Jeffrey B. Lewis, and three anonymous reviewers. We also thank our research assistants at Dartmouth College. This work was supported by grants from the American Political Science Association and The Joan Shorenstein Center for the Press and Public Policy at The Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

flicting perceptions of party behavior raise an interesting theoretical and empirical puzzle for researchers: if parties' legislative positions in Congress routinely diverge, why are so many citizens unable to perceive differences between the parties during campaigns?

Previous work on parties and policy convergence suggests several possible approaches to answering this question. First, following Downs (1957) and Alesina (1988), candidates from both parties may be aware of the majority of voters' positions on important issues and focus on those same issues. This would result in party convergence during campaigns, irrespective of subsequent legislative behavior. Such an outcome would help to explain the disjunction between the public perception of parties and their behavior in Congress. Alternatively, following Schattschneider (1942) and Ranney (1954), parties may focus on issues of central importance to their core partisan constituencies, resulting in policy divergence during campaigns. If this is the case, we must turn to other explanations for the public's inability to perceive differences between the parties.

One such explanation might be a function of voters' limited capacities to make informed judgments in the campaign (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964). More recent research, however, finds that voters' abilities to perceive differences between the parties vary with the clarity and distinctiveness with which parties present their issue positions during the campaign (Pomper 1968, 1975, 1988). Attention to the ways in which parties articulate their issue positions during campaigns may be the key to determining why voters find no differences between parties in a political world that is solidly bifurcated.

It is also possible that parties do not diverge on their issue positions *during campaigns*, when most people are paying attention to politics and making judgments about candidates and parties, even though they behave differently in office. Further, candidates may intentionally choose to remain ambiguous about their issue positions in campaigns and instead talk vaguely about general themes, traits, and priorities with the hope of appealing broadly to voters (Franklin 1991). In particular, the adoption of distinct policy positions may not be the norm in campaign advertising, thus adding to voters' inability to perceive important differences between the parties.

Is the nature of campaign rhetoric driving the dichotomy between political reality and voter perception of a lack of party differences during elections? A look at the information provided by candidates during campaigns may help us answer this question. We bring a unique data set of campaign advertisements to bear on this puzzle, using data from 290 candidates running in 153 races in 37 states during the 1998 midterm elections.¹ These data contain ads for primaries and general elections, and for House, Senate, and gubernatorial races.

¹These data were generously provided by Charlie Cook of *The National Journal*. For complete descriptions of the data set, sampling method, and representativeness of the sample, please see Appendix 2. For a list of cases in the sample, please contact the authors.

Expectations

Motivated by Downs's (1957) seminal work, scholars have modeled the behavior of parties (or candidates) in a two-party system with a majority-voting rule (see McKelvey and Ordeshook 1990). These studies all suggest a similar calculus on the part of political actors: assuming that candidates or parties are motivated purely by winning elections and that candidates have the same information about voters' preferences, then, in one dimension, both candidates will converge fully to the same policies.² Recent work has debated the importance of promises made by parties in achieving these convergence results (Alesina 1988; Calvert 1985; Wittman 1977, 1983). Most recently, Alesina (1988) argues that without binding promises during campaigns, policy convergence by parties in office is unlikely. This theoretical contribution supports the notion that candidates may adopt particular issue positions during the campaign in order to be elected, yet change those positions once in office. Testing these particular predictions has proven challenging, however, because the campaign environment is rarely one-dimensional, and predictions about behavior in multiple dimensions are not easily applied to empirical testing (Plott 1967; but see Kramer 1977).

In contrast to theories of partisan convergence, some models of electoral behavior suggest that parties do indeed stake out distinctly different positions on high-salience issues. The responsible party model argues that centralized, well-disciplined political parties adopt issue positions that are clear and substantially distinct from the positions of the opposition party in campaigns (Campbell 1993; Fiorina 1992; Ranney 1954; Schattschneider 1942; Sundquist 1988). These "party cleavage" models argue that divergent partisan behavior is driven by the influence of party activists, convention delegates, financial backers, and often the candidates themselves (Page 1978; Pomper 1988). The responsible party model rests on the premise that the parties are associated with specific issues and distinct issue positions (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Petrocik 1981). The campaign advertising data may provide some evidence as to which of these theoretical constructs best describes the behavior of parties in elections.

