Campaigns, Partisanship, and Candidate Evaluations in Subpresidential Elections

Considerable research has suggested that presidential campaigns do little more than activate existing voter predispositions such as partisanship. While this may be true of presidential races, campaigns in statewide subpresidential elections have a much greater potential for shaping voter perceptions of candidates themselves. This paper explores the degree to which subpresidential campaigns produce effects resembling those produced at the top of the ticket, and to what degree (and in what manner) subpresidential campaigns are unique.

My analysis suggests that voters in subpresidential races tend to be more open to "learning" about the individual candidates, forming independent impressions of them, and making vote decisions that are less closely tied to one's partisan predispositions. Subpresidential campaigns have the ability to break through some of the partisan cognitive barriers that exist at the presidential level, and build impressions of candidates which are not as closely tied up in partisanship as they are at the top of the ticket. My research suggests that at the state level, campaigns do more than merely activate party voting. Campaigns serve the important function of building impressions of candidates that, while based to some degree on partisanship, impact the vote in a manner which is independent of partisanship. Campaigns also substantially increase voter consistency, and in so doing help bring about the "responsible electorate" of which V.O. Key wrote.

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Considerable research has suggested that presidential campaigns do little more than activate existing voter predispositions such as partisanship. While this may be true of presidential races, campaigns in statewide subpresidential elections have a much greater potential for shaping voter perceptions of candidates. Candidates do not begin the cycle as universally known, the partisan stakes are not as high, and the potential for "learning" is greater. This paper explores the degree to which subpresidential campaigns produce effects resembling those produced at the top of the ticket, and to what degree (and in what manner) subpresidential campaigns are unique.

Measuring Campaign Effects

Political scientists are generally skeptical about the impact of campaigns, but this is partly due to the nature of the effects investigated. Much of the campaign effects literature evaluates the impact of campaign activity on election outcomes or pre-election trial heat standings. Campaigns are considered to be effective to the extent that they influence turnout or the choice of candidate.

The prevailing view among scholars is that presidential campaigns often exert little net influence over election outcomes *per se*; structural and retrospective factors often seem to play a much larger role (see, among others, Markus, 1988; Bartells, 1992, 1997; Gelman and King, 1993). Individual-level studies of voting behavior have provided considerable evidence of strong connections between the vote and incumbent evaluations, the voter's personal economic condition, and (especially) perceptions of the national economy. V.O. Key (1966) was one of the first to build up this theory of retrospective voting, showing that deviation from past partisan vote patterns is rational, and even "responsible," because these deviations are usually in line with voter preferences and evaluations of incumbent performance. Fiorina's (1978, 1981) work stands as another classic early statement of retrospective voting, and myriad other studies have strengthened his original findings. Alvarez and Nagler (1998) showed that perceptions of macro economic performance were a much stronger vote driver in the 1996 presidential election than were candidate issue positions; this leaves candidates free to hedge or obfuscate issue positions, while redirecting the electorate's attention to measures of economic performance. Collectively, these studies and many more (including Alvarez and Nagler, 1995; see also Abramson et al., 1994 and 1998 and Miller and Shanks, 1996 for more general discussions) have established "retrospective voting" as a predominant explanation of voter decision processes and election dynamics.

The predispositional and structural variables emphasized by the retrospective voting theory are in place well before a campaign even begins and, it is generally believed, extremely difficult to alter. If campaigns play a role, it is precisely because they remind voters about partisan ties and build that case about incumbent performance. To be sure, there would be a dramatic effect if one side dropped the ball or failed to campaign. But presidential contests are fairly evenly matched in

talent and resources, a veritable all star game of elections where each side fields its very best operatives. The net effect of this "clash of the titans" is negligible, leaving structural and retrospective factors to determine outcomes.

Despite the ability to forecast election outcomes using models that ignore campaign-related occurrences, campaign efforts are not necessarily useless. At minimum, campaigns need to remind voters about economic conditions and connect blame or responsibility for these conditions to the incumbent (and his party). There is substantial evidence that the principal effect of campaigns is to activate and mobilize predispositions such as party identification and perceptions of incumbent job performance. Finkel (1993), for example, used panel data to demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of individual votes can be accounted for from attitudes (such as party identification and presidential approval) that are measured well before the political conventions. Campaigns win few converts; rather campaigns simply activate existing predispositions and connect these with the vote choice. Holbrook (1996) found something similar in his study of presidential campaigns. Campaign effects were greatest for candidates whose initial level of support lagged behind its predicted level (based on such baseline variables as partisanship, the incumbent's popularity, and the state of the economy); leading to the conclusion that campaigns activate preferences associated with basic predispostions such as partisanship and incumbent evaluations. Petrocik's (1996) analysis of the 1980 election yielded similar results: candidate preferences increasingly coincided with the issues and problems about which voters were concerned.

Gelman and King (1993) found that additional information enables voters to choose more in accord with their preferences. Similarly, Bartels (1996) demonstrated that less-informed voters make candidate choices which are less in accord with their preferences than do fully-informed voters. In short: campaigns produce information about candidates, and information produces the "responsible electorate" of which V.O. Key wrote.

The "activation" and "retrospective" models together provide a fairly comprehensive portrait of voting behavior; it has been difficult to document the degree to which campaign-generated information does more than simply connect voters with pre-existing dispositions. It is possible, however, that additional campaign effects have been hard to uncover because of where researchers have directed their attention. The near-exclusive focus on presidential elections can give a misleading impression of campaigns and their role in American elections. Presidential elections are unique in many respects --- most notably because they feature well-known candidates, extensive campaign activity on both sides, and attract enormous media coverage.

There are a number of other potential limitations in studying presidential elections. The short time frame during which data are collected presents one serious problem. Most NES surveys, the typical dataset for studying these

campaigns, begin their field work around the September 1ˢᵗ traditional kickoff date for presidential campaigning. Fifty years ago the election might have been significantly shaped during the sixty or so days between Labor Day and the election, but the modern system of "permanent" campaigns has created an environment in which most voters arrive at their presidential candidate choice well before the end of summer. The small changes that occur after that date – even if they tip the balance – may be too small for surveys to detect. Furthermore, the massive media coverage given to presidential races, and the tremendous resources marshaled by advocates on both sides, guarantees that candidates will become extremely well known and closely identified with the partisan team each man represents. This enormous publicity can produce stakes so high, for many voters casting a vote for a particular candidate could come to embody *what it means* to identify oneself as a Democrat or Republican.

