Using the Local News: Campaigns, Newspapers, and Accountability

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Using the Local News: Campaigns, Newspapers, and Accountability

Abstract
The steep decline of local newspapers in recent years represents a major shift in the media environment that may be detrimental to political accountability and knowledge. I argue that despite these seismic changes in the marketplace for news, local newspapers remain critical to American politics. Local newspapers inform and empower voters, but are subject to influence and distortion by campaigns. I establish the importance of local newspapers by testing for differences in political knowledge between readers of local and national newspapers. Using the National Annenberg Election Survey, I obtain accurate measures of newspaper readership, knowledge of national politics, and familiarity with local politics. I find that reading a national newspaper makes people better informed about national politics, but reading a local newspaper increases knowledge about local politics and equips citizens to hold incumbents accountable through their votes. Given the importance of newspapers to voters’ decisions, I expect campaigns to seek earned coverage at every opportunity. Campaigns establish a regional presence and conduct newsworthy events, allowing them to cultivate relationships with reporters and earn coverage more easily. I use an original dataset of local newspaper coverage in three elections to demonstrate that local newspapers in areas where campaigns invest resources publish approximately 20% more stories on those elections, a finding that passes placebo tests and robustness checks. Finally, I examine whether campaigns can earn positive news coverage. I performed a content analysis on 304 articles from a matched pairs design of Florida newspapers in the 2004 and 2008 elections. I find that regional campaign presence generates positive earned media, but only in smaller newspapers. When campaign organization is present in an area with a resource-poor newspaper, the campaign receives approximately four times as many positive stories (and stories containing positive quotes) as when it ignores similar areas with a small newspaper. I conclude that local newspapers matter in elections, but recent changes in the media marketplace are reducing their effectiveness and opening them up to manipulation by strategic campaigns. Local newspapers must figure out ways to maintain their autonomy and usefulness in their uncertain future.

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USING THE LOCAL NEWS:
CAMPAIGNS, NEWSPAPERS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Joshua P. Darr

A DISSERTATION
in
Political Science
Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
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DEDICATION

To Marie
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ABSTRACT

USING THE LOCAL NEWS:
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Joshua P. Darr
Matthew S. Levendusky

The steep decline of local newspapers in recent years represents a major shift in the media environment that may be detrimental to political accountability and knowledge. I argue that despite these seismic changes in the marketplace for news, local newspapers remain critical to American politics. Local newspapers inform and empower voters, but are subject to influence and distortion by campaigns. I establish the importance of local newspapers by testing for differences in political knowledge between readers of local and national newspapers. Using the National Annenberg Election Survey, I obtain accurate measures of newspaper readership, knowledge of national politics, and familiarity with local politics. I find that reading a national newspaper makes people better informed about national politics, but reading a local newspaper increases knowledge about local politics and equips citizens to hold incumbents accountable through their votes. Given the importance of newspapers to voters’ decisions, I expect campaigns to seek earned coverage at every opportunity. Campaigns establish a regional presence and conduct newsworthy events, allowing them to cultivate relationships with reporters and earn coverage more easily. I use an original dataset of local newspaper coverage in three
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Chapter 1

Introduction: “A Vibrant, Thriving Free Press”?

America’s oldest continuously published newspaper—Connecticut’s *Hartford Courant*—celebrated its 250th anniversary on October 20, 2014. To mark the occasion, President Barack Obama sent a personal note of congratulations. Recognizing the significance of honoring a newspaper older than the First Amendment, the President used his note to extol the important role local media play in American democracy. Newspapers such as the *Courant*, he declared, ensure that “all our people can make their voices heard and access the information they need” (Obama, 2014).

These democratic functions remain as important as ever, but local news sources are struggling to fulfill them. As consumers turn towards television, radio, and online news—or away from political news entirely—newspapers can barely stay afloat, despite their well-deserved reputation as the best source of local political information (Druckman, 2005; Hayes & Lawless, 2015). The *Courant* fired over 66% of its staff between 1994 and 2009 (Gosselin, 2011), an all-too-common move in light of the steep cuts local newspapers made across the country. For the first time in its 250-year history the *Courant*, and local newspapers like it, must confront the possibility that the days of traditional print news are numbered.

Obama alludes to the “rapidly changing media landscape” that today’s local newspapers face, but does not mention how his own behavior demonstrates the impact of those changes. Obama has given only two interviews to local newspapers during his
presidency: one with the *Virginian-Pilot* of Norfolk, Virginia; and one with the *Des Moines Register* (in 2012) that was intended to stay off the record (Farhi, 2013). For America’s most prominent national politician, television and the internet provide a more effective media platform in the digital age.

