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**Living in a Battleground: Presidential Campaigns  
and Fundamental Predictors of Vote Choice**

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**Abstract**

Little evidence links the strategic decisions of campaigns to individual-level voting behavior. Yet for campaigns to matter in the way that experts argue, exposure to campaigns must also matter so there should be observable differences in the structure of vote choice between battleground and non-battleground states. Combining presidential campaign data with the Senate Election Study, we show that intense campaigning can activate factors like race, ideology, partisanship, and presidential approval. We find that the campaigns affected different variables in 1988 than in 1992, which we hypothesize is the consequence of campaign messages.

## **Introduction**

An emerging scholarly consensus that campaigns matter in elections is built on evidence showing that the public reacts to campaign events (Holbrook 1996; Hillygus 2005), the issue context of elections influences vote choice (Clinton and Lapinski 2004; Carsey 2000; Simon 2002; Popkin 1991), and aggregate election results are related to campaign intensity (Shaw 1999a; Holbrook and McClurg 2005). While such work refutes long-held notions that campaigns have "minimal effects," limits remain to our evidence on whether voting behavior would be different in the absence of presidential campaigns. In this paper we address this by examining whether the intense flows of information created by presidential campaigns in some locales but not elsewhere produce differences in voting behavior.

Unlike most previous research, we examine how campaign decisions create geographically-driven information contexts in order to explicitly link them to voter decision-making. In particular, we examine how fundamental predictors of vote choice like partisanship and presidential evaluation vary in importance across campaign contexts of different intensity. By combining survey data from the Senate Election Study with a unique measure of state-wide campaign intensity from the 1988 and 1992 presidential elections, our study makes two contributions to knowledge on presidential campaign effects. First, we show that individual voting can differ dramatically across campaign context thus providing rare individual-level evidence of campaign effects that result from the strategic allocation of campaign resources over the electoral map. Second, our results suggest a dependence of such effects *between years* on the choice of campaign message. Though this second hypothesis bears further testing in future research, the fact that the

variables which are more important in battleground states than non-battleground states varies across election years is highly suggestive of this point.

### **Research on Campaign Effects**

For years, campaign effects research was plagued by a contradiction between common sense beliefs that campaigns influence voters and generally mild empirical evidence of such effects. Two arguments emerged as political scientist's reconciled instinct with evidence. The first is that campaigns are strategic, with opposing candidates concentrating resources on the same locations (Shaw 1999b, 2006) and targeting subsets of the voting population (Huber and Arceneaux *in press*; Gerber and Green 2004, Chapter 1; Goldstein and Ridout 2002; Abramson and Claggett 2001; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992). From this perspective, strategic considerations and selection processes mask campaign effects. That is, the competitive pressures faced by campaigns minimize their aggregate and individual effects. Seeking to avoid this problem, scholars use experimental designs to investigate the impact of negative advertising (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995), information complexity (Barker and Hansen 2005; Lau and Redlawsk 2001), issue engagement (Simon 2002), and contacting techniques (Gerber and Green 2004; Green and Gerber 2005) on voting behavior. Still others use quasi-experimental designs to gain significant leverage using data from real campaigns (Huber and Arceneaux, *in press*) by focusing on voters in targeted media markets who are *not* in targeted states. The general consensus of these studies is that campaigns can influence voters.

A second perspective sees campaigns as a series of events that are related in time, with the people who run them making decisions on a day-to-day basis, often in reaction

to events outside of their control. When such dynamics are ignored, the argument goes, changes in public behavior that occur *during* the election are overlooked. Accordingly, studies based on cross-sectional designs use an operational concept of campaigns that does not match reality and therefore find weak effects. Gelman and King (1994), Holbrook (1996), Wlezien and Erickson (2002), Hillygus and Jackman (2003), and Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson (2005) all use longitudinal evidence from within a single campaign cycle to illustrate the impact of specific campaign events on the electorate, while Shaw (1999a, 2006) specifically demonstrates the effect of ad buys and campaign visits on statewide and media market outcomes.

Though such research puts to rest lingering doubts about whether campaigns influence elections, there are still limits to what we know. For example, experimental studies convincingly establish that voters *can* be influenced by advertising content and polarity but ultimately do not show that they *do* influence them in the complex environments characterizing actual campaigns where strategy might minimize actual effects. Likewise, scholars interested in dynamic effects understandably focus on specific events (e.g., debates, conventions) or the impact of the campaign in its entirety (i.e., not measuring variation in campaign behavior), rather than the behavioral heterogeneity produced by campaign decisions that are reflected in geographic disparities in campaigning. What remains to be seen in this literature is whether real campaigns influence individual behavior in meaningful ways through their strategic decisions.<sup>1</sup> In this paper we address these issues by, first, focusing on differences in real campaign context and, second, by examining how the underlying considerations of vote choice then differ in impact across campaign context. To our knowledge, there is no other study that

examines the relationship between presidential campaign context and the impact of traditional predictors on vote choice.<sup>2</sup>

### **Campaign Effects and Predictors of Vote Choice**

This paper tests the proposition that, given the inequitable distribution of campaign resources across the fifty states, where voters live determines the amount and type of campaign information available to them, and this in turn has important consequences for how the vote is structured. Consider two states whose names are easily confused but whose campaign experiences in the 2004 election could not be more different, Iowa and Idaho. Neither presidential candidate visited Idaho, nor were there any media buys there by the candidates or parties in 2004. At the same time Iowa was subjected to 17 campaign appearances by the presidential candidates, another 24 appearances by the vice-presidential candidates, and enough media buys that the average Iowan could have seen 310 campaign ad airings.<sup>3</sup> These are starkly different information environments and we expect that these differences have significant consequences for the structure of voter decisions.