Although the overwhelming majority of elections take place at the state and local levels, and these elections would seem an excellent place to look for campaign effects, state and local elections have received relatively little attention from political scientists — largely because reliable data have proved difficult to obtain. However, there is good reason to think subpresidential elections would show more effects of campaigns than presidential contests do. The partisan stakes are not as high, leaving more openness to considering a candidate from a party different from one's own. Campaigns are often less well matched in quality. Also unlike presidential elections, there is seldom massive media attention to state and local candidates, which could serve to settle the question before formal campaigns even begin. In the modern era of presidential campaigns, more than a year of effort, publicity, and press attention are invested in the campaign before the "official" campaign begins on Labor Day weekend.   Both candidates are well known and impressions are settled. This is generally not true in statewide elections, even when an incumbent is seeking reelection. With candidates not as well known and opinions not as firmly crystallized on Day One, more room is left open for "learning" over the course of the subpresidential campaign period.

In fact, the literature which has examined subpresidential voting behavior has found some substantial campaign effects which are more visible than in national elections. For example, the fate of incumbent governors does not seem to be as closely tied to the state of the economy as is the fate of incumbent presidents (Stein, 1990); this would seem to leave governors more free to campaign on issues of their own choosing. Salmore and Salmore (1994) demonstrate that there are many dynamic elements in statewide elections, and give numerous anecdotal accounts of campaign impacts on outcomes. Westlye (1991) discusses the intensity of campaign activity in Senate races as an important determinant of outcomes. He points out that many states elect senators of both parties — and often these senators have widely divergent ideologies. Something more than appeals to partisan predispositions must be going on, therefore. He examines in more detail the

manner in which campaign activity shapes electorates' perceptions of candidates and ultimately influences election outcomes.

The focus of this paper is twofold. First, it will provide evidence of the degree to which campaigns activate partisan predispositions, and the nature in which they do so. The use of state level time series data, from across each of several election cycles in several states, will shed light on the time frame and manner in which this activation occurs. These data will flesh out details of activation which are difficult to discern in simple "before/after" studies such as the NES. I hypothesize that campaigns activate partisan identity in two distinct, but related, manners: direct and indirect. Direct activation means voters increasingly connect party preference with candidate preference; in other words, increased party loyalty in voting. Indirect activation means that partisanship is increasingly used by voters as a schema for evaluating and shaping their impressions of the competing candidates; those "informed perceptions" are in turn increasingly connected to the vote.

Secondly, the paper examines the degree to which subpresidential campaigns do more than simply activate predispositions. Given that candidates are generally less well-known and resources generally less well-matched than in presidential contests, campaigns may produce "extra-activation" effects which previous research has been unable to detect. I find that, in fact, statewide campaigns often do produce effects beyond simple activation of predispositions. At the subpresidential level, successful campaigns construct winning coalitions by assembling a partisan base — but then expanding that base and shaping candidate perceptions which are to some degree independent of raw partisanship. Rather than "reverting" to partisanship in the face of low information, state electorates can be shaped by campaigns to form perceptions of candidates which are connected to the vote *independently* of partisanship. Broadly speaking, I will demonstrate that modern subpresidential campaigns, in addition to activating predispositions, attempt to shape independent perceptions of candidates and then lead voters to use these "informed perceptions" in voting decisions (independently of party id).

Data and Methodology

The paper draws upon cross sectional survey data commissioned by a number of state and federal campaigns. All of the original research design and fieldwork were conducted by Market Strategies, Inc., a Republican polling firm headquartered in Michigan,[1] on behalf of individual campaigns and Republican party committees. The length of time covered by the surveys varies substantially from state to state and race to race. In some races, the first interviews were conducted more than a year before election day; in other races, the interviews did not begin until Labor Day or beyond. Regardless, I compiled every available survey for each race. Table 1 summarizes the states, races, years, and number of interviews to be analyzed in each state. All together, there are more than 68,000 interviews conducted across

sixteen races, seven states, and five election cycles. While these states do not necessarily form a representative sample of the country, they remain a useful collection nonetheless. Some are quite small;

Table 1: Summary of Subpresidential Race Surveys Used			
State	Race(s)	Year	N of interviews
IL	Governor	1990	3,679
IN	U.S. Senator	1990	4,158
SD	Governor	1990	1,500
VT	Governor	1990	1,005
PA	U.S. Senator	1991	5,713
MO	U.S. Senator	1992	5,350
IL	Governor, Atty Gen	1994	8,579
MO	U.S. Senator	1994	5,654
IL	Governor, U.S. Senator, Atty Gen	1998	9,300
MO	U.S. Senator	1998	7,489
NV	Governor, U.S. Senator	1998	4,753
MO	U.S. Senator	2000	11,008

some are quite large. Some have homogeneous populations; others include substantial demographic diversity. They are drawn from throughout the country. Most importantly, all tend to be "swing states," where both Republicans and Democrats have managed to win statewide office in the last ten years; in none of these states is a single party dominant to the exclusion of the other. Furthermore, the races themselves featured a variety of candidate types, offices, and election outcomes: Senators, Governors, and Attorneys General; some strong incumbents, some open seats; some Republican winners, some Democratic winners; a few blowouts, a few extremely close "squeakers," and a number of modest victory margins.

In addition, I also have available state-level survey data conducted by Market Strategies on behalf of Republican Presidential campaigns. Such data are available for 2000 in Missouri (N=10,408), Wisconsin (N=6,450), Illinois (N=4,706), New Mexico (N=3,953), Oregon (N=1,452), Maine (N=1,452), Tennessee (N=2,000), and Iowa (N=2,250). Again, this is not intended to be a representative sample of all states — but they nonetheless form a diverse and interesting collection. Most importantly, all of these states were highly contested and featured substantial campaign activity, which make them an ideal place to look for campaign effects. With the exception of Illinois, the outcome in all of these states was extremely close. I also have an additional 3,950 Missouri interviews from the 1992 Presidential race, and 3,302 Michigan interviews from the 1996 Presidential contest. With a few exceptions, all of the Presidential interviews were conducted from late summer through election day.

Unfortunately, to save valuable campaign resources, the number and scope of questions asked in campaign-sponsored polls are often limited and not consistent over time. A campaign poll's focus is generating useful strategic information, not settling academic controversies about campaign effects. That said, the mix of questions available in particular polls does give some insight into what the campaign perceives to be important and worthy of further understanding. I would

have preferred to have had available questions about incumbent job performance, which form the heart of the retrospective voting model. In almost no races, however, were such questions asked after middle portion of the campaign. In all races there are a handful of key variables which were consistently asked in nearly every survey, and will form the heart of my investigation: party identification, trial heat vote, and favorable/unfavorable impressions of the two candidates in question. While not the exhaustive set of measures an academic researcher might prefer, these are the key variables on which the campaigns themselves focused their attention. Although the candidate favorable/unfavorable ratings do not capture retrospective job performance evaluations *per se,* they do serve as a handy summary measure of the global impact of campaign activity on overall feelings about the competing principals. As such, they are a very useful gauge of how campaigns shape perceptions of candidates — and in turn connect these perceptions with the vote.

In all cases, I have coded these variables to range from pro-Democrat to pro-Republican[2]. Party identification is the standard seven-point scale, built using the typical three NES questions to determine intensity, ranging from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Vote choice is always coded as a trichotomy: Democrat-Undecided/other-Republican.

