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The changing dynamics of coattails in senate elections

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**THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF COATTAILS
IN SENATE ELECTIONS**

By

Sheila Dubron Lambert

**Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1996**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the**

**Master of Arts Degree in Political Science
Department of Political Science
College of Liberal Arts**

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ABSTRACT

The Changing Dynamics of Coattails in Senate Elections

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The prevailing theoretical approach in political science has been to analyze presidential coattails from a top down perspective focusing on the effect that presidential elections have on congressional outcomes. Presidential coattail research has been limited in scope to coattails as a one-way causation often examining variables in isolation, rarely accounting for the complex nature of elections and competing forces that influence elections across various levels of campaigns. This research seeks to present a more realistic view of campaign processes by assessing the spillover effects that campaign activity for one race may have on other races occurring simultaneously. Specifically, this thesis considers the factors that shape the context in which presidential and senatorial campaigns are occurring. This thesis builds upon prior

research to offer a state-level analysis of Senate elections and analyze the upward impact Senate elections may have on the vote for President.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2004 Florida election was the scene of a very competitive open seat Senate race between **Mel Martinez (R)** and **Betty Castor (D)**, which resulted in a narrow victory of 50% for Martinez. The Florida presidential election was just as close with George Bush, the Republican candidate for president, receiving 52% of the vote and John Kerry, the Democrat received 47% of the vote. In 1996, the Florida presidential vote went to the Democratic presidential candidate, while the 2000 presidential vote was virtually a tie, with each candidate receiving 48.8 percent of the vote. The 2004 campaign effects should have been a wash in terms of support for the presidential candidate, but the competitive relationship between the vote for president and Senate in Florida may have helped the incumbent presidential candidate win the state.

The 2004 election Nevada election proved somewhat less dramatic. Bush received 50% of the Nevada presidential vote, while Kerry received 48% of the vote. This vote was in stark contrast to the votes in the Nevada Senate election. The Democrat Senator, Harry Reid, received 61% of the vote, while the Republican challenger, Richard Ziser, received only 35% of the vote. Research suggested that the close marginality for Senator Reid's 1998 Senate race, with a difference of less than one percent, would create the backdrop for a quality

challenger to emerge. Richard Ziser, however, with no previous political experience was not a quality challenger and was unable to mount a viable financial challenge to match the financial reserves of Senator Reid.

The Nevada election proved significant for other reasons. Nevada is considered a swing state, and in 2004 was kept in the undecided column for much of the election. Political pundits suggested that policy factors such as the war in Iraq or local issues such as the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste depository would help the Kerry/Edwards ticket. However, there were other considerations that influenced the vote in Nevada to a greater degree. Nevada had one of the lowest unemployment rates, one of the fastest growing populations and strong support for the war in Iraq. These factors proved to be more important in deciding the election. Presidential ratings and economic factors set the backdrop for presidential campaigns to play a big role by effecting whether or not quality candidates emerge. While all the indicators suggested that Reid would face a strong competitive challenger from the incumbent president's party, he did not. Thus, because the Senate race was not competitive it had no effect on the presidential race as evidenced by the similar presidential vote difference in 2000 and 2004.¹

Political science research has long sought to explain or predict election results. It is the vote choice on Election Day that defines the United States political system. Political scholars have structured this explanation by specifying which campaign variables have the biggest effect or any effect at all. Those

¹ George Bush received 50% of Nevada's presidential vote in 2000 and 50.7% of Nevada's presidential vote in 2004.

variables have included campaign fundraising, media, and prior political experience to name just a few. Research has tended to examine these factors in isolation, rarely accounting for the complex nature of elections and the competing forces that influence elections across various levels of campaigns occurring simultaneously.

The primary contention of this thesis is that campaign activity at one level affects the campaign dynamics at other levels. This study differs from other research by attempting to untangle this process by analyzing the effect that campaign activity and the competitiveness of Senate elections exert on state level outcomes. More specifically, the research question posited here is under what conditions will Senate campaigns affect the statewide presidential vote?

Political science research typically explains elections from a top-down approach, focusing on the result that presidential elections have on congressional outcomes. These studies do not explain the potential power that lower level races have on the vote for President. Specifically, this study will build upon prior research to analyze under what conditions Senate elections effect the vote for President. As such, this research seeks to present a more realistic view of campaign processes by assessing the spillover effects that campaign activity for one race may have on other races occurring contemporaneously. That is, whereas prior research tends to consider races occurring at different levels (e.g., local, state, or national) as separate phenomenon, this effort untangles the effects that campaign activity targeted at one level (e.g., campaigns for the United States Senate) may have on campaigns occurring simultaneously (e.g.,

the presidential elections). The remainder of the thesis is organized as outlined below.

Chapter two presents an evaluation of current and past research on presidential and Senate campaigns, as well as a review of larger theories of campaigns and elections. Specifically, the chapter reviews prior work examining presidential elections, presidential coattail theories, and the dynamics of Senate and House elections. Additionally, chapter two includes a discussion of previous campaign research, which focuses on whether campaign matters as well as national and state level variables that effect elections.

The thesis's theory and hypotheses are presented in chapter three. Specifically, the theory assesses the factors that affect challenger quality and competitiveness, as well as national and local factors that shape the context in which presidential and senatorial campaigns are occurring. To assess the influence of macro level variables, the thesis modifies Holbrook's (1991) model of state level presidential voting. By modifying Holbrook's model and incorporating variables such as presidential campaign activity, this thesis hopes to determine the level of support a presidential candidate may receive from a Senate election on a state-by-state basis. These modifications will allow this thesis to untangle and analyze the various components of national and state specific factors effecting elections. The theory also builds on the work of Jacobsen (2000) by examining how national conditions affect the emergence of observable measures of campaign competitiveness.

The research design, including data and measurement, are discussed in chapter four. Specifically, to test the hypotheses suggested in chapter three, data for all Senate elections occurring between 1988 and 2000 were collected. This chapter also explains the selection of regression analysis and the importance of using causal modeling to assess processes that unfold over time. The chapter also includes detailed discussion of the variables used in the subsequent analysis. Chapter five presents the results of the analysis and highlights the key findings that suggest Senate elections do affect the vote for president.

Chapter six discusses the findings and implications of this effort. Specifically, this study adds to the research by further untangling the role of competitiveness and its influence on presidential elections. In doing so, the thesis presents an alternative view for conceptualizing and understanding the fluidity and multi-level nature of campaign effects.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The general theoretical approach in political science has been to analyze the presidential coattail effect as a one-way causal process flowing from presidential elections to congressional races and to develop predictive measures from those models to determine how many seats a political party may gain or lose in Congress based upon the strength of its presidential candidate. Additional research has sought to analyze the surge and decline theory in concert with presidential coattails as a basis for understanding the dynamics of congressional midterm elections. There is extensive literature available on House elections and their relationship to presidential coattails, but the relationship between Senate elections and presidential coattails is limited. This study will focus on the relationship between Senate campaigns and the vote for president. More to the point, in contrast with prior research, this effort will analyze under what conditions Senate elections are able to effect the state level vote for president; a process akin to the notion of reverse coattails.

Reviewing the literature on presidential elections suggests that these studies were developed on the premise that national conditions such as the popularity of the president and the state of the national economy can have a direct affect on House elections. This review will look at the various presidential

models including Rosenstone (1983), Campbell (1986) and Holbrook's (1991) work. Next, will be an examination of the research on presidential coattails. It is important to consider all the research on presidential coattails to ensure proper accounting for the variety of possible causal factors in the data. Additionally, this review is important to gain an understanding of what research has been completed to be able to contribute to the campaign literature.

From there, this chapter moves to a discussion of congressional election studies. Reviewing the research on House and Senate elections will provide the necessary background to answer the question -under what conditions do Senate elections affect presidential elections? Jacobsen (2000) suggests that the key to understanding coattails is to understand the interactions between individual candidates, such as candidate emergence, national conditions and campaign activity. This research builds on Jacobsen's assumptions.

Finally, the underlying theme throughout this review and the thesis more generally is the "do campaigns matter" literature. This literature includes Campbell (2000), who suggests that national macro level indicators such as presidential popularity and the economy are more important than campaigns, to other researchers such as Holbrook who suggests that "it is clear that campaign effects play a key role in determining election outcomes" (1996, 148). This thesis attempts to evaluate election studies from the perspective that campaigns matter and have clear effects when elections are competitive. One additional area of discussion will consider the various conditions that create competitive

campaigns and the interactive effects between elections occurring at the same time.

Presidential Studies

Rosenstone's model (1983) was developed to forecast the presidential vote on a state-by-state basis. His model utilized a variety of factors effecting presidential elections. Some of the model's factors included subjective measures such as social and racial issues. Holbrook's (1991) research builds upon Rosenstone's work and provides a model with more objective measures to evaluate a variety of conditions effecting presidential elections on a state-by-state basis. Specifically, Holbrook demonstrates that both state and national level factors accounted for variation in state level voting the 1976, 1980, and 1984 presidential elections. The 1991 model is significant because it incorporated objective measures at the state-level for national influences as well as campaign variables. As outlined below, this thesis incorporates Holbrook's work.

In contrast to Holbrook's work, Campbell's work questions the underlying assumptions that campaigns matter. Specifically, Campbell (1992) suggests that both Rosenstone's and Holbrook's models are incomplete. Utilizing a variety of factors in Rosenstone's and Holbrook's models, Campbell attempts to develop a predictive model to forecast the presidential vote in each state. The most significant difference in Campbell's model is his use of trial heat polls instead of measures of campaign activity. Specifically, Campbell and Garand (2000) contend that it is possible to accurately predict presidential elections without

campaign variables. Campbell and Garand base their assumptions on campaign activities, which they term “predictable.” From the 2000 study, an example of a predictable campaign measure would be partisanship. These assumptions, however, work well only with non-competitive campaigns and with clearly defined macro variables such as the status of the economy. According to their research, campaigns do not have an effect on elections because the activity of each campaign counteracts the other and very few votes are in play, particularly in non-competitive campaigns. In addition, this research suggests that partisanship is a constant factor and therefore, makes voter choice predictable. Campbell and Garand do not consider the continual decline in partisanship, the impact of independent voters, or the increasing influence of swing voters, which affects state vote choice.²

In addition, Campbell’s (1986) model underestimates economic factors and ideology, both of which effect swing voters. Each state has its own measure of political ideology, which is not necessarily reflected in partisanship registration (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1986). It is important to evaluate each election on a state-by-state basis because the political climate in each state is distinctly different. If the political ideology of a presidential candidate is not matched with a state, it will prove more challenging, if not impossible, to win that state.

Holbrook’s (1991) model utilized specific independent variables to demonstrate the difference in the presidential vote on a state-by-state basis. Those factors not only include party strength and state ideology, but also include variables for

² Bartels (2000) suggests there is not a decline in partisanship. This is discussed in more detail below.

region, jobs, income, and whether or not it was the home state of the presidential or vice presidential party nominees. In addition, national macro level conditions such as the economy and presidential popularity were included. These variables combined with campaign intensity can shift the election dynamics in any state.