We expect that voters living in states with intense exposure to the campaign differ from voters living in states with relatively little direct exposure in two important ways. First, we expect that their vote will be more structured and easily predicted by fundamental considerations. Second, we expect that the mix of considerations voters bring to bear on the vote will differ across campaign contexts. These effects, we argue, stem from how voter predispositions are connected to candidates during campaigns. Here, our work is informed by a stream of research that begins with Berelson *et al.*'s (1954) emphasis on activation. They note that most voter change during campaigns comes from partisans

who "return to the fold" (also see Finkel 1993). More broadly, Gelman and King (1993) show that pre-election trial-heat polls became better predictors of the actual election outcomes as the election draws near, suggesting that campaigns "enlighten voters." Several studies have taken up Gelman and King's hypothesis with generally encouraging results (Stevenson and Vavreck 2000; Arceneaux 2005; Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Hillygus and Jackman 2003). While these earlier demonstrations presumed that campaign information makes it easier for voters to cast their ballots the way one might expect them to given their underlying predispositions, there is no direct demonstration that such effects derive from exposure to specific information environments created by the campaigns or the extent to which it operates through voter predispositions.

We assume that campaigns choose campaign messages based on the composition of the electorate as well as the prevailing issues and conditions of the day in order to tap voter attributes that have a prior history of affecting the vote and then allocate resources to communicate that message in the most efficient manner possible (Shaw 2006). The idea here is that campaigns build their influence in elections by appealing to voter predispositions. We are agnostic about the specific psychological mechanisms underlying these connections; they might occur through agenda setting, persuasion, or priming. The key point is that campaign messages are used to help increase the connection between pre-existing voter attributes and interests and a specific candidate. It is not merely a consequence of having an election, per se, so much as being exposed to campaign information that strengthens the connection between voter predilections and the choice between candidates.

While prior research conceives of this process almost solely in terms of partisanship (e.g., Finkel 1993; Berelson *et al.* 1954; but see Kahn and Kenny 1999), there is no reason to expect campaign to focus only on partisanship. Though it remains an important way of connecting with voters, candidates would be remiss if they tried to tap partisanship at the expense of appealing to voters who are happy about a booming economy or upset with a flagging presidency. We therefore expect that a broad array of fundamental considerations, including party identification, presidential approval, ideology, economic evaluations, etc., can be the raw material that campaigns tap through their resource allocation and communication strategies.

Most critically, our approach differs in that we conceive of campaigns as being as much a function of space as of time (in contrast, see Bartels 2006). As Shaw (2006) demonstrates, the imperative to expend resources in as efficient a manner possible leads campaigns to create dramatically different campaign contexts across both states and media markets. If campaign effects depend on what campaigns communicate to voters, those voters who are most directly exposed to that information should be more strongly influenced by it than those who are relatively unexposed. Specifically, voters in battleground states – where campaign information is plentiful – will behave differently than fellow citizens in states that are ignored by the campaigns and therefore relatively information poor with respect to the specific messages constructed by the presidential campaigns. In short voting behavior is jointly produced by a combination of predispositions and campaign context, rather than each type of factor separately.

What of voters in non-battleground states? Does our framework imply that they are choosing at random? Are they basing their votes on something other than

information? In a word, no. We do not claim that voters in these states are uninformed or that their behavior is un-structured. Indeed, we fully expect that voters in the rest of the county are exposed to campaign messages through media coverage of campaign events, including those in the battleground states.

But in a very real sense, they are experiencing the presidential campaign much differently than voters in battleground states. First, they have less exposure to the specific messages, debates, and symbols that the campaigns use to influence voting behavior. Second, to the extent that they do receive campaign information, it is heavily mediated. As the media are more likely to present multiple points of view, provide alternative interpretations of issues and messages, and to focus on campaign strategy or horse race coverage, there is more ambiguity in what the information implies for voters. Altogether this means that intense campaign environments create more opportunities for underlying campaign messages to get to voters and in such a way that the intended meanings are less ambiguous for voters.

As a consequence, if campaigns do in fact affect voting behavior by activating voter fundamentals with campaign information, we should find that voters in battleground states choose differently than voters in other states. If this is not the case and we do not observe differences between voters in battleground and non-battleground states, it importantly implies that campaign decisions about what to communicate, where to communicate it, and when are unimportant for how they influence voter decision-making. This in turn would imply a different model of "campaign effects" that downplays the role of resource allocation and highlights other considerations.

## **Data and Methods**

*Measuring the Battleground States.* Testing our argument hinges on the fact that presidential campaigns do not distribute resources equitably across states (Shaw 1999a, 2006). Since states are unequal in terms of advertising costs, competitiveness, and Electoral College votes, presidential campaigns choose to spend almost no resources in some states while saturating others with visits, commercials, campaign paraphernalia, voter contacts, and the like. The end result is that not all voters live in the same campaign context, providing us with the opportunity to study campaigns by treating them as contextual effects. Since our hypotheses focus on differences in voting behavior that are a product of campaign contexts, we need a valid measure of state campaign intensity.