These empirical findings, taken in concert with the theoretical work on policy convergence and divergence, help to inform our hypotheses about the nature of campaign rhetoric. We assume that parties are important shortcuts for voters and that parties are associated with distinctly divergent policy positions in Congress. We conclude, therefore, that campaign rhetoric may be largely party driven, with each party staking out issue positions that are distinct from the opposition in campaigns. If our intuition is correct and party does indeed act as a constraint on campaign behavior by candidates, then we should find the following in the test of our campaign ad data:

²Sometimes the convergence may be at the median voter's ideal point, and sometimes it may not be.

- *Candidates of the same political party will talk about the same issues and take similar positions on those issues across districts and states.*
- *Republicans and Democrats within districts or states will talk about different issues and take different positions on them, even though they share the same constituency.*

A more complex hypothesis takes into account a candidate's desire to win the election and suggests that:

- *As the constituency's partisan makeup changes, the candidate's campaign rhetoric will also change, such that Republican candidates with more strongly Republican constituencies are more likely to talk about Republican bread-and-butter issues, while Republicans with more moderate constituencies are less likely to talk about these same issues. In other words, there may be variation in the use of party issue positions, contingent upon the partisan leaning of the candidate's constituency.*

One final possibility is that party actually does not act as a strong constraint on campaign commitments. In this instance, we should find that:

- *Candidates of both parties will converge to talk about the same issues and/or take similar positions on issues within districts or states, and possibly even across them.*

Campaign Rhetoric and its Measurement

To measure campaign content, we rely on campaign advertisements. Candidates spend upwards of 75% of their campaign budgets on advertising, indicating its importance to the overall campaign effort.³ The content analysis of candidate advertisements was performed by separating statements that are issue oriented from statements that are trait oriented. Within the issue statements, further distinction was made between specific claims and valence claims, as originally defined by Stokes (1966) and employed by Geer (2000).⁴ We performed content analysis on over 1,000 advertisements; noting the content, tone, level of specificity, and imagery of each advertisement. These data were then supple-

³We do not believe we are biasing the results by focusing only on television advertising. We cannot think of any a priori reason to suggest that candidates might be more vague or general in television ads as compared to other forms of advertising or other campaign venues (rallies or town meetings, direct mail, phone banks). Even in terms of advertising, others have shown that candidates spend very little time advertising on the radio compared to television, even in areas that cross media markets (Fowler, Spiliotes, and Vavreck 2001).

⁴A valence claim is a general statement of policy or principle, to which voter opposition is highly unlikely. For example, a candidate who says, "I want to improve education" is making a valence claim. In contrast, a candidate who says, "I want to improve education by starting a state lottery to fund smaller class size" is making a positional claim. One may think of valence issues as issues on which all voters have the same ideal point.

mented with contextual information about each candidate in the data set; for example, for each candidate we calculated the Democratic share of the two-party vote for president in 1996 as a measure of a district or state's political leaning.⁵

Advertising Content: Valence or Positional

What characteristics define campaign advertising in the 1998 midterm elections? Our initial findings show that most advertisements contain information on both traits and issues. Nearly all candidates mention traits (90%) in at least one of their advertisements, and approximately 87% of all the ads in the data set contain a trait mention. Yet, only 30% of the advertisements are predominantly trait based.⁶ We find generally that advertisements contain between one and three trait mentions. The most frequent trait mentions are those dealing with accountability, integrity, being a "family man," and having children. Over 70% of the candidates made at least one advertisement that either mentioned children (not necessarily their own) or used them visually in the advertisement. Most advertisements are a relatively balanced mix of trait and issue claims.

Most candidates also mentioned issues in at least one of their advertisements (92%). Fully 87% of advertisements in the data set contain an issue appeal, and 52% of the advertisements are predominantly issue driven. Overall, 69% of the candidates made at least one advertisement that was predominantly focused on issues. Among these candidates, only 32% made at least one advertisement that could be classified as adopting a specific position on an issue. In other words, most of the advertising information about issues is vague, with candidates mainly stating their issue priorities and not taking particular positions on issues. In general, the data show the most frequent issue mentions to be taxes, the economy, crime, and education. Over 53% of the candidates made at least one advertisement discussing taxes, while nearly 60% mentioned education at least once.