While some may argue presidential campaigns have a limited impact on state level voting, this opinion is not shared by all researchers. Shaw considered presidential campaign activity by analyzing state visits and television advertising for 1988, 1992, and 1996 (1999a). Shaw's analysis considered media buys and presidential visits from Labor Day to Election Day. Shaw's studies found "presidential campaigning influences statewide support for candidates" (1999a, 358). Shaw also explained how some states never see a presidential candidate, while other states see them repeatedly, suggesting strategic allocations of campaign resources such as money and visits. That is, presidential candidates may visit battleground states more often compared to less competitive states. In addition to national and state forces, the work of Shaw suggests that presidential campaigning affects non-decided voters.

In summary, there are two schools of thought that exist regarding the role and importance of campaigns. The first suggests that macro level factors determine election campaigns. The second school of thought maintains macro level factors are important, but more significantly is the effect they have on candidate emergence. These macro level factors set up the backdrop for campaigns to matter.

Surge and Decline

As mentioned above, the primary approach to studying the effect that campaign activity at one level exerts on other campaigns has been top-down. Campbell (1987) evaluated the surge and decline theory in presidential elections, and offered an explanation as to why there are differences in voter turnout between presidential and midterm elections. Campbell explained a surge in turnout among partisans of the advantaged party and a surge in support for the advantaged party among independent voters. Angus Campbell's (1960) work was used as the blueprint for Campbell's later evaluation. Similar to the original theory, Campbell focuses on the short-term forces in presidential elections. The primary difference in the revised theory is the vote choice based on a "surge" of information in presidential elections resulting in a higher turnout of independent voters. This surge is suggested to have an impact on turnout rates and voter choice of partisans and independent voters alike. This surge of information can be related to campaign activity through the dramatic increase in information disseminated by political parties or the mobilization of partisan voters and undecided voters.

Kritzer and Eubank (1979) considered surge and decline as one possible explanation for the lack of presidential coattails. This explanation would be described in terms of the increase and changing characteristics of independent voters. Those characteristics include citizens with diminished party loyalty based on either economic or moral issues; both of which may contribute to an increase in independent voters. The changing characteristics of voters can be directly

linked to a diminished association with political party affiliation as evidenced by split ticket voting, which gives rise to a greater number of independents.

Campbell asserts that voters have three possible choices in any election. First, an inveterate voter can make the choice to reinforce his or her vote for a favored party candidate. An inveterate voter is a citizen who regularly turns out for elections and supports his or her respective political party without fail. An inveterate voter would be defined as an individual with deep rooted and firmly established beliefs and connections to his or her political party. This typically manifests itself in terms of partisan or straight ticket voting. Second, voters of the disadvantaged party can choose to support a candidate whom they do not believe in or whom they do not believe can win or for voting for the favored candidate. Lastly, they could choose not to vote. According to Campbell, independent voters may be more easily swayed because they are not closely aligned with any one party.

Presidential Coattails

Although there are mixed reviews on the power of presidential coattails, the most accepted theory in political science is presidential coattails have been diminishing (Jacobsen, 2000; Calvert and Ferejohn, 1983; Ferejohn and Calvert, 1984; Mondak, 1990). For instance, the 1996 Democratic presidential victory of Bill Clinton should have benefited the Democrats in Congress, but it is the Republicans that gained two seats in the Senate.³ Similarly, in the 1998 midterm

³ The 1996 U.S. Senate election had 13 open seats; eight seats vacated by Democrats, with Republican victories in three of elections, plus the Republicans held on to their own, except one.

election, Clinton gained seats in the House when it was predicted the Democrats would lose seats; a similar scenario unfolded in 2002. There have been several explanations for the reduction in presidential coattails including an increase in independent voters and a decrease in partisan identification. Both of these are discussed below.

The definition of presidential coattails utilized for this study, taken from Jacobsen (2001, 146), “reflects the notion that successful candidates at the top of the ticket – on national elections, the winning presidential candidate – pull some of their party’s candidates into office along with them riding, as they were, on their coattails.” In earlier studies, coattails were more pronounced if the presidential candidate had a high approval rating (Mondak, 1990) or won by a large margin (Kaplowtitz, 1971). There is a vast amount of political science research that discusses presidential coattails and whether or not coattails are alive and well (e.g., Born, 1984; Campbell, 1986; Campbell and Sumners, 1990); if presidential coattails are declining (Calvert and Ferejohn, 1983; Ferejohn and Calvert, 1984; Tuckel and Tejera, 1983); or if coattails are non-existent in a particular election (Mondak, 1990).

The coattail research above has mainly focused on the strength of presidential coattails and their impact on House elections as a one-way causation. There have been a variety of methods utilized to assess and predict presidential coattails. These approaches have included individual level data from national surveys (Jacobsen 1976; Calvert and Ferejohn 1983), aggregate data at the congressional level (Born, 1984) and at the national level (Ferejohn and

Calvert 1984, Campbell 1986), and straight aggregate voting data (Kaplowtitz 1971). However, the current research models do not have measures to account for the spillover effects from the various campaigns and consider how they influence vote choice.

Researchers have discussed the various influences coattails have on congressional elections. By evaluating coattails at the national level using a direct two-equation model, Calvert and Ferejohn (1983) suggest that presidential coattails have declined, but not at levels suggested by other research. Ferejohn and Calvert (1984) and Tuckel and Tejera (1983) offer a historical perspective of the presidential coattail effect and explain what they suggest is a downward trend or lessened impact of presidential coattails on House elections. The overall conclusion of these studies is the extent of coattail voting has declined steadily consistent with the decline in party identification over the past decades.

Contrary to the research that suggests a decline in party identification, Bartels (2000) disagrees with mainstream research that party identification has been declining. Bartels suggests that partisan voting has stabilized in the 1990s and continues to increase in importance. This research posits one possible hypothesis "that increasing partisanship in the electorate represents a response at the mass level to increasing partisanship at the elite level" (44). This contention would provide support for presidential coattail proponents.

Contrary to the mainstream opinions in political science today suggesting a downward trend in presidential coattails, Born (1984) and Campbell (1986) submit the presidential vote has lost little of its ability to expand House election

margins. They argue that support for claims of a weakened impact on presidential coattails is based on inadequate evidence. Campbell and Born both evaluated the presidential vote and suggest that the presidential vote continues to have a strong and significant effect on congressional seat change. They further suggest that scholars have relied on faulty measurement strategies and should apply more appropriate measures to evaluate the research. One example is in regards to survey-based research. Born suggests that survey data are best served to identify individual motives, but “existing data are inadequate to disentangle the complex web of causality which can connect the two voting decisions” (61).

Presidential coattails have been analyzed strictly as a top-down phenomena with just a slight mention of a reverse coattail possibility in one Senate election study by Campbell and Sumners (1990). Campbell and Sumners attempted to illustrate how a political party’s presidential vote in the states remained positively related to its’ Senate vote. This work investigated to what extent presidential coattails are responsible for this association. Campbell and Sumners included all Senate elections in the study, even those that were not considered competitive. The analysis suggests that there are not any reverse coattails, but this finding does not systematically analyze this process, which is the intent of this effort.

National Conditions and Campaign Effects

An implicit tension in the above literature is the debate regarding the role and importance of campaign processes for affecting election outcomes. There is disagreement among authors as to whether campaigns matter (e.g., Kahn and Kenney, 1999; Shaw, 1999b; Westlye, 1983; Holbrook, 1994) or whether they have less of an impact (Campbell, 2000; Campbell and Gerand, 2000). There is some debate as to how much campaigns matter and if national factors are the predicting measures. Specifically, some argue campaigns have small, direct effects and instead, are determined largely by national forces (Jacobsen, 2000). In contrast, the work of Shaw (1999a) and Holbrook (1994) attempts to bridge the gap in our understanding of the interaction between national forces and campaign processes by arguing campaigns do matter. While this debate is far from settled, others argue that in addition to affecting presidential voting, national forces also indirectly influence what occurs in congressional elections (Abramowitz, 1988; Abramowitz and Segal, 1986).

Most notably, Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995) suggest that the public mood, an aggregated measure of the public's domestic policy preferences create the context in which elections occur. Along these same lines, national conditions such as presidential popularity and the economy create the environment for campaigns to matter. According to Jacobsen and Kernell (1981), these national level forces have an indirect effect on candidate recruitment. That is, the economy and the presidential popularity thermometer ratings set up the conditions for quality candidates to emerge. If the national economy was

determined to be in a recession, quality challengers from the presidential challenger party would be expected to emerge. Similarly, if the economy had strong positive indicators, quality challengers from the presidential incumbent party would be expected to emerge.

In order to analyze the impact of presidential campaign effects on the state level vote, Shaw (1999a) utilized data on television purchases and presidential candidate appearances. Shaw's study concluded that candidate activities, in each respective state, were directly and positively related to each candidate's vote. Furthermore, while national factors such as the economy play a role in congressional and presidential election outcomes, campaign activities are important and make a difference. Other research by Kahn and Kenney, 1999; Westlye, 1991; Shaw, 1999b; Holbrook 1991, 1994; and Abramowitz, 1984, all concluded campaigns do make a difference.

There is some discrepancy between the various authors as to what should be considered a campaign event and what comprises national factors. Holbrook (1994) puts forth a model for candidate support that incorporates campaign variables and national conditions. Holbrook's (1994) study focused on specific campaign and national factors. He reviewed a variety of national events that had a significant impact on public opinion including campaign momentum, debates, and political conventions. National conventions were identified by researchers as the most influential campaign event for both Democratic and Republican candidates (Holbrook, 1994; Shaw 1999b), while the Democratic and

Republican national committees consider this as simply the kick-off for the presidential campaign.

Senate Studies

In 1913, the Seventeenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provided for the direct election of senators.⁴ Since this time, Senate elections have evolved into highly competitive and complex campaigns. Senate races are typically viewed as more competitive than House races because they are not affected by redistricting and because of the longer election terms. Senate terms are six years and staggered with one-third of the Senate seats contested every two years. Even though it is the Senate that is perceived as the powerhouse of Congress, more attention and research has focused on House elections. This is mainly attributed to the sheer number of House elections every two years, which provides more data to develop and test explanatory and predictive models.

At the same time, Senate campaigns have greater visibility than House campaigns (Stewart, 1989) and, as suggested before, are generally more competitive since they attract more well-financed and experienced challengers. There have been several studies that analyzed various characteristics of Senate elections, including challenger quality and competitiveness. Stewart (1989) focused on predicting quality challengers by considering marginality and campaign expenditures. Westlye (1983) analyzed the competitive nature of

⁴ Prior to the Seventeenth Amendment, United States Senators were appointed by their respective state legislature.

senatorial seats in respect to resources and explored constituency-based explanations.