We use three readily available indicators of presidential campaign behavior to build our measure. Two of them – presidential advertising purchases and candidate visits – were gathered by Daron Shaw and made available in his 1999 *American Political Science Review* article. The third is a measure of national party monetary transfers to the states.<sup>4</sup> Including party transfers is important because they played an important role in presidential campaigns throughout the 1990s and because they are more widely distributed across states, thus providing additional variation in our key independent variable. We combine these three indicators by standardizing each *within* campaign year and then summing them together into a single measure of campaign intensity. This then is used as the basis for identifying the battleground states: those states in the top third of the summary measure in each of the election years.<sup>5</sup>

Since our survey data are for 1988 and 1992 (see below), we can establish validity for our measure by comparing it to Shaw's (1999b) data on Electoral College strategies that are gleaned from the campaign's strategy memos. Of all the states he identifies as

being considered a "battleground" by both campaigns, all of them are similarly measured with our data. Moreover, of all the states identified as a battleground by *at least one* of the campaigns, we are consistent in all but two cases (out of seventeen). Although we pick up a fair amount of campaigning in states that are not listed in Shaw's classification (e.g., South Carolina in 1988), the vast majority of those are cases in which the data show the campaign did not follow their plan and therefore did campaign in those states. All in all, we believe this clearly establishes the validity of our battleground measure.<sup>6</sup>

*Individual-Level Data.* Investigating our hypotheses also requires individual-level observational data within the states. Two criteria exist for the individual-level data: 1) there must be a large enough sample size within each state to produce stable coefficient estimates and 2) our respondents must have been surveyed at approximately the same time to minimize the impact of temporal dynamics as an alternative explanation. Although there are many national survey samples with appropriate sample sizes or the appropriate measures, only the Senate Election Study (Miller *et al.* 1999) meets both these criteria. This study was constructed primarily for studying views of Senators and senatorial candidates in each electoral year from 1988 to 1992. However, it includes many of the variables essential for studying presidential voting behavior and is therefore useful for our purposes.

In 1988 and 1992, roughly 60 voting-age citizens were interviewed in each of the 50 states.<sup>7</sup> For this study, we draw on the 1988 and 1992 data which provides us with approximately 5,859 survey responses. Of this sample, 4,394 reported voting in the November elections (4,344 in the presidential election) with 3,857 respondents providing a presidential vote choice. From this study we draw the basic independent variables for

the analysis, each of which is described and summarized in Appendix B. They include familiar predictors of vote choice available in the National Election Study, such as partisanship, race, ideology, etc. To account for the unique structure of these data, all of our estimates use appropriate population weights and clustered standard errors by state.

### **Vote Choice, Fundamental Considerations, and Campaign Context**

We now turn to an examination of how campaign intensity influences the mix of variables that are important to presidential vote choice. It is important at the outset to be clear that our interest here is not just in whether there is a direct relationship between campaign activity and vote choice, but rather in how the campaigns structure the underlying determinants of vote choice and make them better (or stronger) predictors of what citizens do. Our logic here flows directly from the proposition that campaigns engage "fundamental" considerations such as partisanship and presidential evaluations (Campbell 2000; Gelman and King 1993). The basic idea is that campaigns deliver messages that reinforce party identification and remind voters of the issues at hand, especially those related to presidential performance. If this is the case, then we expect to see the fundamentals of vote choice play a stronger role in states in which the presidential campaign is intense than in states in which the level of campaign activity is relatively minimal.<sup>8</sup> We also develop and test a fundamental vote choice model and examine its results under different campaign contexts. The model includes measures of partisanship, presidential approval, economic attitudes, political ideology, and demographic characteristics.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis of the differential impact of fundamental considerations in battleground and non-battleground states is presented in Tables 1 and 2. In both of these

tables we regress vote choice on the basic model for the full sample and then also for the battleground and non-battleground samples. There are two general questions that we answer here. First, does the model of fundamental considerations "fit" better in battleground states than in other states and, second, are certain fundamental considerations activated by the campaign to produce significantly stronger effects in the battleground states than in other states?

Turn to the analysis of the 1988 election presented in Table 1, where the choice between Bush and Dukakis is estimated with a logit model. Here we see that the fundamental model is strongly related to vote choice and that the variables we expect to be important (party, approval, ideology economy) obtain standard levels of statistical significance. Turning to the issue of whether the model overall performs better in the battleground states, we see that the pseudo  $R^2$  is .57 in low intensity states and .67 in battleground states. On its face, this looks like a significant increase in explanatory power. When put to a test of statistical significant, however, we find the difference is marginally significant ( $p=.076$ ).<sup>10</sup>

[Table 1 about here]

With respect to specific coefficients we see that while many of the differences are trivial, two variables – ideology and race – stand out as significantly stronger in the battleground states than in other states.<sup>11</sup> We can gain an appreciation of the magnitude of these differences by turning to Figure 1, which plots the probability of casting a vote for Bush for different levels of ideology and race (all other variables set to their median values). Here we see a relatively flat slope for ideology in non-battleground states and a much steeper slope in battleground states. The total estimated difference in probability of

voting for Bush between a very liberal and very conservative respondent was .14 in non-battleground states and fully .39 in battleground states. The lower part of Figure 1 shows how race was activated by the 1988 campaign. Here we see that there was no racial gap in voting in non-battleground states but a substantial gap in battleground states, where the difference in the probability of voting for Bush between black respondents and all others was .33.