The candidate favorability index is a nine-point scale ranging from polarized pro-Democrat to polarized pro-Republican. It is built from the two candidates' overall favorability ratings,[3] themselves coded: very unfavorable (-2), somewhat unfavorable (-1) no opinion (0), somewhat favorable (+1), very favorable (+2). The overall nine-point index ranges from –4 to +4, and is computed by subtracting the Democrat's rating from the Republican's rating. For instance, a person with a very favorable impression of the Democrat and a somewhat favorable impression of the Republican would score –1. A person giving both candidates identical ratings would fall in the exact center of the scale (0), as would those with no feelings about either candidate.[4]

Results: Presidential Races
Much of the "minimal effects" research suggests that Presidential campaigns primarily activate existing attitudes such as party identification. According to this research, as the election season progresses, party id becomes increasingly tied to the vote decision both directly and indirectly. The direct effect should be visible through increasingly large correlations between party id and the vote. The indirect effect should take the form of increasingly large correlations between party id and other perceptions of the candidates, such as personal favorability or job performance, which are in turn tied to the vote. Practically speaking, by election day, party id should account for an enormous share of the variance in presidential voting. Impressions of the candidates should also be driven to a large degree by party id. Very little variance in either the vote or in candidate impressions should

be left unexplained by party id. Furthermore, the independent relationship between candidate impressions and the vote should be substantially smaller than the direct relationship between party id and the vote.

Table 2 traces the zero-order (Pearson's r) correlation between party id and the 2000 Presidential vote in the eight states for which I have data. Missouri interviews were conducted from May through election day; in the other states, interviews were conducted at various times between the end of August and the beginning of November. In six of the eight states, by the end of the campaign the correlation was at least r=.74; in the other two states, the correlation was also quite large (r=.65 and r=.67). In Missouri, where the interviews spanned the greatest period of time, there is a noticeable increase in the size of this correlation over time: from r=.70 in the spring, to .80 the night before the election. In Missouri, therefore, there seems to have been some direct activation of party id over time. In the other states, where the interviews date only to late August (and in Missouri from late August onward, for that matter), the size of the correlations remained largely flat over time. There may well have been campaign-driven activation of partisanship in these other states as well, but it seems to have occurred before the traditional Labor Day "official" kick-off of the campaigns. This suggests that the typical post Labor Day time frame we examine for Presidential campaign effects may be too narrow. It appears that a great deal of partisan activation occurs before this "official" campaign start. As the Missouri studies suggest, there is even considerable activation that occurs before May. In that state in 2000, party id was already highly correlated with Presidential vote choice in the spring.

Table 2 President 2000: Party ID with Vote (Pearson's r)								
	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
May	.70							
June	.72							
July	.72							
Aug 20-24	.75							
Aug 27-31	.78	.72	.69	.69				
Sept 5-7	.70	.74		.70	.72	.64		
Sept 10-14	.77	.70	.71	.70				.72
Sept 17-21	.71		.74			.63		
Sept 24-28	.73	.74		.67				.69
Oct 1-5	.73	.75	.71				.79	
Oct 8-12	.74	.71		.71	.71			.74
Oct 15-19	.73	.77	.76				.75	
Oct 22-26	.75	.70	.75	.67	.75	.67	.76	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.73	.75	.75	.65			.74	.76
Nov 5-6	.80							

The 2000 Presidential campaigns also seem to have activated partisanship in an indirect manner. Table 3 shows that the correlation between party id and

candidate impressions increased substantially in Missouri between spring (r=.69) and election day (r=.78), indicating that partisanship was increasingly relevant to voter impressions of the candidates as the campaigns progressed. In the other states, with a shorter window of interviewing, the trends over time were more mixed; party became more relevant for candidate impressions in Illinois, Maine and Iowa, stayed flat in Wisconsin, New Mexico and Oregon, and became slightly less relevant in Tennessee. However, in all states there was a very strong correlation between partisanship and candidate impressions by election eve. The size of the ultimate Pearson's r ranged from a low of r=.67 in New Mexico to a high of .78 in Missouri. Again, in nearly all of these states, most of the activation of party as a driver of candidate impressions seems to have occurred well before Labor Day. The Missouri studies again suggest that considerable activation occurs even before the spring.

Table 3								
President 2000: Party ID with Candidate Impressions (Pearson's r)								
	MO	**WI**	**IL**	**NM**	**OR**	**ME**	**TN**	**IA**
May	.69							
June	.72							
July	.70							
Aug 20-24	.72							
Aug 27-31	.77	.73	.69	.70				
Sept 5-7	.71	.73		.70	.74	.61		
Sept 10-14	.74	.71	.70	.70				.71
Sept 17-21	.71		.70			.67		
Sept 24-28	.72	.73		.68				.70
Oct 1-5	.73	.75	.73				.78	
Oct 8-12	.76	.74		.71	.73			.74
Oct 15-19	.72	.75	.75				.76	
Oct 22-26	.77	.73	.77	.67	.73		.78	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.75	.75	.76	.67		.68	.73	.76
Nov 5-6	.78							

Although party id is strongly connected with candidate impressions, and appears to grow more closely connected over time, impressions of the candidates do exert some independent influence over the vote decision. This independent influence can be determined by calculating a *partial* correlation between candidate impressions and the vote, controlling for party id. These partial correlations can then be compared to the correlations in Table 2 to determine the relative independent strength of party identification and candidate impressions in driving the vote.[5]

Table 4 shows that the strength of these partial correlations tends to increase over time in the states examined. As always, the largest increase was in Missouri — from r=.59 in the spring to r=.77 the last full week before the election (with some backing off in the small N=400 sample conducted in the last two days of the election). Looking across all states, the partial correlations tended to end up in the upper .60s to low .70s. Importantly, in nearly every state, immediately before the

	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
Table 4								
President 2000: Impact of Candidate Impressions on Vote, Partialling out Party ID								
May	.59							
June	.56							
July	.63							
Aug 20-24	.65							
Aug 27-31	.66	.61	.67	.66				
Sept 5-7	.65	.59		.66	.63	.69		
Sept 10-14	.65	.63	.65	.68				.61
Sept 17-21	.71		.58			.70		
Sept 24-28	.73	.60		.73				.64
Oct 1-5	.70	.56	.67				.59	
Oct 8-12	.67	.68		.67	.70			.62
Oct 15-19	.70	.65	.62				.68	
Oct 22-26	.72	.68	.70	.74	.65		.65	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.77	.65	.72	.74		.71	.70	.71
Nov 5-6	.69							

election, partisanship exercised a somewhat stronger independent influence over the vote than did impressions of candidates. The spread was largest in Missouri, Wisconsin, and Oregon; the gap was somewhat smaller in Illinois, Tennessee, and Iowa. In only two states, New Mexico and Maine, did candidate impressions prove more important independent vote drivers than party.