The conflicting messages sent by the President’s words and actions suggest an important question for scholars of American politics and political communication: are local newspapers still relevant to American politics? Alternative sources of news and entertainment have never been more plentiful, and they convey political perspectives that reflect nearly every ideology and issue position. Newspapers will be less capable of thorough political reporting if their revenue and resources continue to plummet. The local press may lose its democratic usefulness if politicians cease to respect and fear newspapers’ ability to inform their constituents.

**Politicians, campaigns, and local newspapers**

I argue that despite these seismic changes in the marketplace for news, local newspapers remain a critical force in American politics. Elected officials, candidates, and voters interact with local newspapers to construct the information that voters need to ensure the nation’s continued democratic health. In his statement regarding the *Courant*, the President asserted that the free press is a “crucial … cornerstone of the democracy we know today” and that newspapers “[tell] stories that need to be told and make sense of events that might at first seem beyond comprehension” (Obama, 2014). These stories and events are particularly important during elections, when voters rely on the information
closest and most easily available to them to decide the political fate of their elected officials. Political knowledge in elections is constructed through citizens’ exposure to politicians, their campaigns, and the news sources tasked with holding them accountable.

Politicians. The actions and inaction of local newspapers affect campaigns and politicians in meaningful ways. In the vast majority of elections in America, this process takes place locally, making local newspapers a crucial mechanism of democratic accountability. Newspapers should help voters make sense of their options, give candidates’ arguments credibility, and hold politicians accountable for their behavior in office. Ideally, these news sources should inform voters about their incumbent and non-incumbent candidates and campaigns in an election (deVreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Jerit, Barabas, and Bolser, 2006). It is difficult for constituents to learn of politicians’ conduct in office unless a dedicated reporter functions as a “watchdog” or “burglar alarm” (Zaller, 2010). The consequences of insufficient coverage can be normatively disconcerting. When local newspapers fail, politicians operate with less oversight, campaigns alter their messaging strategies, and voters know less.

Without a watchdog, graft and corruption can spiral out of control. Bell, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, lost its only community newspaper in 1998. The town, along with 88 other municipalities and a total of 10 million Americans, relied upon the Los Angeles Times as its main newspaper, (Folkenflik, 2010). No reporters were dedicated to Bell’s city hall from 1998 to 2010. During that period the salary of town manager Robert Rizzo skyrocketed to $300,000 in 2004 and $787,637 in 2010, nearly double the salary of the president of the United States. The police chief in the town, Randy Adams, was also earning $457,000 per year—50% more than the Los Angeles
police chief or the county sheriff (Gottlieb & Vives, 2010). Rizzo was appointed in 1993, seventeen years before the *Los Angeles Times* investigation resulted in 53 felony counts against Bell’s city manager.

When newspapers do inform voters about the actions of their politicians, they influence voters’ decisions and the activities of elected officials. The *Post and Courier* of Charleston, South Carolina, ran a series of articles this year about the state’s deeply flawed domestic violence policy. During the past decade, over three hundred South Carolina women were killed by their husbands or boyfriends. The five-part investigative series described how the state’s loose gun laws and lack of resources for domestic violence victims bore substantial blame, spurring a conversation about potential changes (Hawes et al., 2014). Local reporting on government failures put this issue on the agenda.

In the months since the *Post and Courier*’s report appeared, Governor Nikki Haley has appointed a special commission to re-examine the state’s domestic violence policy with the directive to “take the statewide epidemic personally” (Roldan, 2015). Additionally, Republican State Senator Larry Pickens is pushing a bill that would ban domestic abusers from owning a firearm for a decade—an action that is currently enjoying support from over 60% of the state in opinion polling (Smith, 2015). In such a deeply Republican state, one rarely sees strong support for any form of gun control. Local newspaper reporting forced the hand of Republican state senators by conveying the threat that they might face electoral consequences if they did not act.

**Campaigns.** Elections provide opportunities for Americans to replace their representatives or reward incumbents for their performance in office, and local newspapers can provide the information that citizens need to make those decisions.
Politicians and their campaign organizations try to influence their coverage in the media when possible in order to distract reporters from negative stories or use media coverage to persuade potential supporters. Campaigns seek to persuade and activate voters to go to the polls to vote for their candidates, while the local press tries to attract readers and subscription dollars. Each entity wants to provide its intended audience with locally framed, engaging content.