Abramowitz and Segal (1992) focused on Senate elections and attempted to demonstrate seat changes through patterns associated with national conditions. Their work suggests that the prior distribution of Senate seats along with the economic conditions and the popularity of the incumbent president have distinct effects on the vote. Abramowitz (1988) builds upon this research and uses the individual Senate contest as the unit of analysis to estimate the relative influence of variables effecting Senate elections including political characteristics of states, characteristics of candidates, and national political conditions. Abramowitz attempts to build a comprehensive model of Senate election outcomes, and includes variables that continue to be at the center of the electoral literature such as candidate spending, coattails, challenger quality, and partisanship. This work suggests that Senate elections are influenced by campaigns and national conditions.

Additional studies have attempted to explain how candidate characteristics or policy decisions affect the vote for Senate. The work of Wright and Berkman (1986) focused on whether decisions by incumbent Senators affected election outcomes by evaluating the "policy dimension" in Senate seats. Ragsdale and Rusk (1995) and Kahn and Kenney (1997) evaluate conditions or criteria that influence the decision making process of citizens in Senate elections. The research suggests that as a campaign becomes more competitive, the more

likely citizens are to consider ideology or economic conditions. In addition, presidential approval and issue formation also may be considered.

Underlying the influence of these factors is the competitiveness of an election. Competitive races generate more money, which then creates an environment to attract media attention and increase voter interest. Like dominoes, competitive races then lead to more public attention and more debate on policy issues (Kahn and Kenney, 1999). These competitive elections may cause a “spillover” effect that may factor into other races occurring at the same point in time. This point is explored in chapter three. The role of competitiveness in shaping a Senate race manifests itself in a number of other variables including challenger quality, incumbency, marginality, campaign finance, and partisanship.

Quality Challengers

Quality challengers are defined in terms of characteristics or previous political experience (Abramowitz 1988, Jacobsen 1989, Shaw 1999a, Stewart, 1989; Westlye, 1991). Evidence suggests that candidate characteristics such as challenger quality have the strongest influence on the outcomes of the recent Senate elections (Abramowitz, 1986). A quality challenger is one who is well known or established in his or her respective state. This can be accomplished through holding a significant political office or having celebrity status as mentioned before through Canon (1990). There is an expectation in Senate elections that the challenger will more likely have held a political office and be better financed than candidates in other elections.

Squire and Smith (1996) posit the higher state office one holds, the more significant a challenger they will be in congressional elections. They developed a theory ranking each state political office. The higher the state office, the more points received and thus this officeholder would be expected to be a more qualified candidate. The assumption is the more visible a political office held is, the more likely that individual would have the experience and name recognition to be a quality candidate for Congress. That is, quality challengers are strategic and will evaluate and analyze which race would be more likely to be competitive, and basically, winnable.

Incumbency

The incumbency effect has been identified as a key factor in congressional elections (Abramowitz 1986, 1988; Kritzer and Eubank, 1979; Campbell and Sumners, 1990; Calvert and Ferejohn, 1983). Calvert and Ferejohn (1983) suggest that while partisan factors continue to decrease, incumbency factors continue to increase. Incumbents have the advantage in most political races because of name recognition and previous campaign experience. Incumbents traditionally have had the ability to generate resources early and generally have media access through community events and with those duties associated with the position (Mayhew, 1974).

Contrary to the opinions of researchers who consider incumbency a strong factor, Eubank (1985) and Tuckel and Tejera (1983) suggest that a more general and historical trend in the decline in partisanship connecting one election to

another has weakened the importance of incumbency. Tuckel and Tejera suggest a decline in the effects of incumbency in Senate elections and believe incumbency is tied to local forces unique to congressional races such as partisanship and attitudes. Their research concludes incumbents have an indirect effect because of the valuable resources they bring to the table. Tuckel and Tejera further suggest that the lessened effect of incumbency is an indication of weakened past constraints of party loyalty and weakened presidential coattails. They conclude that incumbency can no longer be used as predictive measure.

Marginality

Prior research has conceptualized the safeness of an incumbent's seat in terms of marginality. Stewart suggests that quality challengers are determined by marginality (1989). Marginality, as used in this thesis, is defined as the past margin of victory for the incumbent. The prior margin of victory is a strong predictor of whether or not the incumbent will face a quality challenger in the next election (Stewart, 1989; Abramowitz, 1988; Bond, Covington and Fleisher, 1985). The incumbent would be considered vulnerable and have a weakened incumbency effect if the prior election were close. Jacobsen noted "measures of marginality are, in essence, estimates of vulnerability" (2000, 28). That is, experienced challengers are more likely to make strategic decisions to run against an incumbent based on the results of the previous election.

Campaign Finance

Election studies have utilized a variety of campaign expenditures to consider competitiveness. Congressional election outcomes are considered to hinge on the challenger's ability to spend money. Indeed, the single most important variable in determining whether or not an incumbent can be unseated is campaign expenditures by the opposition (Abramowitz, 1988; Shaw, 1999a; Squire and Smith, 1996).

To this end, Abramowitz (1988) suggests that incumbent spending has less of an impact on Senate elections than challenger spending. Instead, it is the amount of money raised by the challenger that shapes the competitiveness of a race. For incumbents, spending has a diminishing return. In untangling this, Jacobsen (1980) suggests that there is a point at which incumbent expenditures begin to hurt the incumbent candidate because incumbents increase spending in response to the spending of challengers. "As an incumbent candidate spends more money and becomes better known, the impact of further spending diminishes" (Abramowitz, 1988, 38). In addition, Jacobsen suggests that "...incumbents usually exploit their official resources for reaching constituents so thoroughly that the additional increment of information about their virtues put forth during the campaign adds comparatively little to what is already known and felt about them" (2000, 45). Westlye (1983) utilized the two-to-one expenditure ratio breakpoint to assess if resources were somewhat equal and the campaign considered competitive. Westlye admits the breakpoint is arbitrary, however, it

serves as a good indicator of whether the challenger could mount a viable financial challenge.

Tuckel and Tejera (1983) again contradict dominant research that suggests incumbent and challenger spending have comparable effects on average. They suggest that the effects of spending are different based on the size of each state. Incumbents are favored by campaign spending dynamics in large states and challengers are favored in small states. This is linked to the ability to personalize a message and to reach the voting public. Tuckel and Tejera discuss the ability of a candidate to reach more voters in a smaller state with less money. However, they did not analyze the differences in population between some of the larger and smaller states.

Media

Media intensity has been identified as an important measure to determine the competitiveness of Senate campaigns (Kahn and Kenney 1997). Senate races typically generate more intense media coverage than other local elections or House elections (Abramowitz, 1988) because they are more competitive than House elections (Abramowitz, 1988; Canon, 1990) and less frequent. Senate elections are statewide and are considered to have bigger issues at stake. Tuckel and Tejera (1983) have studied a decline in the traditional factors of predicting Senate elections and believe that the mass media are becoming the biggest predictor of campaigns. At the same time, these studies fail to recognize that media attention is a function of competitive campaigns and quality

challengers. The more an election is perceived as newsworthy, the more media coverage it will receive. The media want to focus on elections that are competitive with a questionable ending that generates curiosity (Campbell, 2000). There must be a competitive election before the media will get involved. Thus, media exposure is a function or byproduct of a competitive campaign and accounted for in campaign intensity.

Party Strength and Partisanship

Although the Constitution does not specifically mention political parties, partisanship has operated as a stabilizing influence for our system (Wattenberg, 1990). The strength of political parties has worked to predict election outcomes, provide resources for candidates, and secure a base of support for party candidates (Pomper, 1977). Political parties also have historically had the responsibility of generating loyalty and political interest. They have served to mobilize voters and act as socialization agents fostering stability within our political framework. Political parties provide members a venue by which they become politically active and work for policy changes. There are a considerable number of elections in any given year including ballot questions, initiatives, and races for local, state, and national office.

Kahn and Kenney (1997) suggest that one of the most recognized and reliable predictors of candidate evaluations is party identification. They also suggest (1999) that as campaigns become more competitive, citizens are more likely to consider policy ideology, partisanship, and campaign influences. Party

identification would refer to those citizens registered to vote who identify with a major political party. Kamieniecki (1988) suggests that the more a person identifies with a particular party, the more they were likely to apply partisan behavior. Westlye (1991) suggests that citizen partisanship and ideology must be taken into consideration when there is a strong quality challenger with a competitive campaign. Political ideology and party strength are important factors to get out the base vote for candidates, but the key voters in competitive elections are swing voters. If partisanship identification were the key factor in election outcomes, then registration alone would be a predictor of winners and losers.

Conclusion

As the above review suggests, the study of campaigns and elections is well developed. At the same time, this research has not considered the upward affect Senate elections have on the state level presidential vote. As such, this effort differs from much of the prior literature in this area by focusing on the reverse coattails process. As such, this thesis embraces the premise all politics is local and local politics can affect national elections including the vote for president.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY

This thesis will assess the effects competitive Senate elections have on the state level vote for president. Specifically, this thesis argues competitive Senate elections have a positive influence on the presidential vote. The complex nature of this research requires modeling both Senate and presidential elections on a state-by-state basis. This establishes control for the influence that presidential campaigns have on Senate elections while at the same time assessing the affect that Senate campaigns have on each state's presidential vote.

In order to account for all causal relationships, this study will identify the election variables that occur simultaneously at both the state and national level. National and local campaigns must contend with not only the forces generated by their own campaign activities, but also those macro level forces that set up the context in which these campaigns operate. These macro-level variables include the state of the economy and presidential thermometer ratings.

The argument presented in this chapter draws on the above research evaluating presidential elections. More specifically, utilizing a multi-level framework, the thesis assesses how the confluence of macro-level factors affect

Senate campaigns. It is the macro level factors that are expected to have the strongest impact on the emergence of quality challengers. These factors set up the backdrop necessary for competitive Senate elections to have an impact on the vote for president. The specific hypothesis for this study is "Senate campaign activity will have a positive affect on the state wide presidential vote" and "competitive Senate elections will have a positive affect on the state wide presidential vote."

Senate Model

There is increasing evidence that campaign effects are best understood by evaluating those elections that are competitive. By generalizing the effects of campaigns across any election cycle, the true impact of campaigns may be skewed because many races are not competitive. In order to accurately address a reverse coattail relationship between the vote for Senate and the vote for President, the Senate race must be competitive. With competitive Senate elections, the local electorate becomes stronger as an overall force and thus affects the vote for president to a measurable degree. This thesis expects to see a reverse coattail effect present in competitive Senate elections. This would be attributable to a decline in partisanship identification and more candidate centered elections, both of which increase the importance of campaigns in explaining election outcomes.

As suggested before, identifying competitive Senate elections is important to address the argument presented in this theory. In order to have a competitive

election, there must be a quality challenger with a well-financed campaign. This research includes measures to identify those factors that determine a quality challenger. Challengers who have previous political experience generally have name recognition and the status likely to generate campaign resources enabling them to mount a viable challenge (Jacobsen, 2000). This study measures campaign finances through campaign expenditures. If there is a well-established challenger who can raise the resources to mount a competitive campaign, that race will gain exposure and media attention creating a high level of campaign intensity.