Finally, putting party id and candidate impressions together in a regression equation predicting vote choice, Table 5 tracks the changing amount of explained variance in the vote (R-squared of the model). Importantly, the R-sq. increased in every state examined; this increase was often sizable, and finished at an enormous .75 or greater in nearly every state. In other words, three-fourths or more of the vote can be explained by party id and candidate impressions. Once these two factors are taken into account, fairly little of the vote choice is left unexplained.

	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
Table 5								
President 2000: R-Sq of Party ID and Candidate Impressions Predicting Vote								
May	.67							
June	.67							
July	.71							
Aug 20-24	.75							
Aug 27-31	.78	.70	.71	.70				
Sept 5-7	.71	.70		.71	.71	.69		
Sept 10-14	.77	.69	.71	.72				.70
Sept 17-21	.75		.70			.69		
Sept 24-28	.79	.72		.74				.69
Oct 1-5	.76	.70	.72				.75	
Oct 8-12	.75	.73		.73	.75			.73
Oct 15-19	.76	.76	.74				.76	
Oct 22-26	.79	.73	.78	.75	.75		.76	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.81	.75	.79	.74		.72	.77	.79
Nov 5-6	.81							

The Missouri data from 1992 and the Michigan data from 1996 provide some additional confirmation of these patterns seen in 2000. It should be cautioned that these races are somewhat difficult to compare to 2000, because of the prominent role played by Ross Perot. This makes the coding of the variables, especially the vote, more problematic: I had to lump Perot voters into a large middle category with the undecided voters. With a strong third-party candidate in the race, any such correlations between impressions of the major party candidates, party id, and the vote are bound to be somewhat weaker than in a strictly two-party race.

Table 6 shows that in Missouri (1992), party id increased somewhat in strength as a direct vote driver between June and election day. However, Perot's presence in the race seems to have suppressed the absolute strength of party id to r=.69, which is lower than the r=.78 in Missouri eight years later. Interestingly, r=.70 was the *starting point* in May for party id in Missouri in 2000. The indirect influence of party id, as a shaper of candidate perceptions, remained fairly flat between August and November, 1992 and did not reach as high a peak as in 2000. The independent strength of candidate impressions as a vote driver held steady in Missouri between August 1992 and election day, but were interestingly slightly *more* important than partisanship much of the time. On election eve, the two factors finished with equal importance.

Table 6 Missouri U.S. President 1992					
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
June 92		.61			
Aug 92	.72	.65	.71	.67	600
Sept 92	.77	.73	.72	.71	800
Oct 11-15	.72	.66	.71	.68	900
Oct 18-22	.74	.67	.73	.68	750
Oct 24-29	.73	.69	.69	.70	900

Perot's influence was more muted in 1996 Michigan than in 1992 Missouri, with 1996 Michigan showing a pattern more similar to most 2000 states. While the importance of party id as a direct vote driver declined slightly between Labor Day 1996 and the election, and the independent influence of candidate impressions increased slightly in the same time period, the election day importance of party id (r=.69) was substantially stronger than the independent importance of candidate impressions (r=.57). Also, as was true in 2000, party id maintained an extremely strong relationship with the candidate impressions themselves.

Table 7 Michigan U.S. President 1996					
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Sept 4-7, 1996	.67	.73	.53	.78	802
Oct 13-17	.63	.70	.53	.75	900
Oct 19-24	.70	.74	.58	.78	800
Oct 26-31	.65	.69	.57	.74	800

In Presidential contests, it appears that the minimal effects school may be fairly accurate in describing campaign effects as largely due to "activation" of pre-existing attitudes such as party identification. Party id tends to grow highly correlated with both the vote and with candidate impressions. Furthermore, when the party id component of candidate impressions is controlled for, partisanship *per se* tends to be a stronger independent driver of the vote than are candidate impressions.

Results: Subpresidential Races

The critical question is the degree to which these findings about Presidential campaign effects can be applied to subpresidential races — and the degree to which subpresidential campaigns are unique in the mix of effects they produce. It is possible that because statewide contests tend to feature lower profile candidates and less overall campaign activity than at the Presidential level, partisan activation could be extremely important for downballot races. In the face of relatively low information, voters may "revert" to partisanship in both forming opinions of the candidates and in making a vote choice. However, it is also quite possible that because the stakes are lower and the contest is closer to home, there is more openness to "learning" about the individual candidates, forming impressions of them based less on partisanship alone, and making vote decisions that are less closely tied to one's partisan predispositions.

Specifically, the ensuing examination attempts to answer four questions: (1) to what degree, and under what circumstances, do subpresidential campaigns increase or decrease party loyalty in voting; (2) to what degree do campaigns activate or suppress partisan identity as a component of candidate impressions; (3) to what degree are candidate impressions connected to the vote independently of partisan identity; and (4) how are all of these patterns over time different from patterns visible at the presidential level.

In the sixteen subpresidential contests examined, there tended to be little activation of direct party loyalty (in voting) over time. The typical pattern was for party id to begin the cycle with a substantial zero-order correlation with the vote (usually in the r=.50 to r=.60 range), and then remain flat or even decline over time. Party id seldom became substantially *more* correlated with the vote. This suggests that over time, subpresidential campaigns do more to decrease than increase party loyalty in voting; in most states, partisan defection is key to putting together a winning coalition.

That said, in most races the campaigns did succeed in *indirectly* activating party id, by making it more relevant to the candidate impressions. In nearly every race examined, the correlation between partisanship and candidate impressions grew much larger over time. A common pattern was for the earliest surveys to show a fairly weak link (r=.20s to r=.30s range) between party and impressions, with election eve surveys showing these correlations to be considerably higher. In no

instances did the connection between party and candidate impressions grow weaker over time. In other words, partisan identity did serve as a sort of cognitive schema which voters increasingly used to help them categorize their feelings about the competing candidates. Generally speaking, the longer the campaigns wore on, the stronger the connection between party id and candidate impressions.

This brings us to an important question: the relative importance of partisanship and candidate impressions as drivers of the vote. Even when the party id component of the candidate impressions was partialled out, in nearly every race, over time, the independent component of candidate impressions overtook party id as the strongest driver of the vote. This is quite different from the presidential races examined, where party almost always ended up more relevant to the vote than the independent effect of candidate impressions.