In advertising content, predominantly issue ads are more popular than predominantly trait ads, but the majority of ads contain a mix of the two. For those ads that focus mainly on issues, only a third of them are specific in nature. Candidates are talking about issues in their ads, but they are doing it in a very broad manner.

⁵ As a measure of constituency partisanship, we calculated Bill Clinton's share of the 1996 two-party presidential vote for each district or state under investigation. The mean of this calculation is .55 (Clinton won in this sample, on average, with 55% of the two-party vote), and the standard deviation is .08. To calculate constituency leanings, we measured deviations from this sample mean such that districts or states with positive values lean toward the Democratic party and vice versa. Districts or states that were one standard deviation above or below the mean were considered to "lean" in the appropriate direction.

⁶ An advertisement is predominantly trait based if more than half of its claims are about candidate traits.

The tone of the advertisements was mainly promotional (64% of the advertisements were aimed at promoting a candidate's issue position or good qualities). Contrasting one candidate's positions or qualities to another candidate's made up 20% of the advertisements, while purely attacking the opponent's positions or qualities made up 16% of the advertisements. There were no systematic relationships between the tone of advertisements and the content; for example, not all the attack advertisements were issue based.

Advertising Content: Convergence or Divergence?

Since we are interested in explaining whether party acts as a constraint on candidate commitments in advertising, we want to know whether candidates with the same constituency talk about the same issues (or take the same positions on issues), or whether, despite their common electoral incentives, candidates with similar constituencies diverge and discuss issues that are popular within their party nationwide. Furthermore, we are interested in explaining what role a constituency's partisanship has in determining the kinds of commitments candidates make in their advertisements. In order to test these hypotheses, we look for systematic differences between the parties (and thus the candidates), while controlling for office (House, Senate, governor), election type (primary vs. general), constituency partisanship (Republican, moderate, Democrat), and incumbency status.

To this end, we use probit to analyze candidate advertisements in the data set's five most dominant issue areas: the economy, tax cuts, juvenile justice, education, and gun control.⁷ The dependent variable measures whether the candidate took a position (or mentioned the issue in valence terms) in at least one of his or her advertisements.⁸ We include the following independent variables in the model for each issue: candidate party, constituency party leaning, incumbency status, primary election, office, and the conditional relationship between the candidate's party and his or her constituency's party leaning. For each of the five issues, the determinants of issue-specific candidate discourse are pre-

⁷The data set contained codes for approximately 40 issues. These five were the issues that dominated campaign rhetoric (mentioned most often). We are sensitive to the notion that this may bias the results and thus we tested for party convergence on some of the less popular issues. Results were constant across issue salience—even for issues that were only mentioned sparingly, the candidates mentioning these issues were of the same party.

⁸For the remainder of the paper we use the candidate as the unit of analysis; thus we consider whether a candidate made a particular type of statement in *any* of the advertisements we have in the data set for that candidate in that election. This protects against biasing the results in favor of candidates who contribute more advertisements to the data set. We have done these analyses using several alternative operationalizations of the dependent variable. The substantive findings do not change. Alternative approaches included using the ad as the unit of analysis instead of the candidate (thereby not accounting for the bias possibly provided by candidates who contribute more ads to the data set) and using the proportion of ads that mention items of interest as the dependent variable.