This process also informs voters, who should use the knowledge they gain from direct campaign contact and mediated information from their choice of news to make their decisions in elections. Local newspapers provide context and help voters make sense of the information put forth by campaigns, but news is not independent of campaign influence. Understanding the extent to which campaigns can influence their news coverage is crucial because the quality of information available to voters should directly impact election outcomes.

As local newspapers lose the resources to do their jobs well, crucial political information can slip through the cracks. The *Flint Journal* of Flint, Michigan, was forced to reduce its publication to four days a week in 2010 (Raymer, 2010). Like seemingly everything else in Flint, the local newspaper was losing revenue, making it more difficult to provide quality political coverage. Their troubles became apparent in 2013 when the *Journal* published on Wednesday, November 7th—the day after Election Day—that Wantwaz Davis, one of the victorious city council candidates, had served nineteen years in prison after pleading guilty to a charge of second-degree murder. “We reported it the same day we discovered it. However, we did not inform voters … of that information before they went to the polls on Tuesday,” the *Journal*’s news director wrote (Raymer,
2013). Whether or not Davis’ conviction would have (or should have) influenced voters, this information was certainly newsworthy.

Candidates for local office are not the only politicians with incentives to earn positive local news coverage. Presidential campaigns possess the most resources, employees, and volunteers to devote to influencing the press. For example, in preparation for the presidential debates in 2012, the Mitt Romney and Barack Obama campaigns worked for weeks to create content with the goal of influencing media perceptions in real time. Communications staffers deployed timely and contextually appropriate messages on social media to shape how journalists interpreted what they were seeing (Uberti, 2014).

Campaign news emerges from the interaction between campaign staffers and the media, and we should expect campaigns to steer those conversations in their favor whenever possible.

The same dynamics that play out on the national communications stage occur on the local level, even for national campaigns. In Iowa, traditionally home to the first nomination contest for presidential candidates, local radio hosts act as gatekeepers. Candidates traveling through the state cannot ignore these local media figures, lest they be labeled “gutless” (Weigel, 2015). A strong local media creates incentives to attract candidates who might otherwise wish to avoid media attention. As radio host Steve Deace puts it, “I have everything a candidate would want: access to an audience of people that they need to communicate to” (Weigel, 2015). When local news sources are relevant, campaigns are forced to reckon with them and adjust their strategies accordingly.

The political role of local news stands at a crossroads. Presidential candidates must talk to local reporters in areas where they need votes, but the president himself feels
no need to grant them interviews. Some local newspapers are proving their political impact through their in-depth reporting, while others demonstrate the extent of their failures through the consequences of their inability to cover politics as they once did. Voters are left without viable alternatives for quality news about their local representatives, possibly encouraging them to turn to the plentiful national, partisan, or entertainment options instead. In today’s “rapidly changing media landscape,” which is endangering even America’s oldest newspaper, these concerns raise a question for scholars of political communication: How relevant are local newspapers to today’s elections and political campaigns?

**Overview of the dissertation**

In this dissertation, I explore the role of local newspapers in recent elections and the ways in which campaigns have influenced their coverage. Local newspapers provide valuable political knowledge that cannot easily be replaced by non-local sources. Campaigns recognize the importance of local newspapers and try to influence their coverage, strategically interacting with local newspapers by establishing a local presence. These investments cultivate locally framed events, quotes, and political participation that reduce the cost of political reporting and increase the chances that newspapers will publish positive stories about them.

Chapter 2 introduces the fundamental concepts and theory that ground the rest of the dissertation. I outline and clarify definitions of local news, campaign presence, and local political learning—the major components of my theory. I provide details to support
an overarching theme of my analysis: the decline of local newspapers in America. I also discuss recent changes in campaign strategy and voter habits. With this background established, I briefly identify the presuppositions that provide the basis of the theoretical frameworks outlined in greater detail in each empirical chapter.

In Chapter 3, I test whether reading a local newspaper increases voter knowledge about local elections, as compared with reading a national newspaper. Using the National Annenberg Election Survey, I obtain accurate measures of newspaper readership, knowledge of national politics, and knowledge of local elections. I show that readers of national newspapers know more about national politics, while readers of local newspapers are better informed about local elections—even though national newspapers readers are better educated, wealthier, and more interested in politics. I also show that reading a local newspaper helps citizens hold their elected officials accountable with their votes. The local press is an essential means of informing voters about local elections, and national political news is not an acceptable substitute.