[Figure 1 about here]

In Table 2 we find results that are similar in that the campaign seems closely related to the impact of fundamentals in 1992, but different in that the specific fundamentals affected are themselves not the same as in 1988.<sup>12</sup> Here we see additional evidence that different sets of considerations are important in battleground states than in other states. Focusing again on the overall fit of the model we see that the pseudo  $R^2$  in battleground states (.60) is substantially larger than in other states (.48), thus indicating that, as a whole, the fundamental variables used in this model more adequately explain vote choice where the campaign is intense than where it is not.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the vote is still structured in non-battleground state, just not *as* structured by the fundamental considerations as in battleground states.

[Table 2 about here]

An examination of the individual coefficients reveals some additional, mostly intuitive, differences between the two models.<sup>14</sup> First, the fundamental considerations of party identification and presidential approval are much stronger determinants of vote choice in battleground states than in other states. Not only is the difference in slopes statistically significant but also it is substantively very important. The top two panes of

Figure 2 illustrate how the influence of party identification and presidential approval on vote choice is conditioned campaign intensity. In both cases the translation of attitude into vote is much swifter and stronger in battleground states than in other states. These differences are exactly what might be expected given our hypothesis.

We do have one important contrary finding in Table 2 – economic evaluations are significantly related to vote choice in low intensity states but not in battleground states. One possibility is that given the dramatic influence of presidential approval in battleground states, economic evaluation are subsumed under that broader evaluation. A second possibility is that some complex relationship among partisanship, presidential approval and economic evaluations is producing this unexpected result. There is some evidence for both explanations. A bivariate analysis shows that the economic attitude-vote relationship is stronger in battleground states (Cramer's  $V=.35$ ) than in the other states (Cramer's  $V=.28$ ). Moreover, economic evaluations are more strongly determined by partisanship and approval in battleground states ( $R^2=.28$ ) than in the other states ( $R^2=.18$ ).<sup>15</sup>

Otherwise we are at a loss to explain this anomaly, except to say that the impact of economic evaluations is really quite meager compared to the impact of party identification and presidential approval. The bottom pane of Figure 2 makes this point fairly clearly. Here we see that while that while economic evaluations are of some consequence in non-battleground states (the slope for battleground states is not significant), their impact pales in comparison to the other considerations in Figure 2 and, overall, contribute much less to the overall explanation. Finally, the slope for respondent sex is significant and in an unexpected direction in battleground states but not significant

in other states. While this is the case, the difference in slopes between the two samples is not statistically significant.

### **Why Does the Impact of Campaign Fundamentals Differ From 1988 to 1992?**

While we expected to find that campaigns would influence the relevance of factors other than partisanship on voting, we did not expect to find that partisanship would *not* be activated in the 1988 campaign or that factors impacted by the campaign would matter significantly from 1988 to 1992. This raises an interesting question, though one we had not anticipated – why are *these* fundamentals influenced rather than others? We are able to spin a *post hoc* answer that is related to the themes of the campaign that we believe has merit, though one that is admittedly is in need of additional empirical testing.<sup>16</sup>

The foundation for this conjecture comes from Berelson *et al.*'s original arguments about activation, particularly when we consider their interpretation of Harry Truman's comeback in the 1948 presidential election. According to them, Truman's recovery was not due to changes in evaluations of his character or competence but to an increase in the salience of class-related issues late in the campaign:

The campaign was characterized by a resurgence of attention to socioeconomic matters, at the expense of international issues. The image of Truman did not change, but the image of what was important in the campaign--and perhaps even the image of what Truman stood for--did change to a dominance of socioeconomic issues (1954:264).

In effect they argue that, as Truman shifted the focus of the campaign to class issues, he activated those considerations among his wandering supporters and they came home to vote for him. We suspect that this same argument applies to our data as well, with the type of issues raised by the campaigns influencing the type of fundamental considerations

that loom larger in people's voting calculations across years. And, as campaign strategy provides for more intense, less ambiguous information environments these ought to have a larger impact on voters in battleground states than in non-battleground states.

At first blush, the cross-campaign differences are sensible. For example, the 1988 campaign was marked by racial overtones. Of particular interest here are the findings from Mendelberg's (2001) analysis, which showed that the Willie Horton ad (and coverage of it) not only primed racial attitudes but also primed ideology as an influence on candidate evaluations in the 1998 presidential contest. In addition, Gwiasda's (2001) finding that media coverage of the Willie Horton ad had an influence on general perceptions of Michael Dukakis' ideological position also buttresses our findings. Similarly, Geer (2005, p. 91) shows that a key racial issue – crime – was intensely pushed by George Bush in his negative advertising (27-percent of all Republican negative ads that year).

In contrast, the 1992 is often remembered for emphasizing the poor performance of the incumbent administration, particularly with regards to the economy. In that sense, it is a classic retrospective-voting election with – importantly – blame focused on the tax increases agreed to by the Bush administration and responsibility for the economic downturn being laid at his feet by the Clinton campaign. Illustrative evidence comes from Geer's account of advertising in the 1992 campaign. The Clinton campaign ran over 30-percent of their negative ads on "economic times," while the Bush campaign ran over 30-percent on taxes (with Clinton running 17-percent of his positive ads on taxes as well, essentially claiming he would not increase taxes on any but the rich).

We would be remiss if we did not point out that accepting this as a possible interpretation requires us to believe that the economic question was less about feelings on the economy than it was a review of President Bush's performance and that we have no strong evidence supporting that assertion. Yet, it is not entirely inconsistent with other evidence on voting behavior in 1992, as well as our own finding about how economic factors behave as expected when incumbent evaluations are dropped from our model. For example, Holbrook (1994) shows that consumer sentiment had an impact on candidate preferences that was roughly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> as large as the impact as presidential evaluation in a model that controls for the sequence of campaign events, but not for geographical differences in campaigning. Similarly, Hetherington (1996) shows that the *standardized* coefficient for candidate evaluation – an indirect measure of presidential popularity – is roughly four times as large as it is for economic evaluations in influencing vote choice. While none of this is definitive proof of our assumption, it is generally consistent with the hypothesis.