TABLE 1
 Determinants of Candidate Commitments in Advertisements

| Dependent Variable | Economy | Tax Cut | Juvenile Justice | Education | Crime |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Independent Variables | | | | | |
| Republican (0,1) | .84* (.16) | .91* (.16) | -.45* (.17) | -.47* (.15) | .10 (.16) |
| Constituency Party Leaning (-1,0,1) | .52* (.20) | .56* (.21) | -.27 (.21) | .16 (.20) | .14 (.21) |
| Republican* Constituency Leaning | -.70* (.29) | -.68* (.30) | .07* (.21) | -.25 (.29) | -.54* (.30) |
| Incumbent (0,1) | .27 (.21) | .27 (.20) | .12 (.21) | -.04 (.19) | .15 (.20) |
| Primary (0,1) | -.29* (.16) | -.35* (.16) | -.29 (.17) | -.34* (.16) | -.41* (.16) |
| Senate (0,1) | .16 (.21) | -.02 (.21) | -.16 (.21) | -.30 (.21) | -.07 (.20) |
| House (0,1) | -.51* (.17) | -.57* (.17) | -.67* (.19) | -.82* (.17) | -.82* (.18) |
| Constant | -.015 (.16) | -.01 (.16) | -.16 (.17) | 1.00* (.17) | .02 (.16) |
| Pseudo R ² | .12 | .13 | .09 | .09 | .09 |
| N | 290 | 290 | 290 | 290 | 290 |

Cell entries are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

* $p \leq .10$ (two-tailed)

sented in Table 1. We discuss the relative magnitude of these effects in terms of a percent change in probability of a candidate choosing to focus on a particular issue in his or her advertisement.⁹ As is evident, the results show that parties do not converge on similar issues or issue positions during a campaign.

In general terms, the findings in Table 1 indicate that candidates are much less likely to make at least one ad discussing these important issues if they are running in primary elections (when they are mainly focused on gaining name recognition) and when they are running for the U.S. House of Representatives, presumably because candidates for the House make fewer ads in general and thus have fewer opportunities to make ads about issues. Incumbents are no more or less likely to make ads containing issue rhetoric, which is somewhat surprising considering they could easily take credit for previous accomplish-

⁹We calculate these probabilities using the probit coefficients while holding all variables at their mean values and changing only the variable of interest.

ments (Mayhew 1974). It is reasonable to believe, however, that once the partisan leaning of constituents is taken into account, incumbency has no effect. For example, incumbents are unlikely to claim credit on unpopular issues. Party, on the other hand, is the central predictor of advertising content even when constituency characteristics are considered.

The Economy

As the results demonstrate, party is the most significant determinant of candidate mentions on the economy, holding other things constant. Republican candidates are 33% more likely to discuss the economy in their advertisements. This contrasts a 40% likelihood for Democrats with a 73% likelihood for Republicans. In accounting for the partisan leanings of the constituency, we see further how a candidate's party interacts with partisan demographics. For example, a Republican candidate running for reelection with a largely Republican constituency has a 77% likelihood of mentioning the economy in his or her advertisements. This probability drops to 65% for the same Republican candidate running with a largely Democratic constituency. As expected, Democratic candidates in Democratic districts mention the economy with even less probability, at 59%.

Taxes

We parse the economic variable further in order to isolate issue mentions on cutting taxes. The results for the probit analysis of specific tax cut mentions are similar to the more general economic findings. Party substantially determines whether a candidate will discuss tax cuts in his or her advertising. Republicans are 35% more likely than Democrats to mention tax cuts, even when controlling for constituency preferences. As was true for general economic commitments, the nature of a constituency's partisanship matters as well. Republican candidates in politically congruent districts or states are most likely to talk about cutting taxes in their campaigns. Republicans in Democratic districts or states, however, are much less likely to mention this issue (nearly a 50% drop in probability). In addition, Democratic candidates in Republican districts mention tax cuts with an even lower probability than Republicans in Democratic districts, underscoring the importance of partisan congruence.

Juvenile Justice

The rising incidence of youth violence was a topic of concern for many candidates during the 1998 midterm elections. For example, we considered candidates who talked about Zero Tolerance for Guns or Drugs in Schools programs, summer school sessions, gangs, or punishment for juvenile offenders as mentioning juvenile justice issues. As the results in Table 1 show, party is again an

important factor in determining whether candidates mention these issues. Democrats were 12% more likely to talk about juvenile justice issues than Republicans, but discourse on this topic was nonetheless relatively sparse. Overall, Democratic candidates exhibited a 27% likelihood of mentioning juvenile justice issues, while Republican candidates mentioned it with only 14% likelihood. As was true for both taxes and economy, district or state partisanship affects whether candidate discourse focused on juvenile justice. Although there is no direct effect for constituency partisanship in this case (the leaning of the constituency itself does not influence commitments), constituency partisanship does slightly condition the effect of a candidate's party, much as it did with the previous issues.