These results raise a related question: can campaigns influence what newspapers publish—and should their influence concern us? If local newspapers matter as much as the conclusions of the previous chapter suggest, campaign control over that content is normatively troubling. Chapter 4 explores whether campaigns influence the amount of coverage they receive in local newspapers when they establish a local presence. Using original nationwide datasets from three election cycles (2004, 2008, and 2012), I compare campaign coverage in areas with and without a campaign presence. I find that where candidates make an investment, they receive more attention from the press. Using
robustness checks and placebo tests, I show that this effect is not simply a function of sample or selection bias.

Campaigns can influence the amount of coverage they receive; can they also affect the shape and tone of that coverage? In Chapter 5, I examine whether campaigns are capable of earning more positive coverage—a quantity arguably more valuable to their electoral goals than the mere amount of coverage. I employ an original dataset of newspaper content and campaign investment from the 2004 and 2008 elections. I utilize a within-state matched pairs design of newspapers from the state of Florida, matching on county-level partisanship and newspaper circulation size while varying regional campaign presence. Using a detailed content analysis of twenty-one randomly selected days in each election cycle, I code the tone and construction of over three hundred campaign stories. I find that a regional campaign presence generates positive earned media, but only in smaller newspapers. Newspapers with fewer reporting resources are more susceptible to campaign influence, and thus more likely to provide them with positive earned media.

Chapter 6 describes limitations and directions for future research and discusses the implications of my findings for campaigns, local newspapers, and the future of their coexistence. Local newspapers matter in elections, but the changes taking place in the media marketplace are reducing their effectiveness and opening them up to manipulation by strategic campaigns. Campaigns are likely to increase their wealth and power in the near future. Local newspapers and those who care about them must determine how to maintain their autonomy and usefulness in uncertain times ahead.
Chapter 2
Creating Campaign News in a Local Context

Advancements in technology and strategy are changing the way local newspapers, campaigns, and voters interact. Over the past two decades, the political news media have fractured into innumerable organizations and points of view. Historically interesting elections and relaxed campaign finance laws propelled campaign spending to unprecedented heights. Americans still want local news, but their newspapers cannot report on politics as thoroughly and independently as they once did.

In this chapter, I describe a theory of the influence of local media and campaigns on what voters know about American elections. I explore how upheavals in media and campaigns over the past twenty years have affected local newspapers, campaign strategies, and the news habits and preferences of voters. Finally, I briefly outline the theoretical framework of this dissertation, which is supplemented by more detailed theory sections in each of the individual empirical chapters. Local news coverage of elections informs voters about their options, and campaigns exploit resource disparities to shape that coverage.

Defining “local”: Media, campaigns, and knowledge
An entity described as “local” is focused on a particular area or community and is defined by its geographic situation. Local could refer to the intended audience, subject matter, or implied scope of an action. In this section, I apply the concept of “local” to media,
campaigns, and political knowledge to establish working definitions of the foci of my
analysis and to generate testable predictions from a theoretical framework.

**Media.** Local news sources concentrate their reporting on a distinct, regional
market, and target their content at the particular interests of Americans in that market. A
strictly local focus helps newspapers produce specialized regional news that businesses
and customers will support financially. Newspapers played an historical role in creating a
sense of shared community in proximate cities and towns by constructing a local market
around common geographic interests (Kaniss, 1991). This strategy made it more
attractive for local merchants to pay for newspaper advertisements, while attracting
customers in a broader regional market (Kaniss, 1991). It is not only easier, but also more
profitable, for local newspapers to concentrate the scope of their coverage to a limited
geographic area.

National newspapers, by contrast, are not subject to regional constraints. I define
national newspapers as those that publish a national edition and report about politics with
a national perspective. The *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, and
*USA Today* sell national editions on the strength of their reputations for quality
journalism about national affairs. The internet has provided broadly relevant news
sources with a distinct advantage by significantly lowering the cost of disseminating
news over large distances (Waldfogel & George, 2006). Printing and distributing a
newspaper nationally requires significant production costs that online distribution does
not. Technological change has enabled all Americans to access quality national
newspapers, but it has not expanded the potential market for local news sources (Stynes,
2013). As consumers encounter more options for print news, some will decide that they prefer national newspapers to their local ones (Waldfogel & George, 2006).