However, we believe that this hypothesis warrants closer attention than we can give it here. But more centrally for our argument, none of this is inconsistent with the original conjecture that the different information contexts created by campaigns ultimately matter for the final vote decisions made by voters on Election Day *within* the context of a single election. On that score, our evidence is not ambiguous.

## **Conclusion**

The point of this paper is to demonstrate that the unique electoral contexts created by presidential campaigns affect the way that voters behave, specifically by influencing

the relationship of vote choice to its fundamental predictors. Our evidence shows most fundamentally that voters behave in a more predictable fashion in intense campaign states than in low intensity states. Given that differences between states reflect information environments produced by strategic decisions made by presidential campaigns, this is a strong demonstration that the decisions made by campaigns affect election outcomes through how they structure voting. We also find that presidential campaigns enhance the effect of retrospective presidential evaluations and partisanship on the eventual vote choice in 1992 and race and ideology in 1988. Also of interest is that our interpretation of the cross-election differences suggests a link between the choice of message used in campaigns and the types of fundamentals that end up being significant for voting in the battleground states.

The primary drawback of our analysis is that we do not tackle the difficult problem of measuring campaign content. Even though the distribution of resources and the subsequent effect they have on voters is important, such strategic decisions are only a subset of what campaigns must consider. And given that campaigns coordinate their resources so closely (Shaw 1999b, 2006), it can be argued that the most important decisions presidential campaigns make are on how to pitch their candidate and his issues. Our evidence, unfortunately, cannot determine which campaign had the better message. However, the differences in the fundamentals that were important in 1988 – race and ideology – and in 1992 – presidential approval and partisanship – are consistent with conventional wisdom on the messages that dominated those elections and provides an intriguing hypothesis for future research.

Although the evidence is not without its limitations, it makes a clear contribution to our understanding of how campaigns affect voting behavior. Importantly, it buttresses an emerging theme in political science – modern election campaigns have substantial effects on election outcomes and voting behavior. In this analysis we have focused on an important element of this story; that is how campaign activity influences the mix of considerations people bring to bear on their vote decision.

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Table 1. Fundamental Characteristics and vote Choice in the 1988 Presidential Election, by Campaign Intensity (Logit estimates, Standard Errors Clustered by State)

	Full Sample		Low Intensity States		Battleground States		Differences	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	Slope Difference	t-score
Party Identification	0.786	0.063*	0.75	0.073*	0.834	0.13*	0.084	0.690
Presidential Approval	0.793	0.114*	0.832	0.150*	0.782	0.232*	-0.05	-0.230
Ideology	0.807	0.177*	0.489	0.164*	1.179	0.26*	0.69	1.81*
National Economy	0.328	0.118*	0.364	0.153*	0.286	0.216	-0.078	-0.330
Black	-0.725	0.812	-0.011	0.952	-2.18	0.566*	-2.17	-1.96*
Income	-0.019	0.070	0.027	0.091	-0.046	0.117	-0.073	-0.580
Female	0.299	0.291	0.221	0.267	0.287	0.461	0.066	0.110
Constant	-1.106	0.291	-1.112	0.429*	-1.188	0.649#	--	--
N	1514		1052		462			
X <sup>2</sup>	443.0		280.6		493.71			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.61		.57		.67			

\*p<.05, two-tailed test.

Table 2. Fundamental Characteristics and vote Choice in the 1992 Presidential Election, by Campaign Intensity (Multinomial Logit, Standard Errors Clustered by State)

		Full Sample		Low Intensity		Battleground States		Differences	
		b	s.e.	b	s.e.	B	s.e.	Slope Difference	t-score
Bush	Party	0.855	0.063*	0.800	0.078*	1.066*	0.107	0.267	2.01*
	Strength of Partisanship	-0.013	0.155*	-0.022	0.170	-0.064	0.367	-0.042	-0.10
	Approval	1.770	0.136	1.608	0.151*	2.423*	0.219	0.815	3.07*
	Ideology	1.088	0.230*	1.051	0.334*	1.325*	0.220	0.274	0.68
	Economy	0.375	0.160*	0.569	0.194*	-0.179	0.189	-0.747	-2.76*
	Black	-1.57	.74*	-1.91	.583*	-.907	0.904	1.003	0.93
	Income	-0.082	0.076	-0.098	0.103	0.049	0.062	0.147	1.22
	Female	0.805	0.301*	0.479	0.277	1.653*	0.705	1.174	1.55
	Constant	-2.830	0.563*	-2.134	0.561	-5.325	1.190	-3.191	-2.43
Perot	Party	0.520	0.079*	0.495	0.096*	0.582*	0.149	0.087	0.49
	Strength of Partisanship	-0.490	0.110*	-0.468	0.150*	-0.573*	0.173	-0.104	-0.46
	Approval	0.304	0.101*	0.229	0.125	0.458*	0.169	0.230	1.09
	Ideology	0.493	0.191*	0.472	0.252*	0.598*	0.242	0.126	0.36
	Economy	0.078	0.114	0.040	0.134	0.083	0.222	0.042	0.16
	Black	-3.34	1.06*	-2.79	01.06*	-34.433*	0.598	-31.64	-26.00*
	Income	-0.068	0.058	-0.128	0.059	0.041	0.109	0.170	1.37
	Female	-0.129	0.210	-0.335	0.244	0.296	0.375	0.631	1.41
	Constant	0.593	0.413	1.015	0.475*	-0.219	0.644	-1.234	-1.54
N	1500		995		505				
X <sup>2</sup>	858.3		1505.7		28751				
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.52		.48		.60				

\*p<.05, two-tailed test.