Education

Education issues were a strong component of Democratic candidate advertising. In 1998, however, Republicans also mentioned issues like smaller class size, computers in every classroom, tougher standards on teachers, teacher competency testing, improvement in childhood reading levels, and the importance of new textbooks. Candidates from both parties debated how to fund school improvements, mentioning possible funding sources including lotteries, budget surpluses, and taxes. As anticipated, party is again a central determinant of candidate discourse on education. Democratic candidates were 18% more likely than Republicans to talk about education issues generally in their advertisements. Unlike the other issues, however, education is linked neither directly nor indirectly to constituency partisanship, demonstrating its broad appeal across the advertising discourse of candidates from both parties.

Crime

As Table 1 demonstrates, crime is the only issue for which party does not appear to have a direct effect on candidate discourse. Being a Republican or a Democrat does not seem to influence whether a candidate will make general commitments about crime. There is, however, a conditional relationship between candidates' party and the constituencies' partisanship. Republicans are more likely to talk about crime in more Republican districts.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that most issue advertising is vague in nature, candidates are still talking about different issues in their campaigns. This finding suggests divergence between parties rather than convergence and provides support for the responsible party model; in 1998, Republicans focused on the economy and tax cuts, while Democrats highlighted education and juvenile justice. It also lends credence to Pomper's (1988) claim that voters' abilities to distinguish

between the parties may be a function of the clarity with which the parties present issue information.

Party is clearly a constraining factor on the kinds of commitments candidates make. Factoring in a constituency's partisan predisposition further illustrates this effect. Candidates, however, are sufficiently sensitive to their electoral situation to know the extent to which they should talk about their party's bread-and-butter issues, as Downs might predict. We are left to conclude that campaign discourse is not the cause of voters' perceptions regarding the lack of policy differences between the parties. Our results suggest that candidates campaign largely within the policy space defined by their respective parties. Republicans across districts and states all mentioned the same types of issues in their advertisements, with some mentioning certain issues more or less, depending on their constituents' partisan leanings.

There is, however, one strange twist to this seemingly straightforward story. Very few candidates actually mention their party affiliation in their advertisements. Only 25% of all candidates make at least one advertisement that refers to their party identification verbally or in writing on the screen. With partisanship exerting such a strong influence on candidates, why would they hide this cheap and easy signal from voters? One possible explanation is that candidates understand the signal party membership may provide, but they also know that voters dislike the partisan nature of politics. Thus, candidates are reluctant to remind voters directly of their party label.

Another possibility is that the party label connotes many issue positions that candidates do not want voters to associate with their campaigns. Thus, when a voter hears or sees the word "Republican" in an ad, he or she might associate pro-life positions with this candidate. If the candidate does not want to alienate pro-choice voters, he or she may choose not to signal party, but instead to talk vaguely about the economy and tax cuts. Thus, advertisements serve as an indirect partisan message to citizens.

Perhaps many citizens do not recognize the differences between parties in large part due to the absence of media coverage on parties (as institutions) as they campaign for control of Congress or statehouses across districts or states. Alternatively, maybe citizens are not paying attention to politics.¹⁰ Finally, the question about party differences may tap into an underlying dimension that mimics a general cynicism about politics. Whatever the root cause, we have shown here that candidates are not directly responsible for the blurred policy lines voters observe among them. Campaign rhetoric, while vague, differs across party and may be used as a meaningful source of information about the priorities of candidates once they have been elected.

¹⁰The National Election Study reports no decline in respondents who are "interested in the current campaign" over time. The survey does show modest declines in the number of respondents paying attention to campaigns on television (89% in 1992 to 74% in 1996) and in newspapers (65% in 1992 to 55% in 1996).