Campaign intensity allows this study to measure the direct effects of Senate campaigns and competitiveness on presidential state-level voting. To this end, Campbell (2000) suggests that campaigns may have an influence of only 4% to 6% on the vote (188). The 2000 presidential election results explain how 4% could have made a tremendous difference, especially in Florida.⁵ This reinforces the premise that campaigns matter when they are competitive. It is in competitive Senate elections where the “spillover effect” will have a greater influence on the state level vote for president. Spillover effects would be defined as those events or actions by another campaign or event that have an impact, indirectly or directly, on other campaigns. For this thesis, competitive Senate elections will be defined as those elections that have a quality challenger with previous political experience who is well-financed.

⁵ Bush and Gore's presidential votes in Florida are significantly under Campbell's 4% margin, with each candidate receiving 48.4% of the vote initially.

Emergence of Quality Candidates

Incumbency, marginality, and open seats are important variables that interact with the macro level factors to determine if quality candidates emerge, and, thus create the potential for competitive elections. Without competitive Senate campaigns, there is not expected to be a reverse coattail relationship; a point made in the introductory chapter's overview of the 2004 race between Harry Reid and Richard Ziser in Nevada. Incumbency itself is a key consideration. Incumbency is often cited as the major factor in Senate elections. Abramowitz (1986, 1988), Campbell and Sumners (1990), and Calvert and Ferejohn (1983) call incumbency the single most important factor in determining election outcomes. Generally speaking, the more name recognition one candidate has through incumbency, the more resources a candidate will generate in terms of money and support. Incumbents have a team of employees already working when the election cycle begins (Mayhew, 1974). Although incumbency is important, these same studies demonstrate the incumbency effect is diminished when there is a quality challenger; likewise other factors such as marginality and an open seat must be taken into consideration.

Marginality has often been cited as a determining factor as to whether or not an incumbent faces a quality challenger. The emergence of a quality challenger is crucial for an election to be competitive. If the last election proved to be close, then the incumbent is seen as vulnerable and can expect a well-financed and quality challenger from the opposing party in the next election. In general, Senate races are more competitive than House seats because Senate

seats are seen as more valuable (Jacobsen, 1986). With a small level of marginality, these factors set up the scenario for quality challengers to be enticed in the election to run against an established incumbent.

Unlike marginality, which may generate competitive elections when the previous election was seen as close, open seats produce the most competitive elections because they generate a higher level of voter turn out and attract quality candidates from both parties (Jacobsen, 2000). The candidates do not have to consider incumbency or marginality, because most likely both will have previous political experience and be more or less on an equal footing. The candidate in the open-seat who generates the most resources and exposure should benefit the presidential candidate of the same party. In terms of coattail effects, the results of an open Senate election will generally be a “wash”, as the campaigns run by both candidates will likely counter balance one another. It is in these “open seat” elections that the local political dynamics and structure may prove to be most influential. This type of election would illustrate the point of how campaign effects might cancel each other out as suggested by Campbell (2000) depending on the macro level variables.

Presidential Model

As mentioned in chapter two, other research has focused on presidential coattails as a one-way causation, from the president downward. This study will differ from previous work by suggesting a reverse coattail relationship from the bottom-up. The key to understanding this relationship is recognizing the multiple

dynamics of the election process and the symbiotic relationship between state and national elections. More specifically, by identifying competitive Senate elections one can analyze the influence that “local politics” have on the vote for President, while accounting for the effect of presidential campaigns on the contemporaneous Senate races.

As outlined above, Holbrook’s original model included measures for state unemployment, change in state income, party strength, state ideology, state ideology interaction, a dummy for the South, presidential and vice presidential home state, presidential popularity, presidential home region, as well as economic measures such as percent change in national income and national unemployment rate. The percent change in national income is similar to the measure used by Abramowitz and Segal (1986). Holbrook’s model will be modified to incorporate Senate campaign intensity as well as other modifications, including presidential campaign activity.

Presidential campaign activity will be included in the presidential model utilizing Shaw’s work (1999a). Shaw measured campaign intensity by counting the number of times a presidential candidate visited each state as well as additional work that focused on media buys. There is little doubt national campaigns influence local elections. A visit by a presidential candidate to any state is suggested to provide a boost to the campaigns of the local political hopefuls of the same party (Shaw, 1999a). That is, while this visit is intended to strengthen the presidential candidate’s base vote, it can have spillover effects on other elections. Shaw argues in some cases presidential candidates will visit

states they are expected to lose to help turn down ticket races (1999b). Presidential campaign activity for this thesis will be measured based on the number of times a presidential candidate campaigned in each state during the 1988, 1992, 1996, and 2000 election years from Labor Day until Election Day. The information on presidential visits is not available for campaigns prior to 1988.

Holbrook's model included a variable for home state influence for presidential and vice presidential candidates. Campbell (2000) and Holbrook (1991) suggest that the presidential or vice presidential candidate will gain several percentage points for the home state advantage. This variable would be expected to capture any additional influences of campaign intensity along with presidential campaign visits. Additionally, this model was unable to include Shaw's media buys for presidential campaign activity because the information was available only for 1988, 1992, and 1996. This would not provide enough cases to show a systematic effect.

Macro-Level Variables

Holbrook provided a national measure of presidential popularity and a measure for the state of the economy. Both the presidential vote as well as the Senate vote is affected by macro level factors. The economic variable is a macro level variable that influences voting choices as well as providing the backdrop for quality challengers to emerge. According to Wattenberg (1991), economic measures have been steadily increasing their importance with the voting electorate while factors such as partisanship have been decreasing.

Senate and House incumbents are often held responsible, along with the president, for the state of the economy (Campbell 1987). This thesis includes similar macro level variables such as the national unemployment rate and the percent change in national income, as used by Holbrook. These variables will help measure the impact of the economy on the vote. The state of the economy can also affect the emergence of quality challengers. If it is a bad year for the President's party because of a slow economy, one is less likely to see quality challengers emerge from that party.⁶

A booming economy and a popular president (or presidential candidate) are assumed to favor the party in power; economic problems and other national failings are blamed on the administration are costly to its congressional candidates. Exactly those things that politicians and political scientists who look at aggregate data believe influence congressional voters also guide the strategic decision of potential candidates and contributors. (Campbell, 2000, 154)

Quality challengers would more likely emerge from the opposition party in this scenario. The effect of these macro-level variables on the presidential vote is straightforward. If the public mood from war or recession is working against the president or his party, this will hurt the president and his party and candidate emergence. Alternatively, if the economy is strong, this would be expected to boost the votes for the president and his party.

⁶ Shaw's data (1999b) discusses how scandals or blunders can affect the vote. This theory will not include any variables that measure scandals or media blunders. In addition, this model does not include any outside influences such as war.

Partisanship and Ideology

As detailed above, campaigns are complex with a multitude of short-and long-term election forces occurring simultaneously. As a consequence, explaining election outcomes and vote choice cannot be reduced to analyzing partisan registration. While it is important to consider partisan registration, the more important consideration would be to identify inveterate voters and swing voters. The swing vote in states creates the environment where campaigns become important. In addition, the number of independent voters on state registration documents also provides a target for campaigns to make a difference.

State-level partisanship historically has been a key indicator of how a state may vote in an upcoming presidential election. Identifying with a political party led many to simply disregard other candidates. In more recent years, there has been an increase in the number of voters who identify themselves as independent and an increase in the number of swing voters. Through the years, most research, except for Bartels, demonstrates a decline in party identification to a voter mainstream that considers itself more moderate. Although partisan identification has weakened slightly over the past decade, it is still an important factor to consider when evaluating election outcomes. With the increase of independent and swing voters, the stability of the state political party structure weakens, as does straight ticket voting. This begins to strengthen the impact of local voting and, more importantly, campaigns.

Party identification is not as clear-cut as it once was. The voting dynamics have shifted from being party-based to being candidate-centered. This candidate-centered focus has encouraged more individuality, with an increase in the number of individuals classifying themselves as independents or becoming “swing voters.” Swing voters are defined as those citizens registered as either a Democrat or a Republican who do not vote strictly along party lines or citizens registered as Independents. The decline in partisanship and the increasing number of independent voters have diminished the presidential coattail effect and enhanced the impact of local competitive elections (Calvert and Ferejohn, 1983). Campaigns have increased their importance in an attempt to reach these independent and swing voters. It is important to keep in mind campaigns are designed to secure the party base and persuade those swing and independent voters of a candidate’s worthiness (Damore, 2004).

Conditions for Reverse Coattail Effect

The macro-level variables including presidential popularity, state ideology, and the economy set-up the conditions for reverse coattails to be present. The president should benefit from some reverse coattails when the macro-level variables benefit the Senate challenger from the president’s party. This scenario would produce a quality candidate able to mount a strong challenge against the incumbent. The campaign intensity would generate a high level of interest from party members, thus the reverse coattails. Consequently, when the same macro-levels do not favor the president’s party and the Senate challenger is from

the president's party, reverse coattails would not be expected. This would primarily be because the Senate race would not be considered competitive by the variables previously discussed in this study. Unless there is a quality challenger and, thus, a competitive election, there is not expected to be reverse coattails.

Additionally, one would not expect to see a reverse coattail effect if the macro-level variables favor the president's party, and the Senate challenger is from the challenger party competing against an incumbent from the president's party. This situation would be unlikely to produce a quality challenger. Also, there is the chance the Senate campaign may actually help the challenger's party presidential candidate. This could occur if the macro-level variables do not favor the President's party, and the Senate challenger is from the opposition party competing against an incumbent from the President's party. These macro-level variables coupled with campaign intensity provide the basis for this theory.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

Presidential coattail theories and Senate campaign models have traditionally utilized standard multiple regression models focusing on the campaign process operations in isolation. These studies fail to capture the causal relationships between independent variables occurring simultaneously at different levels. If a causal relationship exists among campaign variables at different levels, an ordinary least squares regression model (OLS) examining only one level will not capture those effects.

In order to overcome these shortcomings, this thesis presents three regression models. The first is labeled the “naive model” because it looks at Senate and presidential races in isolation. Specifically, it estimates separate models for the presidential and Senate election that do not consider the spillover effects. The second model extends the first by examining the spillover effects between Senate and presidential elections. Again, it estimates separate models for the presidential and Senate election, but includes variables tapping the campaign activity of the other race. The last model presents a causal analysis of the entire process that captures both the direct and indirect relationships among the variables and as such, provides a more complete analysis of the causal process of interest.

For all models, the Senate contest is the unit of analysis. The data were originally designed to capture the two-party vote. This proved to be problematic since it did not capture the incumbency effects or the economic effects present in either the presidential or Senate races. Additionally, the two-party system measurements of Republican and Democrat did not permit the standard OLS or causal model to effectively measure some of the variables created in this study. Based on these concerns, both analyses are conceptualized in terms of the White House incumbent party. That is, the party of the current president during the election year would be considered the incumbent party. For example, in the 2000 election, President Bill Clinton was the Democrat President in the White House. However, due to term limits, he was unable to run again. Since he was the sitting president at the time of the 2000 election, the incumbent party for 2000 was coded as Democrat.