Figure 1. The Differential Impact of Ideology and Race on Presidential Vote, 1988

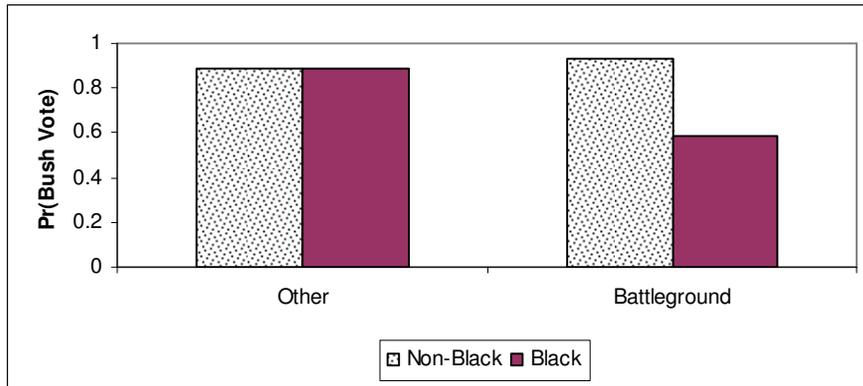
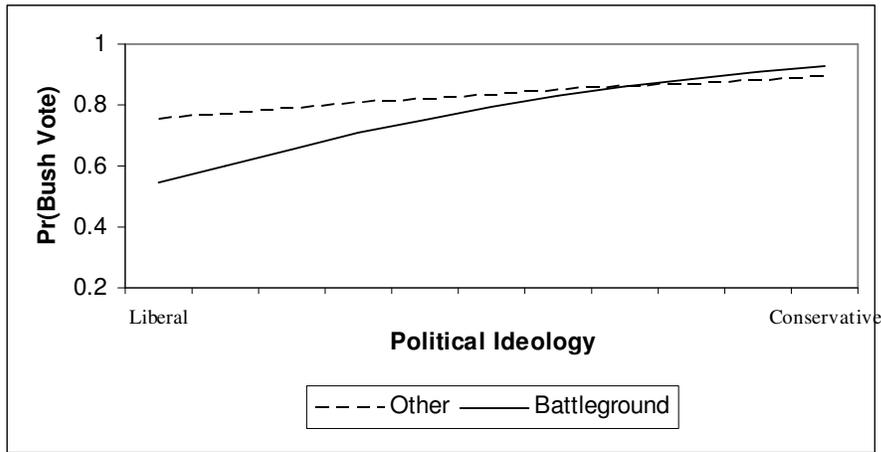
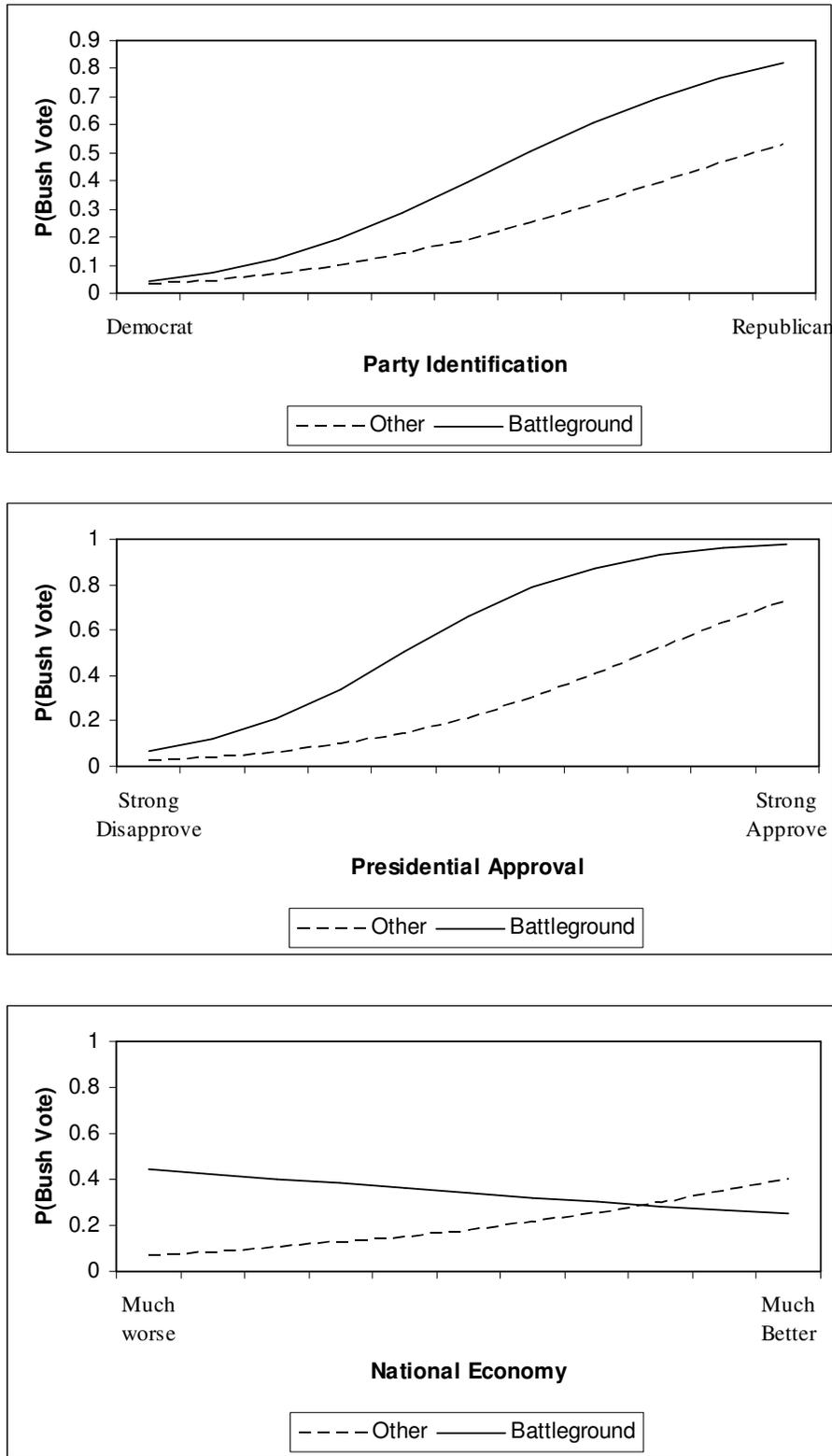