Appendix 1 Distribution of Variables

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Low | High |
|----------------------------|------|-----------------------|-----|------|
| Mentioned Crime | .35 | .47 | 0 | 1 |
| Mentioned Education | .57 | .49 | 0 | 1 |
| Mentioned Taxes | .53 | .49 | 0 | 1 |
| Mentioned Juvenile Justice | .22 | .41 | 0 | 1 |
| Republican | .47 | .50 | 0 | 1 |
| Constituency Party Leaning | .01 | .54 | -1 | 1 |
| House | .41 | .49 | 0 | 1 |
| Senate | .213 | .410 | 0 | 1 |
| Governor | .38 | .42 | 0 | 1 |
| Incumbent | .19 | .39 | 0 | 1 |

Appendix 2 Notes on Sampling and Representativeness of Data

These data were gathered by Strategic Media Services of Alexandria, Virginia, for *The National Journal*. The collection of data began 26 weeks before the general election. The data are a sample of advertisements from competitive elections. *The National Journal* deems elections competitive if they are open seats, if the incumbent is vulnerable to challenge, if a challenger is of high profile, or if vote margins in previous elections have been close (Todd 2001).

The average vote margin for the congressional elections in this data set is 13% (12% standard error). The average vote margin for all contested congressional elections in 1998 is 36% (20% standard error). It seems that Strategic Media Services did a good job of targeting competitive races. The selection of these competitive races should not be detrimental to the analysis, as this does not amount to selecting on the dependent variable (mentions of issues or issue specificity). It is, however, possible that competitiveness might be correlated with the dependent variable such that in competitive races candidates care more about their strategy and may be more or less likely to discuss issues or issue positions because of this. If it is the case that competitiveness is correlated with the dependent variable, then finding effects in this sample on an independent variable representing competitiveness (for example, the balance of partisanship in the district) would be quite difficult as there would be no variation on the independent variable to produce a pattern of results with the dependent variable. The fact that constituency partisanship does have strong effects in this analysis suggests that even among these competitive races, some are more competitive than others. For example, in these data, vote margins range from .1% (Kentucky and Nevada Senate elections) to 75% (Massachusetts' 8th District).

This variation arises from the fact that SMS collected both primary and general election ads for the sampled races even if only one of those elections was deemed competitive. For example, Massachusetts' 8th District Congressional race is in the sample because the Democratic primary was highly competitive. The general election was not as competitive, but the ads were still collected. There is a wide range of vote margins on Election Day in this data set, and there are systematic factors that are able to predict what issues candidates will talk about in their ads. The sample of ads makes it more challenging to find this effect since it essentially limits the variation on an independent variable—competitiveness—and not on the dependent variable.