The four 1990 races provide an excellent illustration of these patterns, and I will later confirm these findings with the even more extensive data available in the later 1990s from other states. Table 8 shows that in these 1990 races, the direct connection between party id and vote choice was relatively modest (compared to what Table 2 showed to be the case for Presidential contests), and the size of this relationship tended to remain flat (or decline) as the campaigns wore on — even in the states with fairly wide windows of interviewing. The independent influence of candidate impressions, by contrast, gained strength over time in all four races. In three of the four races, candidate impressions ended up a much stronger independent vote driver than party id; in the fourth race, candidate impressions equaled the importance of party id. Even that fourth race (Indiana U.S. Senate) is notable for the kinds of changes in the electorate which the campaign period inspired, however. In February, party dwarfed candidate impressions in importance, r=.57 to r=.31. By election eve, the importance of party declined to r=.52 but candidate impressions climbed to r=.52. In other words, as time went by

	VT Governor		SD Governor		IL Governor		IN US Senate	
	Party ID	Impressions (Partial)	Party ID	Impressions (Partial)	Party ID	Impressions (Partial)	Party ID	Impressions (Partial)
February							.57	.31
May	.50	.54						
June							.63	.38
July			.40	.61				
August					.47	.48	.49	.42
Oct 10-15	.48	.55	.44	.60	.52	.60	.58	.48
Oct 16-18					.43	.60		
Oct 19-25	.51	.71			.50	.63	.55	.47
Oct 26-Nov 1			.38	.64	.50	.66	.52	.52

Table 8
1990 Races: Vote with Party Id (Pearson's r) and Candidate Impressions (partial, beyond party)

Party column is Pearson's r correlation between seven-point party id scale and vote. Impressions column is partial correlation between nine-point candidate impressions index and vote, controlling for party id. All coefficients significant at p<.01

in these races, the campaigns seemed to be doing little to increase the direct connection between voter partisanship and candidate choice. The campaigns wrought the biggest change in the electoral landscape by shaping impressions of the candidates that were themselves connected to the vote independently of partisanship.

Table 9 shows that in three of the four races, the campaigns did make some indirect activation of party id, as a shaper of candidate impressions. Voters did tend to use party to organize their feelings about the candidates to a greater degree on election eve than they did earlier in the year. Even in the states where the strength of this correlation increased over time, however, the coefficients tended to be remain much smaller than what was visible in Table 3 for Presidential contests.

Furthermore, despite this indirect activation of party id, the independent relationship of candidate impressions with vote choice ended up catching or surpassing the direct importance of party itself by election eve (Table 8).

Table 9				
1990 Subpresidential Races: Party Id with Candidate Impressions (Pearson's r)				
	VT Gov	SD Gov	IL Gov	IN USS
February				.20
May	.34			
June				.37
July		.25		
August			.22	.21
Oct 10-15	.32	.34	.40	.29
Oct 16-18			.37	
Oct 19-25	.34		.32	.28
Oct 26-Nov 1		.30	.37	.33

Table 10 confirms than in all four races, the amount of variance in the vote explained by party and candidate impressions together increased over time. The increase was smallest in South Dakota and largest in Illinois, Vermont, and Indiana. Interestingly, it was in these last three states where the importance of candidate impressions posted the largest increases relative to party id over time, suggesting that the increased independent relevance of candidate impressions was becoming more responsible for vote decisions than partisan activation. Campaigns seem to serve the important function of making voting decisions more firmly rooted in other

Table 10				
1990 Subpresidential Races: R-Sq of Party ID and Candidate Impressions Predicting Vote				
	VT Gov	SD Gov	IL Gov	IN USS
February				.39
May	.47			
June				.48
July		.47		
August			.40	.37
Oct 10-15	.46	.48	.52	.48
Oct 16-18			.48	
Oct 19-25	.63		.55	.45
Oct 26-Nov 1		.49	.58	.47

supporting perceptions. Early in the cycle, there tended to be considerable unexplained voting, caused by mismatches between candidate perceptions, party id, and candidate choice. Before exposure to campaign activity, many voters grounded their candidate choice in factors unrelated to either party or to impressions of the candidates themselves. Campaign activity tended to decrease these idiosyncrasies and increase voter consistency.

It should be noted, however, that even with these increases in explained vote, none of the 1990 election-eve R-squares comes close to the R-squares reported in Table 5. This seems to indicate that there is a fluidity to subpresidential races that is lacking at the Presidential level. In the latter, a voter's party and impressions of the candidates together account for nearly all of his vote choice — and this decision is pretty much locked up after Labor Day. In the former, there is still considerable room for change after Labor Day, and there is more room for still other considerations — beyond party and candidate impressions — to influence the vote. These other considerations could be partly random noise generated by low information; they could also include incumbent job performance, the appropriateness of each candidate's prior experience, or candidate issue positions — any of which may exert an influence on the vote which is independent of party or personal feelings about the candidates themselves. (Uncovering the relative strength of those other considerations is beyond the scope of the paper, but will be an avenue of future research.)

Results for the other subpresidential races examined are quite similar to what was evidenced in 1990, and I will now run through them in more or less chronological order. For each race, I will show a single table with four trends over time: overall explained variance in the vote, correlation of party id with the vote, partial correlation of candidate impressions with the vote, and the correlation of party id with candidate impressions themselves (the indirect relevance of partisanship).

The first of these races is the special election held in Pennsylvania in 1991 to fill the U.S. Senate seat opened by the death of John Heinz. Harris Wofford, a former university president who was appointed to the seat by Democratic Governor Bob Casey, was challenged by the well-known former Republican Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh. The relatively short campaign lasted from late summer until the first week of November. In those months, the direct relevance of party remained fairly flat before spiking upward in the closing days of the campaign. Candidate impressions themselves started out fairly strongly connected to the vote (independently of partisanship) and grew even more closely tied to the vote as the campaigns progressed. By election eve, the correlation of party with the vote ended at $r=.58$; the partial correlation of candidate impressions with the vote ended at $r=.69$ (almost Presidential range). The campaigns also substantially reduced the amount of unexplained voting, increasing the model R-sq. from .47 to

.65. The events that transpired seem to have helped voters make stronger and more consistent overall connections between party, candidate impressions, and the vote.

Interestingly, the biggest change over time was the connection of party id with candidate impressions. At the beginning of the campaign, Thornburgh was

			Table 11		
		Pennsylvania U.S. Senate Special Election 1991			
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
August	.47	.48	.57	.33	801
September	.54	.54	.60	.41	803
Oct 8-9	.55	.54	.61	.42	802
Oct 13-19	.59	.51	.67	.40	1052
Oct 20-26	.58	.51	.66	.43	901
Oct 27-28	.62	.49	.71	.41	602
Oct 29-31	.65	.58	.69	.52	752

fairly well-known and liked by voters of all partisan stripes. Wofford was virtually unknown. The Wofford campaign's strong emphasis on the health care issue seems to have signaled to Democrats that Wofford was "one of them;" Republicans and Democrats seem to have adjusted their feelings about the candidates accordingly. (Details about how Wofford did this is the subject of Blunt, Petrocik and Steeper, 1998.) What is interesting is that party id ended up correlated almost as strongly with the candidate impressions as with the vote. The chief activation of partisanship was indirect, rather than direct. Even given this enormous indirect activation of party id, however, the component of candidate impressions that was independent of partisanship ultimately proved a more powerful vote driver than partisanship itself.