Figure 2. The Differential Impact of Fundamental Variables on Presidential Vote, 1992



## **Appendix A**

### **Measuring the Battleground States**

We use a behavioral measure of campaign context to distinguish between the battleground and non-battleground states. We do this by measuring the relative intensity with which campaigns disperse three different types of resources – presidential ad buys, candidate visits, and party transfers – into the three states. While this undoubtedly misses some important sources of information (e.g., independent expenditures), it undoubtedly picks up the most important sources of cross-contextual variation stemming from presidential campaigns themselves.

To validate this measure, we compare it against an independent measure of campaign context that was based on qualitative evidence (see Shaw 1999b, 2006 for a discussion of how he uses campaign materials to establish campaign Electoral College strategies). In Shaw's classification, campaigns could view states as being (1) a battleground, (2) marginal and leaning toward one party, or (3) a base state that leans strongly toward one party. He then compares the intra-party classifications of both of the major party's campaigns in order to get some sense of which states were targeted in the 1988-2004 presidential campaigns.

Our approach is to examine which states were identified as a battleground by both major party campaigns, by at least one of the major party campaigns, or as marginal by both major party campaigns. The assumption is that these targeting classifications should make a state more likely to receive a significant amount of attention from the presidential campaigns and therefore an "actual" battleground.

Table A-1 reports the results of our comparison. All of the states listed in the second row of this table were marked as "battleground states" with our measure. The stars indicate their relative position in the Shaw ranking described above. As this table makes clear, our measure has relatively high overlap with Shaw's ranking. There is a 78-percent overlap in 1988, 82-percent overlap in 1992, and 80-percent overlap over both years. This suggests a substantial amount of content validity for our measure, though this is due in part to a large number of easy calls (i.e., states where there is no campaigning).

[Table A-1 about here]

**Table A-1. Validity of Battleground Measure.** Our measure of battleground states is based on the actual intensity of the presidential campaign within each electoral year. This table compares a different measure derived by Shaw (1999b).

Battleground States in 1988	Battleground States in 1992
California*** Colorado Connecticut* Hawaii Illinois** Kentucky Massachusetts Michigan** Missouri*** Montana New Jersey** New York** Ohio*** Pennsylvania** South Carolina South Dakota Texas*** Vermont* Washington**	Colorado** Connecticut* Georgia*** Kentucky** Louisiana** Michigan *** Missouri** Montana** North Carolina** North Dakota New Jersey*** New Mexico** Ohio*** Pennsylvania** Texas* Vermont Wisconsin**
States from Shaw (1999b) left out:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Two battleground</i> – none</li> <li>• <i>One battleground</i> – Oregon</li> <li>• <i>Two marginal</i> – Delaware, Maine, Wisconsin</li> </ul>	States from Shaw (1999b) left out:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Two battleground</i> – none</li> <li>• <i>One battleground</i> – Maine</li> <li>• <i>Two marginal</i> – Delaware, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington, Alabama, South Dakota</li> </ul>

\*\*\*– Identified as battleground by both campaigns  
 \*\* – Identified as battleground by one campaign  
 \* – Identified as marginal by both campaigns