In local and national newspapers alike, editorial decisions about what political news to report and publish are driven by economics as well as standards of newsworthiness. For example, a newspaper’s partisan slant reflects the partisan composition of its surroundings in order to attract readers (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). In large markets with many communities, political news from individual areas is often ignored in favor of stories affecting the entire region (Snyder & Stromberg, 2010). The corruption scandal in Bell, California (a small town in the Los Angeles media market) illustrates the dangerous consequences of this tendency (see Chapter 1). Newspaper owners and editors seek to circulate to their entire district, but they must make strategic choices about the scope and focus of coverage.

**Campaigns.** Campaigns will personally contact voters at the local level if they can afford to do so. When campaign workers knock on doors and make quality phone calls to potential supporters, citizens are more likely to go to the polls (Gerber & Green, 2000; Mann & Klofstad, 2015). A local investment in campaign staff, an office for volunteers to assemble, or paid canvassers in an area can make conducting these valuable activities easier (Masket, 2009). Some campaigns—school board elections, mayoral and city council contests—are inherently local because they occur within compact districts. In larger elections—senatorial, gubernatorial, or presidential—campaigns have greater resources and selectively invest in different areas. House elections (which I investigate in Chapter 3) fall somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, because they are the most local
election with significance for national politics. Any campaign can create a local presence by deciding to invest time and effort in a particular area.

I refer to these durable local investments as a “campaign presence” in an area. A local campaign presence coordinates voter-level data and voter contact (Darr & Levendusky, 2014). Staffers assigned to a location conduct training sessions there, keep track of data, and engage with the community to recruit local volunteers. Campaigns invest in building regional capacity because local volunteers are more effective than outsiders at get-out-the-vote activities than outsiders (Sinclair, McConnell & Michelson, 2013). Campaign staff must organize and interpret real-time data on volunteer capacity and the status of persuadable voters at the local level (Issenberg, 2012a).

In practice, the voter outreach of national campaigns emerges from a coalition of local campaign operations (Issenberg, 2012a). Strategic campaigns will invest in some areas and ignore others according to their available resources and the type of voters they want to attract (Darr & Levendusky, 2014). Presidential campaigns enjoy not only the most money and employees, but also the widest range of geographic possibilities. Only a select set of states (“battleground states”) receive investments of campaign resources. Within those states, some areas contain more reliable supporters and volunteers, while others contain persuadable voters who could benefit from local contact (Demissie, 2012; Cho & Gimpel, 2010). Bigger and better data on voters’ histories, preferences, and activities can help campaigns decide where their investments will be rewarded (Issenberg, 2012a). Data alone is not enough to improve a candidate’s chances: effective voter mobilization should be “a perfect blend of the technological and the concrete,” and that usually requires a local presence (Surowiecki, 2012).
Campaigns’ efforts to stimulate their vote totals can bring more people into the process and make them better informed (Geer, 2006). A critical campaign task is identifying reliable supporters, those who might be persuaded, and those who will not vote for the candidate under any circumstances. Once these types of voters are identified, campaigns assemble contact strategies tailored to each group: reminding reliable supporters to vote; crafting specific messages aimed at “persuadables” (Hillygus & Shields, 2008); and ideally ignoring their opponent’s supporters when possible. Even advertising, which is broadcast on stations or websites that anyone can view, is being tailored to specific niche audiences (Issenberg, 2012a). The strategic nature of campaign communications ensures that not all audiences will be targets for information and contact.

**Voters.** Media consumers choose their sources because the information provided is useful to their lives. Americans turn to local news sources, for instance, primarily for information on local weather, traffic, crime, and sports (Pew, 2015). These topics provide instrumental knowledge on what coat to wear that day, where to go, how to stay safe, and how to spend their leisure time. Local newspapers and television specialize in these topics because they are the topics of greatest interest to their readers. When voters turn to local media for this information, they are also exposed to political reporting, and gain valuable cues that help determine their political choices and preferences (Popkin, 1994).

Political coverage in the media provides the essential information that sustains other sources of political knowledge. The opinions of friends, family, and colleagues are important influences on political knowledge, but interpersonal discussion has its limits (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Media exposure fuels political discussion: when there is less information available about politics, conversations about politics are less informative.
(Mondak, 1995a). In local political contexts, newspapers are often the most comprehensive and most widely consumed source for quality information by interested citizens (Pew, 2015).