One obstacle to evaluating Senate elections is the Federal Election Commission (FEC) reports were not required until 1974. This does not permit campaign financial data to be included in election studies prior to 1974. This study is unable to consider Senate elections prior to 1976 because this research utilizes FEC campaign expenditure data to help isolate competitive Senate elections. Based on the financial data, this thesis initially compiled data for 230 Senate campaigns from 1976-2000. Table 4-1 provides a detailed listing of each variable and description.

Table 4.1 Variables and Definitions

VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Percent Change National Product	The percent change in net national product (Macro variable)
Unemployment	National level unemployment rate (Macro variable)
Partisanship	Percent of IP ⁷ in the State Legislature
Quality Challenger	IP candidate with previous political experience 1; CP candidate with previous political experience -1; and neither or both having previous political experience 0.
Seat Type (Casual Model) ⁸	Trichotomous measure for Senate seat type: 1 for IP Seat Advantage; -1 for CP Seat Advantage; 0 for open seat ⁹ .
Marginality	Trichotomous Measure: IP race within 10% coded as -1; CP race within 10% as 1; Coded as 0 if over 10%.
Senate Campaign Intensity (IP)	IP cost per voter for money spent through 12/31 of campaign year
Senate Campaign Intensity (CP)	CP Cost Per voter for money spent through 12/31 of campaign year
Senate State Level Vote	Senate State level vote for the presidential IP
(IP) Presidential Campaign Activity	Number of IP presidential candidate visits to each state from Labor Day to Election Day ¹⁰
(CP) Presidential Campaign Activity	Number of CP Presidential candidate visits to each state from Labor Day to Election Day
Presidential Campaign Activity (Casual Model)	For the causal model, the Presidential campaign variable was changed to reflect Shaw's original data and used the difference between the IP Visits and CP Visits
Presidential State Level Vote	The Incumbent's Party share of the State Level two party presidential vote.
Home State Advantage	Home state (registered to vote) of Presidential or Vice Presidential candidate. Coded as 1 for IP, -1 for CP – all other states coded as 0
Presidential Thermometer	NES data on national presidential thermometer ratings.
Incumbency	Incumbent Party Incumbent Advantage coded as 1, Challenger Party Incumbent Advantage coded as -1, and no incumbent is 0.

⁷ IP is Incumbent Party; CP is Challenger Party: Incumbent Party is determined by the current Administration in the White House during election year.

⁸ Where Noted "Causal Model" the variable was operationalized different for the OLS and Causal Model.

⁹ Seat type does not capture open seat advantage, but instead attempts to capture the advantage of the Incumbent or Challenger Party on Competitive Senate Races.

¹⁰ Shaw's (1999a) Data

Another area where data collection was problematic was identifying a state level variable to capture presidential campaign activity. The state level presidential variables that were available both came from Shaw. Shaw's TV Ad buy data were compiled 1988, 1992 and 1996. However, the information was not available to create a comparable measure for 2000. Shaw's presidential visit data also analyzed 1988, 1992 and 1996. The information on presidential state visits was readily available to create a comparable measure for 2000. Based on the need to include a presidential campaign variable, this precluded any inclusion of Senate elections prior to 1988. Kahn and Kenney's (1997) media measure was considered, but this data was not easily duplicated and there was the issue of continuity among years. While other state level presidential campaign finance variables were researched, state level financial data was not required or recorded by the Federal Election Commission.¹¹ As a consequence of these data limitations, the campaign cycles that are used here are 1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000, resulting in 133 cases. With the deletion of Louisiana from the study because of the state's requirements for candidates to receive over 50% of the vote, the resulting number of observations is 127.

The information filed in FEC reports and recorded through government resources is deemed accurate and reliable as part of the warehousing of political information. The information obtained through state and federal sources are also considered accurate, as a standard in political science research. The above

¹¹ Ad buy data for 2000 is now available through Goldstein (2004). This could possibly more effectively capture state level presidential campaign activity, for future research.

information is considered reliable. All information was transferred to obtain accuracy so there would not be any validity issues.

Presidential Model

As discussed before, this study modified Holbrook's (1991) model of state level presidential voting. Holbrook's model utilized a pooled, cross-sectional approach to demonstrate both state and national forces that influence a presidential election. This thesis operated under the same premise presented by Holbrook that there are state and national level forces that affect presidential elections.

This research utilized the *President Incumbent Party's State Level Vote* as the dependent variable. This is measured in terms of the White House incumbent's party share of the state level two-party vote. Initially, this variable was coded as the Democrat's share of the two-party vote, but the measure had to be modified to account for incumbency effects and the influence of macro conditions.

This thesis used the following independent variables in the presidential regression models: *Home State*, *Partisanship*, *Presidential Thermometer Ratings*, *Unemployment*, and *the Percent Change in National Product*. In addition to the state and national level factors, the presidential model includes a measure of *Presidential Campaign Activity* to account for presidential campaign effects on a state-by-state basis. For the presidential spillover, a variable of *Senate Campaign Intensity* was used to capture the Senate campaign effects.

This was operationalized as the cost per voter for the presidential incumbent party Senate challenger and the presidential incumbent party Senate incumbent.

As utilized in Shaw's (1999a) research, *Presidential Campaign Activity* is measured based on the number of times a presidential candidate traveled to each state from Labor Day to Election Day. Presidential campaign appearances allow presidential candidates to gain greater exposure in each state and generate their own campaign forces (Shaw, 1999a). Shaw's data are utilized for the 1988, 1992, and 1996 elections. A comparable measure has been created for 2000 by reviewing available data on Bush and Gore presidential state visits from Labor Day to Election Day.¹² The same time frame was utilized to maintain consistency. As discussed above, data were not available for previous election years limiting this thesis' ability to increase the number of observations.

State level presidential popularity and thermometer ratings are considered macro level variables that create the backdrop for both Senate and presidential campaigns. Beyle, Niemi, and Sigelman (2002) created job approval ratings for presidents, Senators, and governors from state level public opinion polls. However, this data did not include all states for each year. The information is not available to evaluate state level presidential thermometer or popularity ratings on a state-by-state basis. Based on this data limitation, this thesis had to utilize the national presidential thermometer ratings. The national popularity ratings in Holbrook's model initially utilized the Gallup-poll, while this research used the presidential thermometer data from the National Election Studies guide.¹³

¹² Calendars were obtained on www.politicsandelections.com.

¹³ NES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior <http://www.umich.edu/~nes/neguide>

The status of the economy is considered an important factor in campaigns. The *National Unemployment* data, as well as *The Percent Change in Net National Product* both serve as the economic variables. These macro level measures provide the backdrop for campaigns to matter and to determine if a quality challenger may emerge. *The Percent Change in Net National Product* has been gathered through labor statistics.¹⁴ The percent change in net national product is detailed and compiled for this study. The national level *Unemployment* figures were gathered from the labor statistics website.¹⁵ The economic variables are expected to perform as strong macro level variables influencing the Senate and presidential elections.

As discussed earlier, partisanship is an important consideration in state and national elections. It was not possible to utilize partisan registration on a state-by-state basis for a variety of reasons. First, the partisan numbers are inconsistent. That is, state numbers and federal election numbers are not always identical. In addition, some states update their numbers, which causes some confusion with the data. Also, not all states register voters based on party and some states allow voter registration on Election Day. Considering the above, a new partisanship variable was created. The *Partisanship* variable was created by determining the percent of legislative members from the incumbent party in each state legislature. By obtaining the number of Republican and Democrat members of each state's legislature, this thesis was able to create a partisanship

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economics Analysis, March 2004. (www.bea.doc.gov)

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2004. (www.bls.gov)

variable. The partisanship variable is expected to impact both the presidential state level and Senate state level vote in a positive manner.¹⁶

Holbrook's (1991) research suggested that presidential and vice presidential candidates receive a boost in terms of a percent of the vote from their home state. This is termed *Home State Advantage*. This thesis was able to research the home states (defined as those states that presidential and vice presidential candidates were registered to vote in) for both the incumbent and challenger presidential party candidates. The variable is coded as 1 for incumbent party home state and -1 for the challenger party home state. All other states were coded as 0.

In order to evaluate spillover effects, an additional variable is added to the presidential model. To examine the influence that intensity of the Senate race has on the outcome of the presidential election within a state, this thesis includes a variable to account for the amount of money spent by the candidates in the Senate election. This is constructed as a cost per voter variable and is explained in more detail below.

Senate Model

As with the presidential model, a naive Senate model was developed to provide a baseline for comparison. This research utilized the incumbent party's *Senate State Level Vote* as the dependent variable. This is measured in terms of

¹⁶ This variable is not perfect because of gerrymandering that typically provides the majority party with a small seat advantage. Additional variables were considered such as the vote in the last gubernatorial race. However, because of incumbency effects, this measure is problematic. Further research would require the development of a more precise measurement of partisanship.

the White House incumbent's party share of the state level two-party vote. The Senate model includes the following independent variables: *Incumbency*, *Challenger Quality*, *Senate Campaign Intensity*, *Marginality*, and *Partisanship*.

As indicated earlier, having a quality challenger has been determined to be one of the most important factors in Senate election outcomes. As discussed in chapter two, to be considered competitive, a quality challenger must have previous political experience. This thesis coded the variable of *Quality Challenger* as the incumbent party Senate candidate with previous political experience with 1, while the Senate candidate from the challenger party with previous political experience was coded -1. Any Senate candidate that had neither candidate holding previous political experience or both holding political experience were coded as 0. The information about Senate candidates was gathered through *Congressional Quarterly Reports* and the *American Political Almanac*. Because the *American Political Almanac* provides only previous job experience for those Senate candidates who were actually elected, it was necessary to use both resources to identify those races considered to have a "quality challengers" based on prior political experience.

Senate Campaign Intensity is measured in terms of campaign expenditures. More specifically, this thesis utilized a cost per voter variable. The amount spent through December 31st of the election year on the Federal Election Commission (FEC) reports was compared to the number of registered voters in each state on Election Day. By dividing the expenditures with the registered voters in each state, this determined a cost per voter ratio. This thesis would

expect to see campaign expenditures as having a significant impact on the presidential and Senate state level vote. In addition, it is expected that Senate challenger party financial expenditures would have a direct impact on the Senate incumbent party financial expenditures as suggested by Jacobsen (2000).

Incumbency has been an important element in political science research. Initially, this thesis was designed and the variables coded as either Republican or Democrat. After further data collection and the initial analysis, it was determined that the variables could be measured properly only by utilizing the incumbent party. This was designed to capture the economic macro level effects affecting the current administration and Senate campaign. In addition, it was important to provide a control variable of *Incumbency* in Senate elections. By analyzing incumbency, this thesis was able to measure the competitiveness and differences between marginal races with an incumbent. The information on incumbency was gathered from congressional voting records and the FEC data. An additional variable to account for the incumbent party advantage was created. This information for seat type was coded as 1 for the Senate incumbent of the presidential incumbent party and -1 for the Senate challenger of the presidential challenger party. A 0 was designated for an open race.