**Appendix B**  
**Variable Descriptions and Statistics**

**Table B-1. Variable Descriptions.**

Variable name	Description	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Campaign resources	Composite measure of campaign resources expended in a state based on party transfers, candidate advertising, and candidate visits that were standardized by year and then summed together. Negative scores indicate little campaigning; high scores suggest extensive campaigning.	5859	-0.07	1.85	-1.80, 7.43
Battleground	All states in the top quartile of the campaign resources variable were determined to be a "battleground."	5859	0.35	0.48	0,1
Education	Survey-based measure of education. 0=8 grades or less, 6=advanced degree	5665	3.02	1.60	0,6
Partisanship	Seven point measure of partisanship. -3=Strong Democrat, 3=Strong Republican	5491	-0.61	2.12	-3,3
Ideology	Three point measure of ideology. -1=Liberal, 1=Conservative	5424	0.27	0.83	-1,1
Presidential approval	Job rating of incumbent president. 0=Disapprove strongly, 3=Approve strongly	5164	1.62	1.20	0,3
National economic evaluation	Retrospective evaluation of national financial situation. -2=Much worse, 2=Much better	5688	-0.39	1.08	-2,2
Black	Respondent reports being an African-American. 0=Not black, 1=black	5811	0.14	0.51	0,1
Female	Respondent is a female. 0=male, 1=female	5859	0.55	0.50	0,1
Income	Respondent's income. 0=Less than \$10,000, 6=Greater than \$80,000	5208	2.60	1.61	0,6
Vote Choice (1988)	Vote choice in 1988. 0 = Dukakis, 1 = Bush.	1984	0.58	0.49	0,1
Vote Choice (1992)	Vote choice in 1992. 0 = Clinton, 1 = Perot, 2= Bush	1873	0.91	0.90	0,2

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> But see work by Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson (2004) and Shaw (1999a, 2006)

<sup>2</sup> Shaw provides evidence that campaign context is related to statewide vote choices (1999b) and weekly tracking polls (2006). Our analysis differs in that we 1) examine individual-level data and 2) focus on how campaign effects are mediated by underlying motivational factors such as partisanship.

<sup>3</sup> Candidate appearance and advertising expenditures are taken from Shaw (2006).

<sup>4</sup> This variable is measured in terms of *constant* (1982-86=100) *per capita* (voting age population) expenditures.

<sup>5</sup> We chose to use one-third of the states for three reasons. First, this gives us a number of states that is commensurate with the number that campaigns seem to believe they will have sufficient resources in which to compete (Shaw 1999b). Second, this choice is justified on empirical grounds. In grouping the states by thirds, we clearly separate those that receive significant attention from those that receive very little. Third, we can provide face validity for our measure by comparing it to an assessment of campaign strategy based on campaign memorandum (see Appendix A; Shaw 1999b). If we choose a different cut point for distinguishing between battleground and non-battleground states, we experience a loss in the overlap between our measure and those data.

<sup>6</sup> Appendix A provides the details of our validity analysis.

<sup>7</sup> The dates for the interviews vary by year. In 1988, they began on November 14<sup>th</sup> and continued until December 20<sup>th</sup>. In 1992, they stretched from November 4<sup>th</sup> until December 8<sup>th</sup>. See Miller *et al.* (1999, pp. 25-26) for more details. Because these data were gathered after Election Day, we cannot separate activation that occurs as a function

of campaign time in a manner that Finkel (1993) does, though this should not affect comparative differences *between* battleground and non-battleground states.

<sup>8</sup> Underlying the comparison of voting behavior in battleground states to that in low intensity states is the assumption that there are no relevant differences between either the state context or the voters in those different types of states. In analyses not reported here, we found few significant patterns in the types of voters in battleground states or in the competitiveness of Senate elections in these states. Still, we recognize as a limitation of our study that we cannot exhaustively measure all of the relevant elements of state context and raise this as an issue for future research. See Huber and Arceaneaux (*in press*) for a discussion of these issues.

<sup>9</sup> Given the focus of the Senate Election Study on congressional elections, other variables that are often included in presidential vote choice models, such as issue perceptions of presidential candidates, are not available in these data.

<sup>10</sup> Testing for significant differences here is a bit complicated since we are not testing two different models, but rather the same model on two different samples. The method we used relied on running a model for the full sample and including a dummy variable for battleground states that was also interacted with all of the independent variables to express the differential impact of the model in battleground states compared to other states. We then did a  $\chi^2$  test for the joint impact of the battleground dummy variable and its associated interaction terms. This test ( $\chi^2 = 12.83, p=.076$ ) shows that the full model provided a marginally significant improvement in battleground states compared to other states. It is worth noting that the interaction slopes and t-scores from this model are exactly equal to the "slope differences" and associated t-scores in Table 1. We chose to

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present the analysis by sub samples in order to make the differences as intuitively clear as possible. Again, though, there are no substantive differences between the interaction model and the findings in Tables 1 & 2.

<sup>11</sup> Though we interpret these effects as campaigns activating these traits, we cannot exclude the possibility that campaign exposure increases attitude accessibility. It is also worth noting that effects of state context and/or additive effects of the campaigns that do not operate through individual traits have insignificant effects in 1988, as evidenced by the similar intercept values in battleground and low intensity states.

<sup>12</sup> Because the dependent variable is trichotomous, we estimated coefficients and standard errors with a multinomial logit model.

<sup>13</sup> Using the same method as used for Table 1, the difference in models is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 154.0$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ).

<sup>14</sup> Unlike 1988, there are significant intercept differences in 1992. Not only is the baseline probability of voting for Bush significantly lower in battleground states than in low intensity states, but we see that there is a significantly positive probability of voting for Perot over Clinton in low intensity states that is not present in battleground states. Interestingly, the fact that there are *no significant differences* in Perot voting in battleground and nonbattleground states lends weight to our argument since he ran a national campaign and did not over concentrate resources in specific states based on strategic considerations.

<sup>15</sup> In addition, when approval is dropped from the model, the slope for economic evaluations is significant and in the anticipated direction in both battleground and non-battleground states.

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<sup>16</sup> Because we cannot test a hypothesis from the data that produce it (King *et al.* 1994), we offer this as an avenue for future research on how campaigns mobilize voting populations. We particularly think that this is a promising avenue for linking research on campaign intensity to that on campaign messages.