Campaigns and local newspapers are incomplete, biased sources of information, but together they provide most of the information citizens need to perform their democratic duties. Personal information on candidates, in particular, may help voters construct narratives about elections and motivate them to participate (Popkin, 1994). Non-incumbent candidates rely heavily upon the media to help them spread this valuable personal information and stimulate conversations, since they must “catch up” to the high pre-existing knowledge levels about incumbent candidates (Popkin, 1994; Mondak, 1995a). When information about a candidate is limited and uncertainty about future political outcomes is high, campaigns can have the greatest impact through their strategic messaging through the media and directly to voters (Popkin, 1994).

Newspapers are crucial mechanisms of accountability with the potential to wield greater impact than opponents’ criticisms of sitting politicians. People trust their local newspaper, and information received from trusted sources is more likely to change opinions (Kaniss, 1991; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). Americans who read local newspapers are better equipped to hold their incumbent candidates accountable, and local efforts by campaigns can influence newspaper reporting—a dynamic that, if recent developments in local media and campaigns continue, is likely to become more impactful. Changes in the habits of news consumers, campaign tactics, and newspaper resources may be altering the information and participation climate of American elections.
**Current trends in campaigns and political news**

Recent developments in newspapers, campaigns, and political behavior make local political news a particularly interesting subject to study at this moment. Campaigns and newspapers are moving in different directions. Local newspapers’ primary revenue source has dried up, while campaigns are flush with cash and growing more sophisticated with each election cycle. Citizens still turn to newspapers for local political news, however, even as the production of that news dwindles. When local newspapers lose the reporting resources needed to resist campaign influence, the quality of their product suffers.

Newspapers. The past two decades have not been kind to local newspapers. National newspapers are transitioning to online subscription-based revenue models, but local newspapers have not enjoyed success in that arena (Coscarelli, 2012). Over one hundred newspapers—about 7% of America’s total—closed between 2007 and 2010. These closures included big city newspapers, e.g., the Rocky Mountain News, while several newspapers from mid-sized cities (e.g., Harrisburg Patriot-News and the Ann Arbor News) only publish several times a week. Other local newspapers, such as the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and the Tucson Citizen, changed their distribution model by moving entirely online (Waldman, 2011). Moving online reduces production costs, but it also removes print advertising as a source of revenue. Companies are less willing to spend on print advertising as circulation declines and online options take a major revenue source away from newspapers.
As Figure 2.1 shows, revenues from print advertising in newspapers fell by more than 50% between 2006 and 2011 (Edmonds et al., 2013). Classified advertising, once a major revenue generator, fell particularly hard: revenue from employment classifieds in 2010 constituted 8.7% of their totals from 2000, while revenue from automotive ads in 2010 stood at just over one-fifth of their 2000 totals (Waldman, 2011). Print advertising supported the costs of reporting in local newspapers in a way that online advertising fees do not. Even profitable newspapers like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* were forced to declare bankruptcy after losing substantial advertising revenues (Phelps, 2009; Lentz, 2009).

The extent of the losses in reporting capacity is staggering. Between 2003 and 2009, more than fifty newspapers stopped covering their statehouses entirely (A.J.R., 2009). Trial coverage in newspapers has essentially vanished (Waldman, 2011). Fewer
dedicated political reporters means less local political news is produced, and politicians face less scrutiny from the public.

The technologically driven proliferation of news sources has not benefited the production or dissemination of quality local news. Television news stations devote less coverage to Congress, and to local politics in general, than do newspapers (Hess, 1991; Vinson, 2003). Newspapers publish three times more stories on government, politics, economics, and education than television news (Pew, 2015). Alternative sources have struggled to find an audience: online-only “hyperlocal” news ventures, for instance, have failed to attract significant attention online (Hindman, 2011). Other forms of local media have not replaced declining newspapers, leading to less political news created and consumed at the local level.

**Campaigns.** Campaigns’ recent trajectory is the opposite of that of local newspapers. More than twice as much money was spent on the 2008 election as on the 2000 election ($3.8 billion vs. $1.7 billion; Liberto, 2012). In 2012, the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates each spent over a billion dollars for the first time in history (Center for Responsive Politics, 2015). These additional resources give campaigns far more options for reaching and understanding voters. Campaign contact stimulates turnout and informs voters selectively according to their value to each individual campaign.