A Senate incumbent whose previous vote share was less than 60%, would expect to see a quality challenger emerge for the next election cycle. This study created a variable for *Marginality*, which included only marginal races were within 60%. Utilizing the *Almanac* and *Congressional Quarterly* special reports for each election year, this thesis was able to determine the margin of win for incumbent

candidates prior victories. *Marginality* was coded by utilizing a trichotomous variable. The coding was -1 for a Senate race that was within 10% for the incumbent party, 1 if the race was within 10% for the Senate challenger party. If there was not a close race, within 10% during the last election, the marginality was coded as 0.

As with the presidential model, the Senate *Partisanship* variable was measured as the percent of the incumbent party in the state legislature. As with the presidential models, the state level of partisanship is important for Senate campaigns. In addition to the above variables, the Senate spillover model also included the above measures of *Presidential Campaign Activity* (the visit data) to control for any top down campaign effects from the presidential to the Senate contest. As mentioned before when discussing the presidential model, this variable is not ideal, but it permits some level of spillover analysis on a state-by-state basis.

Causal Model

By utilizing a standard OLS model for the naive and spillover presidential and Senate election models, this thesis was able to identify the direct effects of the independent variables. However, these models do not account for a more sophisticated analysis of the causal process of interest. To account for this, the above spillover models were expanded into a causal model format, which allows for a more complex path analysis model to be developed. Specifically, this technique allows the thesis to examine if the competitiveness of the Senate race,

in addition to the Senate campaign intensity, influences the state level presidential vote.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses used to examine the thesis' main concern: under what conditions do Senate elections affect the state level vote for the presidency? This chapter begins with an overview of the analysis and modeling process and then presents the results from the presidential and Senate naive models. The discussion then moves into the regression models that specifically examine spillover effects between Senate and presidential elections. Finally, the analysis for the causal model is presented.

Naïve Model Results

Table 5.1 presents the summary statistics for the presidential naive model and Table 5.2 presents the model's parameter estimates. Turning first to the statistics assessing the overall model performance, it appears the inclusion of the independent variables makes a significant improvement in predicting the dependent variable, incumbent party *Presidential State Level Vote*. Specifically, the value of the F test, 17.639, indicates the inclusion of the independent variables makes a significant improvement over the intercept alone. This F value is statistically significant beyond the .001 level. The adjusted R^2 indicates that

48.4% of the vote for the incumbent party *Presidential State Level Vote* is captured by the model's independent variables: *Partisanship*, *Presidential Thermometer*, *Home State Advantage*, *Unemployment*, *the Percent Change in National Product*, and *Presidential Campaign Activity*. The Standard Error of the Estimate is 6.19 indicating predictions in the dependent variable are on average off by just over 6%.

Table 5.1 Presidential Naïve Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.717 ^a	.513	.484	6.19368

The performance of the coefficients presented in Table 5.2 suggests some support for the hypotheses developed above. Specifically, inspection of the slope estimates indicates that *Partisanship* and the *Percent of Change in National Product* exert strong and significant influence on the dependent variable, the *Presidential State Level Vote*. Prior research suggests that economic conditions are strong predictors of presidential performance. As such, the performance of the variable on the *Presidential State Level Vote* may be influenced by the economic variables in the model. Surprisingly, *Home State Advantage* is statistically insignificant, suggesting presidential and vice presidential candidates do not systematically receive a boost in the vote in their home state.

Turning next to campaign activity, although both variables are in the predicted direction, neither obtains conventional levels of statistical significance. *Challenger Party Presidential Campaign Activity* is significant at the .065 level for a one-tailed test. Surprisingly, *Presidential Campaign Activity*, defined as the number of times a presidential candidate visited a state from Labor Day through Election Day, fails to obtain conventional levels of statistical significance. Specifically, the variable is coded as the number of visits made by the incumbent and challenger party presidential candidates to each state.

With respect to the less than expected performance of the presidential campaign variables, two factors are suspected that may be dampening their effect. First, given a larger sample size, the variables may prove to be statistically significant. Second, the weak performance also may be a problem in measurement rather than theory. As mentioned before, a state level presidential campaign expenditure variable would have been a stronger measure.¹⁷ In an attempt to determine if the poor statistical performance was a function of operationalization, this thesis also modeled the variable similar to Shaw's work (1999a) for the OLS models, from which the data were obtained. Specifically, Shaw models visits in terms of the difference in visits between candidates. However, when this measure is used, it performs similarly.

¹⁷ Reeves, Chen and Nagano attempted to duplicate Shaw's work. The Harvard researcher's concluded that when they followed the methods as prescribed in Shaw's research, they were unable to reproduce the substantive claims. Thus, there is still some debate as to the veracity of the analysis presented by Shaw (1999a).

Table 5.2 Presidential Naïve Model

	b	t
Partisanship	19.483 (3.758)	5.185*
Home State Advantage	-2.400 (2.072)	-.984
Unemployment (Economy 1)	-1.365 (.686)	-1.989*
National Product (Economy 2)	10.027 (2.323)	4.316*
Presidential Thermometer	.401 (.371)	1.081
Presidential Campaign Activity (IP)	.379 (.348)	1.089
Presidential Campaign Activity (CP)	-.491 (.323)	-1.521
N=127		

Table 5.3 presents the summary statistics for the naive Senate model and Table 5.4 presents the parameter estimates for the model. Overall, the model performed well. The assessment of the F test and R^2 statistics suggest that the explanatory power of the model is quite strong. Specifically, the value of the F test, 28.364, indicates the inclusion of the independent variables makes a significant improvement over the intercept alone. This F value is statistically significant at the .001 level. The adjusted R^2 demonstrates that 56.8% of the *Senate State Level Vote* is captured by *Incumbency, Challenger Quality, Senate Campaign Intensity, Marginality and Partisanship*. The Standard Error of the Estimate of .08173 indicates that the average prediction error is less than .08% suggesting a strong fit between data and theory.

Table 5.3 Senate Naïve Model Summary

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.767 ^a	.588	.568	.08173

More importantly, all the variables in the Senate model are statistically significant and in the predicted direction. Interpretation of the parameter estimates suggest a good deal of the variation in the Senate vote can be explained by factors exogenous to the campaign process as demonstrated by the magnitude and significance of *Incumbency*, *Marginality*, and *Partisanship*. For every one-unit increase in *Partisanship* (incumbent party's percent of the state legislature), the *Senate State Level Vote* increases by .1%. Similarly, a marginal incumbent may, on average, draw nearly 5% less of the vote. Additionally, if a marginal incumbent is facing a quality challenger, their share of the vote could be reduced an additional 5%.

The analysis also indicates that campaign activity affects the vote in Senate elections. The beta weights indicate that the campaign activity of the incumbent and challenger party campaigns exert strong substantive effects on the *Senate State Level vote*. Specifically, the standard standardized coefficient for the *Incumbent Party Senate Campaign Intensity* is .288 and the *Challenger Party Senate Campaign Intensity* is -.224. In summary, the Senate naive model indicates that both campaign activity and the macro level variables that establish

the context of a specific race are central to explaining Senate elections outcomes. The analysis supports the premise that campaigns do matter.

Table 5.4 Senate Naive Model

	b	t
Incumbency	.132 (.027)	4.901*
Marginality	-.047 (.016)	-2.941*
Challenger Quality	.045 (.014)	3.143*
Partisanship	.102 (.048)	2.110*
Senate Campaign Intensity (IP)	.018 (.005)	4.043*
Senate Campaign Intensity (CP)	-.014 (.004)	-3.200*
N=127		

Spillover Models

The presidential and Senate spillover models provide, which are designed to capture the influence that Senate and presidential campaign activity have on each other, provide the best test to the hypothesis that campaign activity targeted at one race may affect the outcomes of other races occurring simultaneously. Table 5.5 presents the presidential spillover model summary and Table 5.6 presents the results for the presidential spillover model and Table 5.7 and 5.8 present the model summary statistics and the parameter estimates for the Senate spillover models.

Turning first to Table 5.5, the summary statistics suggest that the presidential spillover model, which accounts for *Senate Campaign Intensity*, performs better than the presidential naive model. Specifically, the value of the F test, 14.954, indicates the inclusion of the independent variables makes a significant improvement over the intercept alone. The F value is significant, beyond the .001 level. The adjusted R² demonstrated 50.3% of the *Presidential State Level Vote* is captured by *Partisanship, Presidential Thermometer, Home State Advantage, Unemployment, the Percent Change in National Product, Presidential Campaign Activity and Senate Campaign Intensity*. The Standard Error of the Estimate of 6.07960 is a slight improvement over the presidential naive model. While the values for these statistics are improvements over the naive model, further evidence of an improvement over the presidential naive model was demonstrated by performing an F change test.¹⁸ This thesis was able to conclude the addition of the *Senate Campaign Intensity* variables to the presidential spillover model significantly improved the model at the .05 (p=.04) level with an F value of 3.24.

Table 5.5 Summary of Presidential Spillover Model

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.734a	.539	.503	.607960

¹⁸ The F change test allows one to determine if the inclusion of additional independent variables (represented here as the spillover model) results in a statistically significant improvement over the reduced model (e.g., the naive models).

Similar to the presidential naive model, *Partisanship*, *Unemployment*, and *the Percent Change in National Product* are highly significant, allowing the null hypothesis for these variables to be rejected. As discussed before, the *Senate Campaign Intensity* was added to this model to assess the spillover effects from the Senate campaign to the presidential campaign. *Incumbent Party Senate Campaign Intensity* proved to be statistically significant at the .005 level. This campaign variable provides the best evidence for the main argument that Senate campaigns can affect the vote for president. The beta weights indicate that *Incumbent Party Senate Campaign Intensity* exerts substantive effects on the *Presidential State Level Vote*. Specifically, the standard standardized coefficient for the *Incumbent Party Senate Campaign Intensity* is .175.

The *Challenger Party Senate Campaign Intensity* showed a significance level of .06 for a one-tailed test. The performance of the challenger variable is not at all surprising given that incumbents spend in response to the challenger. This is primarily due to the notion that incumbents increase their spending in response to the spending of challengers. Thus, the measure of the *Senate Campaign Intensity* is what happens before they react to the challenger.

As with the original model, and probably for the same reasons, Table 5.6 illustrates how *Home State Advantage* and *Presidential Thermometer Ratings* failed to reach statistical significance. In addition, the *Presidential Campaign Activity* did not demonstrate significance. *Challenger Party Presidential Campaign Activity* approaches conventional levels of significance ($p = -.07$). As mentioned before, Shaw's variable may not be the best measurement of

presidential campaign activity. Ideally, the variable that would have been used here would measure the total dollars spent by each presidential campaign in each state.