There was a somewhat different pattern the next year in Missouri, when Democrat Geri Rothman-Serot challenged incumbent Republican U.S. Senator Kit Bond. Partisanship declined in strength as a direct vote driver, and changed very little over time as a shaper of candidate impressions. What *did* change considerably over time was the strength of candidate impressions as an independent driver of the vote; the partial correlation controlling for party id climbed from r=.55 in August to r=.71 on election eve.

			Table 12		
		Missouri U.S. Senate 1992			
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
June 92		.52	N/A	N/A	600
Aug 92	.54	.59	.55	.45	600
Sept 92	.51	.54	.56	.42	800
Oct 11-15	.54	.52	.67	.36	900
Oct 18-22	.55	.51	.63	.45	750
Oct 24-29	.64	.52	.71	.45	900

A similar pattern emerged in the same state two years later, when former Republican Governor John Ashcroft and Democratic Congressman Alan Wheat battled for the seat of retiring Senator Jack

Danforth. The first poll in the race was taken more than one full year prior to the election, and party id had a correlation with the vote of r=.54; after some slight wandering around, it would finish on election eve with exactly the same importance. Over the same period, the indirect importance of party as a shaper of candidate impressions increased only slightly (from r=.39 to r=.46) — but the independent importance of candidate impressions themselves climbed from a partial r=.46 to r=.68. In both of these Missouri U.S. Senate races, then, the campaigns activated voter partisanship to only a minor (and indirect) degree; their more important function was to build impressions of the candidates that were then connected to the vote independently of partisanship.

Table 13 Missouri U.S. Senate 1994					
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Oct 22-26, 1993	.44	.54	.46	.39	600
Aug 3-7, 1994	.48	.52	.54	.41	800
Sept 28-29	.53	.52	.60	.46	605
Oct 15-16	.59	.53	.66	.42	901
Oct 17-20	.63	.59	.66	.50	1049
Oct 23-27	.61	.53	.68	.46	1099
Oct 30-Nov 2	.61	.54	.68	.46	600

The same year, first term Republican Illinois Governor Jim Edgar was challenged by state comptroller Dawn Clark Netsch. In April, immediately following the primaries, the race was very close. However, after the full campaign, Edgar ended up winning by a wide margin in November. He achieved this result not by activating partisanship; the correlation between party id and the vote actually declined from r=.57 to r=.51, as Edgar's campaign built a strong bipartisan coalition. The indirect influence of partisanship, as a shaper of candidate impressions, increased only slightly (from r=.46 to r=.49). In the same time period, the independent importance of candidate impressions, shaped by campaign activity, climbed from a partial of

Table 14 Illinois Governor 1994					
Date	Model R sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Dec 93	.50	.52	.56	.35	800
Apr 7-12	.58	.57	.62	.46	800
June 19-24	.52	.52	.59	.44	800
Aug 25-28	.61	.57	.65	.51	801
Sept 20-21	.57	.48	.67	.38	601
Oct 2-4	.57	.53	.64	.48	583
Oct 12-13	.62	.56	.67	.47	605
Oct 16-20	.58	.55	.64	.49	913
Oct 23-27	.61	.53	.67	.48	805
Oct 30-Nov 6	.61	.51	.69	.49	1070

r=.62 to r=.69. The substance of Edgar's campaign focused on Netsch's past votes in the state senate, especially on crime, which appeared to be outside the mainstream of even Democratic Party opinion. These were contrasted with Edgar's record of achievement and more moderate-to-conservative positions on crime issues. In this manner, the campaign built impressions of the candidates which did more than activate partisan identity — and then connected these impressions to the vote independently of partisanship.

In the same state that year, Dupage County state's attorney (prosecutor) Jim Ryan and attorney Al Hofeld competed for the open Attorney General seat. For a downballot race, this one was very high profile: Hofeld spent millions of dollars of his own money on the campaign, and Ryan himself spent more than $2 million. The campaign focused on Ryan's experience as a prosecutor, Hofeld's experience as a trial lawyer, and which was more appropriate preparation for an attorney general. Hofeld also made an issue of Ryan's strong pro-life stance on abortion. As a result of this largely experience-oriented campaign, party declined considerably as a driver of the vote (from r=.54 to r=.45), while the independent importance of candidate impressions climbed from a partial r=.42 to r=.58. By election eve, partisanship exerted almost no (r=.27) indirect influence on candidate evaluations. It appears that the campaign's focus on experience and the abortion issue had the effect of sorting voters out according to their beliefs about those issues and how those issues (not party) made them feel about the candidates.

			Impressions		
	Model R	Party ID	with Vote:	Party with	N of
Date	sq	with Vote	Partial	Impressions	cases
Aug 25-28	.41	.54	.42	.20	801
Oct 2-4	.40	.50	.45	.22	583
Oct 12-13	.42	.47	.51	.20	605
Oct 16-20	.43	.44	.54	.18	913
Oct 23-27	.44	.46	.54	.28	805
Oct 30-Nov 6	.46	.45	.58	.27	1070

Table 15
Illinois Attorney General 1994

Four years later in Illinois, a similar pattern emerged in the Governor's race. Jim Edgar retired, and Republican Secretary of State George Ryan competed with Democratic Congressman Glen Poshard to replace him. The campaign dialogue focused on Poshard's staunch opposition to gun control, a brewing driver's license scandal which had occurred during Ryan's tenure in the Secretary of State's office, and the appropriateness of each candidate's pervious experience. In the year preceding the election, the direct relevance of party id to the vote started and finished at almost exactly the same point; it plunged sharply in late July, at the peak of Ryan's gun control attack on Poshard, but then slowly climbed back to roughly the same level where it had been (r=.52). Similarly, party id was slow to exercise much influence over candidate impressions until well after Labor Day; this correlation climbed as high as r=.41 by election eve, but not as high as the r=.49 evidenced in the same race four years earlier. Where the 1998 race most closely

resembled the 1994 race was the degree to which candidate impressions became connected to the vote independently of partisanship: from a partial r=.34 one year out to r=.66 on election eve.

Table 16 Illinois Governor 1998					
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Oct 97	.32	.48	.34	.19	800
Mar 25-30	.45	.53	.48	.27	800
July 7-10	.42	.51	.46	.28	800
July 24-26	.46	.38	.61	.19	500
Aug 7-9	.46	.43	.59	.16	500
Aug 27-30	.44	.44	.56	.25	800
Sept 24-27	.47	.49	.55	.33	600
Oct 6-8	.53	.47	.64	.30	600
Oct 11-15	.57	.49	.66	.36	930
Oct 18-22	.55	.48	.64	.38	880
Oct 25-29	.55	.49	.64	.38	877
Oct 31-Nov 1	.59	.52	.66	.41	413

In the same state that year, Republican Peter Fitzgerald challenged incumbent Democratic U.S. Senator Carol Moseley-Braun in a race that was oriented around more traditional partisan issues. This race did activate partisanship to a substantial degree – increasing its correlation with the vote from r=.54 one year out to r=.67 in the final week of October (it did slip to r=.60 in the final two days, but this was a small sample). At the same time, however, the independent influence of candidate impressions on the vote grew from a partial r=.55 to a very high r=.75 on election eve. Interestingly, however, between the March primary and election eve, party id grew little in its impact on candidate impressions.