Advancements in the quality, availability, and techniques behind campaign data collection and analytics have changed the ways campaigns approach voter contact on both sides of the aisle. In 2008, for example, the Obama campaign embarked upon an unprecedented and ambitious effort to predict the behavior of every voter in the nation.
As described by campaign journalist Sasha Issenberg, the campaign assigned and regularly updated scores predicting each voter’s probability of turning out and voting for Obama. Every week in each battleground state, call centers conducted 5,000-10,000 short form interviews and administered 1,000 traditional poll questionnaires over the phones. The campaign’s algorithms then searched for patterns between these survey results and the thousands of data points the campaign possessed for each voter (Issenberg, 2012a). These innovations at campaign headquarters, applied correctly, made much smarter and more efficient contact with actual voters possible. Improved targeting accuracy gave campaigns a better return on voter contact, making them more likely to invest their resources in communities.

The future of data-driven campaigns is local and personal. Analytics enabled the Obama campaign to approach the national election as if it were a collection of local campaigns. In the words of the director of opinion research for the Obama campaign, David Simas: “What [our analytics] gave us was the ability to run a national presidential campaign the way you’d do a local ward campaign [where] you know the people on your block” (Issenberg, 2012a). Though the extensive analytics effort Obama’s team undertook will be difficult to duplicate, it is likely that the combination of sophisticated targeting and local campaign presence likely will continue. Such tactics make a campaign’s efforts more efficient, even as their available resources are rising.
Voters. Americans still want to know about their community and continue to rely on local newspapers for that information.\(^1\) Local political participation is inseparable from newspaper consumption because when it comes to news on government, Americans still turn to newspapers. Media choice is clearly related to political behavior and attitudes. For example, media use is highly correlated with positive opinions about one’s city. In Pew’s survey of Macon, Georgia, 80% of those who rate their city as “excellent” keep up with local news frequently, while only 34% of those who rate their city as “fair” or “poor” keep up with the local news. Small-to-midsize markets in particular rely on newspapers: 40% of respondents in Sioux City report getting their news from the local newspaper, compared to only 23% in the larger Denver market (Pew, 2015).

The habits of American news consumers demonstrate that newspapers remain a critical source and important force within local news environments. Nearly nine in ten Americans follow local news somewhat or very closely, and local television news is the most widely consumed medium for local news on weather, sports, and crime. However, television does not provide the highest quality coverage of political issues (Pew, 2015). Newspapers cover more stories and drive the news agenda in cities (Druckman, 2005). Fewer than half of respondents say that the internet is “very important” for keeping up with local news, and the vast majority of consumers continue to access newspapers in print (Pew, 2015). Consumers turn to newspapers for news on local government and politics, local businesses, the local economy, and jobs and unemployment news.

\(^1\) Reports from the Pew Research Center’s “Project for Excellence in Journalism” routinely provide comprehensive measures of Americans’ local media consumption behavior and attitudes. This section relies on the most recent report, “Local News in a Digital Age,” from March 5, 2015.
Newspapers remain the critical source of political information for Americans, and an attractive target for influence by campaigns.

**Theory: A brief overview**

Local media, campaign strategies, and consumer preferences influence the formation and impact of local election news. These actors, described in detail above, strategically interact to produce meaningful political effects. The interactions and predictions described in this brief section provide the basis for the more detailed theory descriptions in each of the ensuing empirical chapters.

News sources produce content that they expect to appeal to their intended audience. National newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, cater to a politically literate and sophisticated audience interested in national politics and economics. Local news sources’ geographic markets define their intended audiences, and so they direct their coverage to stories originating in and pertaining to their immediate surroundings. Original stories that are pertinent to a local newspaper’s home region are not only easier to produce than non-local stories, but also more likely to generate readership and revenue from advertisers appealing to local consumers. Local newspapers use their (increasingly limited) resources to produce broadly interesting coverage for which their intended audiences will pay. *Local newspapers will choose to create local, original content when their available resources enable them to do so.*

Journalists’ preferences interact with the economic consideration of editors and owners to determine the amount of political coverage in newspapers. Owners of media
organizations might prefer unbiased content to maximize potential consumers, but their reporters may not. In order to retain journalistic talent, newspapers must provide journalists with the motivation to produce quality content. Many journalists are overqualified for the pay they receive, and take a discount from news sources because they place value on producing coverage with political consequences (Baron, 2006).