Manuscript submitted 1 January 2001

Final manuscript received 10 July 2001

References

- Alesina, Alberto. 1988. "Credibility and Policy Convergence in a Two-Party System with Rational Voters." *American Economic Review* 78(4): 796–805.
- Calvert, Randall L. 1985. "Robustness of the Multidimensional Voting Model, Candidate Motivations, Uncertainty and Convergence." *American Journal of Political Science* 29(1): 69–95.
- Campbell, A., P. E. Converse, W. E. Miller, and D. E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Campbell, James E. 1993. *The Presidential Pulse of Congressional Elections*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Converse, Phillip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter. New York: Free Press.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1992. *Divided Government*. New York: Macmillan.
- Fowler, Linda L., Constantine J. Spiliotes, and Lynn Vavreck. 2001. "Group Advocacy in the New Hampshire Primary." In *The Interest Group Connection: Electioneering, Lobbying and Policy-making in Washington*, eds. Paul S. Herrnson, Ronald G. Shaiko, and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Chatham House.
- Franklin, Charles H. 1991. "Eschewing Obfuscation? Campaigns and the Perception of U.S. Senate Incumbents." *American Political Science Review* 85(4): 1193–1214.
- Geer, J. G. 2000. "Assessing Attack Advertising: A Silver Lining." In *Campaign Reform: Insights and Evidence*, eds. Larry M. Bartels and Lynn Vavreck. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Jacobson, Gary. 2001. "The Congressional Elections of 2000." Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Kramer, Gerald H. 1977. "A Dynamic Model of Political Equilibrium." *Journal of Economic Theory* 14(December): 310–44.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McKelvey, Richard D., and Peter C. Ordeshook. 1990. "A Decade of Experimental Research on Spatial Models of Elections and Committees." In *Advances in the Spatial Theory of Voting*, eds. James E. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Page, Benjamin I. 1978. *Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Petrocik, John R. 1981. *Party Coalitions: Realignment and the Decline of the New Deal Party System*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Plott, Charles R. 1967. "A Notion of Equilibrium and Its Possibility under Majority Rule." *The American Economic Review* 57(September): 787–806.
- Pomper, Gerald M. 1968. *Elections in America: Control and Influence in Democratic Politics*. New York: Dodd, Mead.
- Pomper, Gerald M. 1975. *Voters' Choice: Varieties of American Electoral Behavior*. New York: Dodd, Mead.
- Pomper, Gerald M. 1988. *Voters, Elections, and Parties: The Practice of Democratic Theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Poole, Keith T., and Howard Rosenthal. 1991. "Patterns of Congressional Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(1): 228–78.
- Project on Campaign Conduct. 1999. Civic Values Survey: Voter Attitudes on Political Campaigns Conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and John Deardourff/The Media Company. Results at www.campaignconduct.org (accessed January 5, 2000).
- Ranney, Austin. 1954. *The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Schattschneider, E. E. 1942. *Party Government*. New York: Rinehart.
- Stokes, Donald E. 1966. "Spatial Models of Party Competition." In *Elections and the Political Order*, eds. Angus Campbell et al. New York: Wiley.
- Sundquist, James L. 1988. "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 103(4): 613–35.
- Todd, Chuck. 2001. "On the Trail: Forget Madness, This is March Chaos." www.nationaljournal.com (accessed March 21, 2001).
- Wittman, Donald. 1977. "Candidates with Policy Preferences: A Dynamic Model." *Journal of Economic Theory* 14(February): 180–89.
- Wittman, Donald. 1983. "Candidate Motivation: A Synthesis of Alternatives." *American Political Science Review* 77(1): 142–57.

Constantine J. Spiliotes is assistant professor of government, Dartmouth College, Hanover NH 03755.

Lynn Vavreck is assistant professor of political science, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1472.

LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 1 of 2 -



You have printed the following article:

Campaign Advertising: Partisan Convergence or Divergence?

Constantine J. Spiliotes; Lynn Vavreck

The Journal of Politics, Vol. 64, No. 1. (Feb., 2002), pp. 249-261.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28200202%2964%3A1%3C249%3ACAPCOD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>

This article references the following linked citations. If you are trying to access articles from an off-campus location, you may be required to first logon via your library web site to access JSTOR. Please visit your library's website or contact a librarian to learn about options for remote access to JSTOR.

References

Robustness of the Multidimensional Voting Model: Candidate Motivations, Uncertainty, and Convergence

Randall L. Calvert

American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 29, No. 1. (Feb., 1985), pp. 69-95.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28198502%2929%3A1%3C69%3AROTMVM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6>

Eschewing Obfuscation? Campaigns and the Perception of U.S. Senate Incumbents

Charles H. Franklin

The American Political Science Review, Vol. 85, No. 4. (Dec., 1991), pp. 1193-1214.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199112%2985%3A4%3C1193%3AEOCATP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G>

A Notion of Equilibrium and its Possibility Under Majority Rule

Charles R. Plott

The American Economic Review, Vol. 57, No. 4. (Sep., 1967), pp. 787-806.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-8282%28196709%2957%3A4%3C787%3AANOEA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N>

Patterns of Congressional Voting

Keith T. Poole; Howard Rosenthal

American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 35, No. 1. (Feb., 1991), pp. 228-278.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28199102%2935%3A1%3C228%3APOCV%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R>

LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 2 of 2 -



Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States

James L. Sundquist

Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 103, No. 4. (Winter, 1988-1989), pp. 613-635.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0032-3195%28198824%2F198924%29103%3A4%3C613%3ANAPTFT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9>

Candidate Motivation: A Synthesis of Alternative Theories

Donald Wittman

The American Political Science Review, Vol. 77, No. 1. (Mar., 1983), pp. 142-157.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198303%2977%3A1%3C142%3ACMASOA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5>