Table 17 Illinois U.S. Senator 1998					
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Oct 97	.51	.54	.55	.37	800
Mar 25-30	.63	.67	.57	.55	800
July 7-10	.56	.61	.56	.45	800
Sept 24-27	.65	.70	.56	.59	600
Oct 11-15	.68	.68	.66	.55	930
Oct 18-22	.63	.61	.65	.52	880
Oct 25-29	.70	.67	.67	.60	877
Oct 31-Nov 1	.72	.60	.75	.57	413

Jim Ryan faced only token opposition in his 1998 reelection bid for Attorney General, from Democrat Miriam Santos. Ryan's recent (very successful) bout with cancer had left him with substantial favorable ratings statewide. Santos engaged in almost no discernable campaign activity, leaving Ryan free to focus on his accomplishments as Attorney General; he ended up winning a landslide victory. Over the eleven months preceding the election, partisanship held steady or declined in importance as a vote driver. Not surprisingly, even though partisanship did exert some additional influence on candidate impressions (more than in January, and more than during the previous election) the independent influence of candidate impressions as a vote driver climbed markedly (from a partial of r=.34 to r=.49).

| | | | Impressions | | |
| | Model R | Party ID | with Vote: | Party with | N of |
Date	sq	with Vote	Partial	Impressions	cases
		Table 18			
		Illinois Attorney General 1998			
Jan 15-19	.43	.60	.34	.21	800
July 7-10	.38	.52	.40	.21	800
Oct 11-15	.43	.55	.42	.29	930
Oct 18-22	.44	.55	.45	.30	880
Oct 25-29	.47	.59	.43	.31	877
Oct 31-Nov 1	.45	.53	.49	.35	413

Back in Missouri, Senator Kit Bond was challenged that year by Democratic Attorney General Jay Nixon. In the nearly two years preceding the election, the campaigns made party id only slightly more relevant to the vote. All of the partisan activation was indirect, as a shaper of candidate impressions (climbing from r=.28 in January, 1997 to r=.45 on election eve). Even so, the candidate impressions grew to exert a very large independent influence on the vote; the partial on election eve was r=.62, up from r=.43 in the previous January.

| | | | Impressions | | |
| | Model R- | Party ID | with Vote: | Party with | N of |
Date	sq	with Vote	Partial	Impressions	cases
		Table 19			
		Missouri U.S. Senate 1998			
Jan 97	.41	.53	.43	.28	800
Jan 98	.49	.58	.48	.30	947
June 22	.42	.40	.56	.30	809
July 23-26	.44	.46	.54	.26	700
Sept 22-23	.56	.54	.62	.44	600
Oct 6-10	.61	.61	.61	.42	600
Oct 11-17	.58	.57	.61	.46	1101
Oct 18-22	.56	.56	.60	.44	1054
Oct 25-29	.58	.56	.62	.45	878

In Nevada, Bond's Democratic colleague Harry Reid faced a stiff challenge from Republican Congressman John Ensign; Reid ended up winning by only a few hundred votes. Over the course of the year preceding the election, the campaigns activated voter partisanship to only a small additional direct degree (from r=.63 to r=.64). While the relevance of party for candidate impressions did climb from r=.44 to r=.59, the independent influence of candidate impressions ended up an even stronger vote driver (partial r=.68) than party itself.

| | | | Impressions | | |
| | Model R- | Party ID | with Vote: | Party with | N of |
Date	sq	with Vote	Partial	Impressions	cases
	Table 20				
	Nevada U.S. Senate 1998				
Nov 14-18 1997	.53	.63	.46	.44	800
May 27-31	.62	.68	.54	.48	1000
Sept 3-10	.56	.57	.60	.48	802
Oct 10-13	.65	.65	.63	.58	725
Oct 21-23	.68	.64	.68	.59	726

That year's Nevada gubernatorial race evidenced a similar pattern. Democratic Las Vegas Mayor Jan Jones and Republican businessman Kenny Guinn competed for the open seat. The race focused more on Guinn's experience in business and Jones's mayoral performance than on strictly partisan issues. As a result, party id declined as a vote driver, from r=.58 in May to r=.51 at the end of October. Over the same time period, the independent effect of candidate impressions climbed from a partial r=.51 to r=.71.

| | | | Impressions | | |
| | Model R- | Party ID | with Vote: | Party with | N of |
Date	sq	with Vote	Partial	Impressions	cases
	Table 21				
	Nevada Governor 1998				
May 27-31	.51	.58	.51	.29	1000
July 9-12	.53	.56	.56	.32	700
Sept 3-10	.55	.45	.66	.37	802
Oct 10-13	.66	.53	.72	.48	725
Oct 21-23	.63	.51	.71	.47	726

Immediately after the 1998 election, Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan announced that he would challenge Senator John Ashcroft in the 2000 U.S. Senate race. Of all the subpresidential contests discussed, this one most closely approximates the high profile of a Presidential election. Both men enjoyed near-universal name identification from the start, and both enjoyed the strong backing of their respective parties. A poll taken in early 1999, nearly two years before the election, showed correlations of r=.69 between party id and the vote, r=.50 between party id and candidate impressions, and a partial r=.48 between candidate impressions and the vote. As Table 22 shows, however, all the campaign activity

that ensued did not manage to further activate partisanship as a direct driver of the vote. Even the indirect importance of party id (as a driver of candidate impressions) largely held steady over the next year and a half. The independent importance of candidate impressions, meanwhile, climbed to a partial r=.61 in early September of 2000 and held that level through the next month.

Then, on the night of October16th, Governor Carnahan died suddenly in a plane crash. Though the degree of party voting held steady, almost overnight the importance of candidate impressions dropped from a partial r=.59 to r=.48. Whereas before his death opinions of Governor Carnahan were mixed, after the accident reported opinions of him were overwhelmingly favorable. Because many of those reporting a favorable opinion of the late Governor were still not voting for him, the correlation between candidate impressions and vote grew weaker. Interestingly, however, in the closing two weeks of the campaign these correlations again crept upward. Voters seemed to be moving beyond the shock of the Governor's sudden death and were prepared to connect their various attitudes in a manner more similar to where they were before October 16th.