Table 5.6 Presidential Spillover Model

	b	t
Partisanship	18.522 (3.757)	4.930*
Home State Advantage	1.467 (2.085)	.704
Unemployment (Economy 1)	-1.409 (.675)	-2.087*
Percent Change in National Product (Economy 2)	10.080 (2.298)	4.387*
Presidential Thermometer	.358 (.367)	.975
Presidential Campaign Activity (IP)	.393 (.342)	1.149
Presidential Campaign Activity (CP)	-.467 (.322)	-1.451
Senate Campaign Intensity (IP)	.763 (.314)	2.429*
Senate Campaign Intensity (CP)	-.471 (.309)	-1.525
N=127		

Table 5.7 presents the summary statistics for the Senate spillover model summary and Table 5.8 presents the parameter estimates for the Senate spillover model. As was the case with the presidential models, the summary statistics for the spillover model suggest some improvement in the model performance as compared to the Senate naive model. Specifically, the F value

of 21.494 indicates the inclusion of the independent variables makes a significant improvement over the intercept alone. The F Value is significant performing at the .001 level. The adjusted R^2 demonstrates 57.1% of the *Senate State Level Vote* is captured by *Incumbency*, *Challenger Quality*, *Senate Campaign Intensity*, *Marginality*, *Partisanship*, and *Presidential Campaign Activity*.

Table 5.7 Summary of Senate Spillover Model

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.774a	.599	.571	.08175

The Standard Error of the Estimate of .08175 indicates that the average prediction error is less than .08%, again suggesting a strong fit between data and theory. However, while the spillover model did perform well, the F change test, which compares if the inclusion of the additional independent variables significantly improves the model, is statistically insignificant. That is, the inclusion of *Presidential Campaign Activity* variables did not statistically improve the overall performance of the model at the .05 ($p=.20$) level with an F value of 1.591068. This is most likely the case because the additional variables themselves, *Presidential Campaign Activity*, were statistically insignificant.

As with the Senate naive model, all of the independent variables are statistically significant and in the predicted direction for the spillover model. As such, the parameter estimates suggest that the statewide Senate vote can be

accounted for by factors both exogenous to the actual campaign, as well as by campaign activity. Specifically, the magnitude of the estimates for *Incumbency*, *Marginality* and *Partisanship* indicate strong substantive effects. Moreover, inspection of the model's beta weights, indicate that *Incumbency* make a larger contribution in predicting the variance in the dependent variable as compared to *Marginality* ($\text{Incumbency} = .522$; $\text{Marginality} = -.245$).

At the same time, the beta weights also indicate that the campaign activity of the incumbent and challenger party campaigns exert strong substantive effects on the vote. Specifically, the standard standardized coefficients for the *Incumbent Party Senate Campaign Intensity* is .284, -.211 for the *Challenger Party Senate Campaign Intensity*, and .224 for *Challenger Quality*. However, as was the case with the presidential spillover model, neither of the variables taping presidential campaign activity performed as expected.

Specifically, although the *Challenger Party Presidential Campaign Activity* and *Incumbent Party Presidential Campaign Activity* are in the predicted direction, both fail to obtain conventional levels of statistical significance. The results indicate that presidential campaign activity (measured in terms of visits) does not exert a direct influence on the Senate vote.¹⁹

¹⁹Prior work examining presidential coattails generally has not modeled the relationship between presidential and congressional election outcomes by directly assessing the influence of presidential campaign activity on individual Senate and House races. Rather, this research tends to account for coattails by simply comparing the aggregate election outcomes of presidential and congressional elections. As such, the findings presented here bring into question the underlying causal mechanism asserted by the coattails literature.

Table 5.8 Senate Spillover Model

	b	T
Incumbency	.136 (.027)	4.997*
Marginality	-.046 (.016)	-2.845*
Challenger Quality	.044 (.015)	3.015*
Partisanship	.117 (.049)	2.371*
Senate Campaign Intensity (IP)	.018 (.005)	3.935*
Senate Campaign Intensity (CP)	-.013 (.004)	-2.940*
Presidential Campaign (IP)	.006 (.005)	1.298
Presidential Campaign (CP)	-.004 (.004)	-1.013
N=127		

This model supports the research that campaigns matter. *Challenger Quality* and *Incumbent Party Campaign Intensity* resulted in higher standardized coefficients (beta weight) than *Partisanship*. This would suggest that campaign effects are important considerations when explaining the *Senate State Level Vote*. In summary, the Senate spillover model indicates both campaign activity and the context of the race are central to Senate election outcomes.

Causal Model

The above models provide some support for the thesis' primary contention that Senate campaign intensity affects the statewide vote for president. At the same time, these analyses are largely static and as such, are unable to capture the nature of a causal process that unfolds over time. To capture this aspect of

the process of interest, this thesis applies causal modeling techniques to the data. These techniques allow one to assess the direct and indirect influences within a system of variables. By analyzing the multiple variables occurring during the campaign process simultaneously, this thesis follows the growing number of campaign and election studies that focus on the multi-layered dynamics that are present in the campaign process such as Kahn and Kenney (1997), Damore (2004), and Nicholson (2005).

As is customary with causal modeling, the beta weights are used to assess both direct and indirect paths.²⁰ The actual estimation process involves first specifying the paths among the independent variables and dependent variables to capture the underlying causal process. Figure 5.1 presents a schematic of the causal process without the estimates. The causal model is designed to assess if the competitiveness of the Senate race, in addition to the Senate campaign influences tested by the OLS Models, influence the dependent variable, the *Presidential State Level Vote*. The causal model variables had several modifications from the OLS Models. First, *Home State Advantage* and *Presidential Thermometer* were deleted from the causal model after failing to reach statistical significance in the presidential spillover model. Additionally, based on the high correlated values of the *Presidential Campaign Activity* variables (.803), the causal model used the difference in visits as reflected in Shaw's (1999a) original data. Lastly, *Seat Type* was included to account for the Senate incumbency advantage as determined by the presidential incumbent

²⁰ Beta weights are the standardized coefficients, allowing one to make comparisons in the magnitudes of variables that are measured using different metrics.

party. These modifications permitted this model to capture both the direct and indirect relationships among the variables to provide a more complex analysis of the causal process.

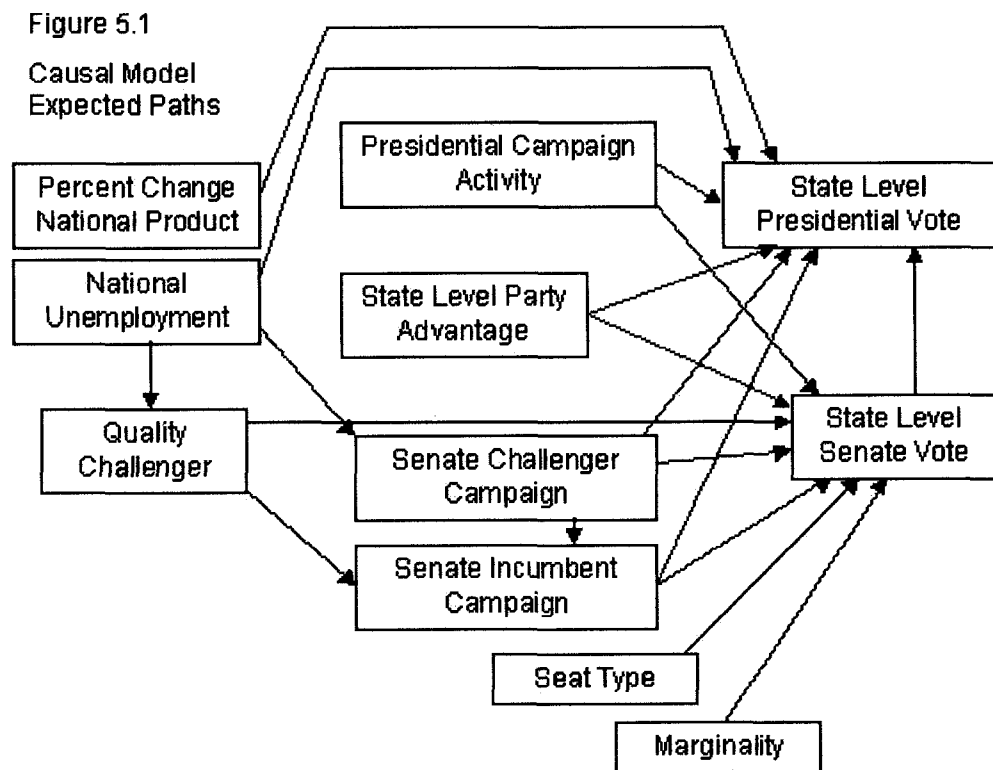


Figure 5.2 presents the standardized coefficients of the causal model displaying the magnitudes of the paths suggested before. Specifically, as shown in Figure 5.2, this modeling process generated 16 separate regression equations to capture both the direct and indirect effects on the variables. Turning to the paths, the results suggest that the *Presidential State Level Vote* was influenced by *Unemployment*, the *Percent Change in National Product*, *Partisanship*, and the *Senate State Level Vote*. The *Presidential Campaign Activity* showed

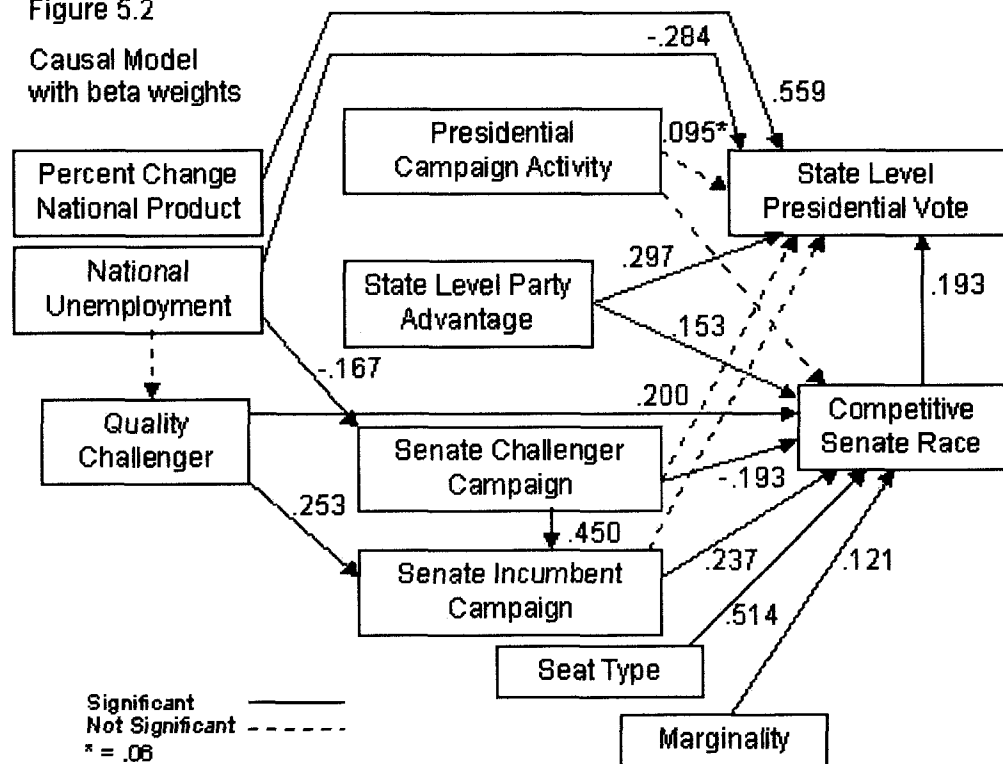
significance only at the .06 level. *Challenger Party Presidential Campaign Activity* was directly related to the activities of the *Incumbent Party Presidential Campaign Activity*, with a correlation of .803. This finding was consistent with the prior work of Shaw (1999b). His study focused on a variety of effects affect presidential messages. More importantly, he demonstrates how the presidential challenger reacts to those campaign related events and messages to shape and mobilize his own support. It also follows that both competing presidential candidates tend to concentrate their resources in the same states. Based on this information, the variable was modified for the causal model to reflect the difference in campaign intensity.