In the end, the overall pattern of voter perceptions in this race again resembled a presidential contest: large amounts of variance explained from start to finish, a large and little-changed correlation between partisanship and vote, some indirect activation of party id as a shaper of candidate impressions, and candidate impressions slightly less important than party id as an independent vote driver.

| | | | Table 22 | | |
| | | | Missouri U.S. Senate 2000 | | |
Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Feb-99	.60	.69	.48	.50	800
Feb-00	.54	.62	.50	.49	801
May	.49	.61	.44	.42	804
July	.56	.64	.51	.48	601
Aug 20-24	.54	.60	.54	.53	750
Aug 27-31	.57	.61	.56	.50	750
Sept 5-7	.54	.64	.49	.49	450
Sept 10-14	.59	.59	.61	.51	752
Sept 17-21	.63	.63	.62	.49	750
Sept 24-28	.60	.62	.60	.54	750
Oct 1-5	.59	.60	.60	.54	750
Oct 8-12, 15-16	.61	.63	.59	.55	1050
Oct 17-19	.54	.64	.48	.59	450
Oct 22-26	.62	.66	.57	.59	799
Oct 29-Nov 2	.62	.66	.57	.62	750

Conclusions

Much of the previous campaign effects literature has focused on Presidential races, in large part because of data availability. My own Presidential data confirm much of the previous research about partisan activation: party id plays an enormous role in driving presidential votes, this role tends to grow stronger over time as the campaigns progress, and the impact of partisanship consistently outstrips the independent effects of candidate impressions. These findings suggest that one of the chief roles of Presidential campaigns is to mobilize partisans and connect their existing feelings about the party with their eventual Presidential vote choice. While Presidential campaigns do build impressions of the candidates which are connected to vote choice independently of partisanship, party id remains responsible for an enormous portion of the Presidential candidate impressions. Furthermore, only in rare instances (such as in the Independent-minded state of Maine) does the independent impact of Presidential candidate impressions surpass the importance of party id in driving the vote.

It has heretofore been difficult to determine the degree to which subpresidential races resemble Presidential contests. My own analysis suggests that because the stakes are lower in subpresidential races and the contests are closer to home, voters appear to be more open to "learning" about the individual candidates, forming independent impressions of them, and making vote decisions that are less closely tied to one's partisan predispositions. It appears that the campaign-inspired dynamics at work in subpresidential voting behavior can differ substantially from the prevailing wisdom about campaign effects at the Presidential level.

In the sixteen subpresidential contests examined, there tended to be little direct activation of party id over time — even when the data window stretched back more than one full year before the election. The typical pattern was for party id to begin the cycle with a substantial zero-order correlation with the vote (but weaker than in Presidential contests), and then remain flat or even decline over time. Party id seldom became substantially *more* correlated with the vote. This suggests that subpresidential campaigns do not activate party loyalty in voting to the same degree that presidential campaigns do. Given that in most states it is necessary to win some partisan defectors in order to build a winning coalition, it is not surprising to see these coefficients decline somewhat over time. Importantly, it appears that voters in subpresidential elections are not simply "reverting" to partisanship in the face of low information. In many cases, candidates broadcast messages which were notably non-partisan or designed specifically to appeal to the opposing side's base. Voters seem to have responded to these messages as would be expected, with increased partisan defection, evidenced by weaker correlations between party id and vote choice.

That said, in most races the campaigns did succeed in *indirectly* activating party id, by making it more relevant to the candidate impressions. In nearly every race

examined, the correlation between partisanship and candidate impressions grew much larger over time. In no instances did the connection between party and candidate impressions grow weaker over time. This suggests that as voters learned more about the candidates, they tended to use partisan identification as a cognitive schema to help array their impressions of those candidates. In no case, however, was the connection between party id and candidate impressions as strong as it was for Presidential contests. It appears that in subpresidential contests, campaigns have the ability to break through the partisan barriers that exist at the presidential level, and build impressions of candidates which are not as closely tied up in partisanship as they are at the top of the ticket.

As an important further indication of this phenomenon, when the party id component of the candidate impressions is partialled out, the independent portion of the candidate impressions overtook party id as the strongest driver of the election eve vote in nearly every race. This is quite different from the presidential races examined, where party almost always ended up more relevant to the vote than the independent effect of candidate impressions. My research suggests that at the state level, campaigns do more than merely activate party voting. Campaigns build impressions of candidates that, while based to some degree on partisanship, impact the vote in a manner which is independent of partisanship.

Campaigns also serve the important function of making voters more consistent in their choices. In nearly every race examined, early in the cycle, partisanship and candidate impressions explained a relatively modest proportion of vote preference. In other words, a relatively large number of people were making trial heat choices that could not be accounted for by their partisanship or feelings about the candidates. Though many voters may have had their own internally consistent (if idiosyncratic) reasons for making the choices they did at that time, these choices were often not rooted in partisan preference or candidate impressions. In nearly every instance, campaign activity made the electorate considerably more likely to link trial heat vote choice with informed favorable and unfavorable opinions about the contending candidates. The explained variance in voting tended to increase substantially over time, and candidate perceptions were responsible for most of the increase. An electorate which collectively connects informed perceptions about candidates with votes for candidates to a strong degree seems inherently different from an electorate which chooses candidates with substantially less regard for impressions of those same candidates. The former has become collectively responsible in making coherent and rational connections between various preferences; the latter is more a collection of individual voters, each making largely idiosyncratic decisions about whom to support. My analysis demonstrates the manner and degree to which subpresidential campaign activity helps assemble, shape, and bring about that more responsible electorate.

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Endnotes

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[1] I am grateful to Mr. Fred Steeper, principal of Market Strategies, for his permission to use these data. In the interest of full disclosure, I have been an employee of Mr. Steeper and Market Strategies for several years, and was personally involved in much of the original management of this research. Any errors remain my own. Out of sensitivity to Mr. Steeper's clients who are still active in politics, I have focused the analysis on relationships between variables and deliberately excluded discussion of hard marginal results.

[2] The direction is arbitrary, but it makes sense to code each variable as a continuum running from left to right. It is therefore natural to put pro-Democratic attitudes consistently at the far left (smaller numbers) and pro-Republican attitudes consistently at the far right (larger numbers).

[3] "I am going to read a list of people whose names have been in the news. For each one, please tell me if you are aware of not aware of that person. (If aware, ask:) Is your general impression of that person favorable or unfavorable? (If favorable/unfavorable, ask:) Would that be very favorable/unfavorable or just somewhat favorable/unfavorable?"

[4] The questionnaire always asked candidate impressions very early in the interview, always randomized the candidate names, and did not supply party affiliation or other cues along with the names. The trial heat vote choice was always asked very soon after the candidate impression questions. In the trial heat, candidate names were always randomized and party affiliations always attached to the names.

[5] This assumes that candidate impressions do not exert any influence over party id. It is conceivable that some survey respondents identified themselves as Democrats or Republicans because of their feelings about the Presidential candidates, but a long political science literature suggests that the influence flows overwhelmingly in the opposite direction. Sorting out the degree to which candidate evaluations influence party id is beyond the scope of this paper, and is a task for someone with access to panel data.