The causal model provides support that campaigns do matter and Senate campaigns can affect the presidential vote. While Campbell's (1992, 2000) argument that macro-level factors are important proves true under this analysis, this causal model also demonstrates the relevance of campaigns.

Unemployment has a direct effect on *Challenger Party Senate Campaign Intensity* as expected, but failed to demonstrate statistical significance directly with *Quality Challenger*. This suggests that consistent with the literature, macro level variables have an effect on the ability of a challenger to effectively challenge the incumbent. As discussed in chapter four, *Quality Challenger* was coded as 1 for an incumbent party challenger with previous experience, -1 for a challenger party with previous experience and was coded with 0 if neither candidate had experience or if both candidates had experience. As suggested in earlier chapters, this variable was not performing as expected and may be one

Figure 5.2

Causal Model
with beta weights



explanation as to why the direct effect was not captured. Another presidential campaign variable should be developed for additional work. Still, the results from the macro level variable of *Unemployment* on the *Presidential State Level Vote* and *Challenger Party Senate Campaign Intensity* supports the work of Holbrook and Campbell. However, more important for this research is these results support the work of Jacobsen and Kernall (1981) who suggest that these variables work to benefit strategic politicians. That is, they serve as the backdrop to help determine if a specific campaign will have a quality challenger who can mount the financial resources to challenge an incumbent. Additionally, considering both indirect and direct effects, this model supports the research of

Jacobsen (1987) that suggests Senate incumbent spending is directly related to challenger spending. This had a significance level of .000. The standardized coefficient was .450, which indicates that this is a strong predictor.

The *Senate State Level Vote* seems to be directly affected by *Seat Type*²¹, *Marginality*, *Senate Campaign Intensity*, *Challenger Quality* and *Partisanship*. The *Seat Type* was strong with a beta weight of .514. That is, *Incumbency* exerts strong substantive effects on the *Senate State Level Vote*. Interestingly, the *Partisanship* variable had a stronger effect on the *Presidential State level vote* than on the *Senate State Level Vote*. The effect of *Partisanship* on the presidential vote was .297, while the effect of *Partisanship* on the Senate vote was .153. Table 5.9 provides the results of the estimates used to generate the causal analysis.

Consistent with the results presented in Figure 5.2, these effects suggest that macro level variables and campaign activity affect both the state level vote for president and Senate.²² More importantly, the path analysis suggests that the campaign activities at one level can no longer be considered in isolation. In summary, the above has presented the statistical analysis used to examine this thesis' main concern: under what conditions do Senate elections affect the state level vote for the presidency?

²¹ Seat type variable was included in the causal model to capture the White House Incumbent party Senate Incumbency advantage.

²² The Senate State Level Vote demonstrated statistical significance when the Senate Campaign Intensity variables were included and when they were excluded. Conversely, the Senate Campaign Intensity variables demonstrated statistical significance only when the State Level Senate Vote was not included. (Incumbent Party Senate Campaign Intensity significance level was reduced to of .07)

Table 5.9 Causal Analyses Results

Senate State Level Vote – Incumbent Party	beta	b	t	Sig.
Senate Campaign – IP	.237	.015 (.004)	3.422	.000
Senate Campaign – CP	-.193	-.012 (.004)	-2.874	.002
Marginality	.121	.022 (.012)	1.867	.032
Seat Type	.514	.072 (.012)	6.128	.000
Quality Challenger	.200	.039 (.014)	6.081	.000
Partisanship	.153	.121 (.046)	3.044	.003
Presidential State Level Vote – Incumbent Party				
National Product	.559	11.791 (1.356)	8.696	.000
Presidential Campaign Activity	.095	-.464 (.304)	1.527	.06
Unemployment	-.284	-1.944 (.439)	4.425	.000
Partisanship	.297	16.296 (3.805)	4.283	.000
Senate State Level Vote	.193	13.417 (4.571)	2.935	.002
Senate Campaign Intensity – Incumbent Party				
Senate Campaign Intensity – CP	.450	.434 (.075)	5.824	.000
Quality Challenger	.253	.778 (.238)	3.268	.001
Senate Campaign Intensity – Challenger Party				
Unemployment	-.167	-.268 (.140)	-1.921	.027

After presenting the results of the naive models that do not consider spillover campaign effects, the analysis moved to an assessment of the spillover effects between the Senate and presidential campaigns. It is the spillover models that provide the best evidence for the thesis' main contention. Specifically, the presidential model was significantly improved with the inclusion of the *Senate Campaign Intensity* suggesting that activity at one level may benefit up ticket races. The chapter concluded by presenting the causal analysis

that seeks to examine if the competitiveness of the Senate race, measured in terms of the vote... positively affects the state level vote for the presidency. The conclusion of this analysis is that the Senate vote influences the vote for President through campaigns and competitive elections.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters explore the inter-relationship between the state level Senate and presidential campaigns. The specific hypothesis questioned whether competitive Senate elections with a high level of campaign intensity provide a positive affect for the presidential candidate in the same political party. To answer this question, this thesis developed theoretical models that accounts for spillover effects among campaigns at different levels.

The initial naive models provided a baseline from which to compare the spillover models. That is, this thesis considered the impact in terms of each election in isolation. From there, each election was considered in terms of being affected or having spillover effects from other campaigns. By then creating a causal model, this research was able to provide a clearer picture of the causal process of interest. As such, these findings serve to illustrate the interdependence of local, national, and macro-level variables that impact elections.

The results presented here suggest that presidential and Senate elections are influenced by macro level factors as well as the campaign events. This supports the work of Campbell (2000) and Holbrook (1991) who suggest macro level factors are important. However, in slight contrast to Campbell, who

suggests that campaigns are not significant, this study suggests that campaigns can matter. For example, in the causal model where all variables were standardized, *Partisanship* showed a beta weight of .153 on the *Senate State Level Vote*, while *Senate Incumbent Campaign Intensity* performed at .237. This shows the effect of campaign activity may be stronger than *Partisanship*. Campaign effects could be more important because they are changeable. For example, it would be easier to increase campaign activity or target a high performing precinct than it would be to change a macro level variable such as the national unemployment rate. However, this being said, a change in campaign tactics would be effective only when the macro level variables supported a competitive election and the emergence of a quality challenger.

Both the macro level variables of *Unemployment* and the *Percent Change in National Product* had direct effects on the *Presidential State Level Vote*. In addition, *Unemployment* had a direct effect on the *Senate Challenger Campaign* activity. This multi-level effects of the economic macro level variables on both the Senate and presidential variables underscores the importance of analyzing all of the various effects that each variable may have on another. This study further suggests that macro level and campaign effects cannot be evaluated in isolation from one another. This research confirms prior work such as Jacobsen (2000), who emphasizes the importance of considering various interactions between national factors and campaign activity.

As mentioned earlier, there is considerable research that suggests that campaigns matter (Kahn and Kenny, 1999; Shaw, 1999b; Westlye, 1983;

Holbrook, 1994; Damore, 2004). This same research highlights the importance of campaigns, specifically when there is a quality challenger in a competitive election. The results presented suggest that a quality challenger is central to a competitive election. This study has found support for Jacobsen and Kernall's (1981) research on the impact and importance of quality challengers. *Quality Challengers* were shown to have a strong, direct effect on *Senate Incumbent Campaign Intensity* and the *Senate State Level Vote*. Additionally, *Marginality* had a direct effect on *Senate State Level Vote*. This supports Stewart's (1989) research regarding the importance of the relationship between marginality and quality challengers.

Competitive Senate elections with well-financed quality challengers appear to have a direct impact on the *Presidential State Level Vote*. The *Senate State Level Vote* has a direct effect on the *Presidential State Level Vote*. *Incumbency* proved to be significant in almost every case, supporting the prior research of Campbell and Sumners (1990) and Calvert & Ferejohn (1983).

In addition to incumbency, the factor of money in campaigns still seems to be a highly consistent indicator of competitive elections. The amount of money necessary to engage the media and the voting public remains significant. The measure of 2:1 utilized in this study and by Westlye (1991, 1993) proves to be a reliable indicator. Campaign spending and the spending by political parties can influence the competitiveness of a campaign. The increase and amount of money being spent in a political environment increases the likelihood the voting public will be engaged in the contest (Nicholson, 2003).

The results of this research provide an initial insight into the multi-level nature of the campaign process, but would need to be refined to include a more precise measure of *Presidential Campaign Activity* and *Partisanship*. While most results were consistent with theoretical expectations, there were limitations with the data that did not allow a more detailed analysis of presidential campaign activity. Due to data limitations of the *Presidential Campaign Activity* variable, this study was not able to capture whether or not there was a direct coattail relationship from the presidency to the Senate (although prior presidential coattail studies support that claim). As mentioned before, having a presidential campaign variable that can accurately assess the financial expenditures on a state-by-state basis may help to answer the question more thoroughly.

Another limitation of this study is the sample size. Although this thesis initially planned to utilize every Senate election from 1976-2000 (as discussed in chapter four), the information prior to the 1990s is not readily accessible. With the conclusion of the 2004 election cycle, the next step in this research process would be to include those samples in the case study to test consistency.

This study can be applied to practical uses and understanding. Based on the results, Senate candidates may have a clearer understanding as to when the right time would be to run for elected office. It is important to recognize the challenges facing those running for election. The guidelines for political parties to select viable candidates may be better identified. This could assist in putting limited resources to better use. Lastly, nominees and presidential candidates may pay closer attention to Senate elections in states that are swing or open for

the next presidential election. If Senate elections can affect the presidency, as this study suggests, then it would be important for national committees not to limit their scope of resources to national elections for president.

The purpose of this research is to provide an advancement of our understanding into the factors that influence the vote for president. The dynamics of local considerations cannot be minimized. That is, election studies need to take into account the bigger picture in the election process. The results presented here suggest there is empirical support for a relationship that only has been mentioned slightly in previous research and dismissed.

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