*Journalists want to produce meaningful political news, and negotiate their ability to do so according to their employer’s available resources and profit goals.*

Consumers of local newspapers absorb valuable information on candidates and politics, even if that is not their intention. Much like newspapers support political coverage with advertising revenue and sports coverage, Americans turn to newspapers and television news for subjects such as weather and traffic and end up learning crucial personal information about candidates for office in their area. By packaging the news with other crucial forms of information, local news sources make themselves indispensable choices for helping Americans with their everyday lives. *People choose to consume local news for a variety of reasons, and receive valuable knowledge about politics and campaigns when they do.*

The choices of news consumers depend, in part, upon the news sources available to them—a consideration that changed has drastically over the past two decades. Americans who wish to follow current events can now read either national news (of nearly any ideological slant) or their local newspaper, or they can opt out of political news entirely. News choice is a defining feature of today’s media environment, thanks to technological innovations that flattened the cost of distribution and publication. The type of news that people consume influences their political awareness and knowledge, and
should influence their behavior—a possibility I investigate further in Chapter 3. Consumers’ choice of news source can influence their political awareness, with political consequences.

The civic importance of local newspapers makes them a target for enterprising politicians and their campaigns. Campaigns determine ideal audiences, which they locate and selectively contact. Today’s smarter, wealthier campaigns are increasing their small local investments. Better data on voters’ locations and preferences instruct campaigns on where to invest their resources while reducing the probability that efforts at local contact will be wasted or misdirected. Areas with existing activist networks and historically high levels of volunteerism constitute attractive targets for campaign organization. Local press coverage in these communities is particularly valuable to campaigns. Campaigns selectively invest their resources to influence their targeted voters and to earn valuable local media coverage.

Campaigns that establish a local presence use the media to generate awareness of their local efforts and obtain more positive and useful coverage. Newspaper headlines often are used in persuasive appeals, and “earned media” is virtually free compared to paid advertising. The national media and wire services cover high profile races extensively, but some sort of nearby campaign action must catch the attention of a local newspaper reporter in order to instigate a story—a dynamic I examine in greater detail in Chapter 4. Locally staffed campaign personnel can garner more press for their campaign by holding events or sending press releases, feeding reporters quotes from locals and stories that portray the campaign in a positive light. A local campaign presence helps
campaigns spread local awareness and prompt the construction of positive, locally situated news coverage.

The propensity of local newspapers to give campaigns positive coverage depends on their available resources. Information provided to the media by campaigns costs less to a journalist than conducting an independent investigation (Baron, 2005), and journalists might be tempted to use that information in their stories. When newspapers put several reporters on the political beat, these journalists have the time and manpower to seek out contradictory quotes from the opposition or to carry out original research. Newspapers with fewer resources should be more willing to accept the stories and frames campaigns provide, because they have less capacity to report stories on their own. Given local newspapers’ recent struggles, campaigns should wield greater influence than ever over the very coverage that, ideally, should hold them accountable—a normatively troubling outcome that I examine in Chapter 5. Campaigns’ ability to earn positive coverage should depend upon the resources of local newspapers.

Changes in the media marketplace make local newspapers more vulnerable to influence by strategic political elites. At a time when newspapers are losing revenue and cutting newsroom staff, wealthier campaigns use better data to ramp up their presence in cities and towns. The dwindling number of local newspaper readers is exposed to less critical news about candidates seeking to win that region, making it more difficult for readers to hold those candidates accountable. Though regional investments by campaigns can encourage political participation, they also distort the local information environment. If local newspapers continue to suffer, then campaigns will increasingly gain the upper hand in their strategic interaction with local media.
Chapter 3

The News You Use:

Learning about Elections from Local and National Newspapers

If “all politics is local,” as former House Speaker Tip O’Neill asserted, then politicians should care first and foremost about their constituents and the issues affecting their home districts. Candidates’ ability and plans to resolve those issues should occupy the forefront of local electioneering. This responsive vision of government depends upon a healthy and vigorous local press providing surveillance of politicians and regional political needs.

The landscape of political news in America has shifted dramatically over the past two decades. Thanks to cable television and news websites, consumers have the ability to consume political news in any form they choose. However, cable and online coverage mostly focuses on national politics, and sources for local news are diminishing. These trends raise an important question: how does consuming local news influence what citizens know about politics?

In this chapter, I draw from an array of research in political science and communication to develop a theory explaining how news choice relates to political knowledge and behavior. I anticipate that reading a local newspaper leads to increased knowledge about local politics because these sources report the news using a local frame (Waldfogel & George, 2006). Using data from the National Annenberg Election Survey, I find strong evidence for my core hypothesis: reading a local newspaper contributes more
knowledge about local candidates and elections than reading a national newspaper. I also show that choosing to consume either local or national news affects readers’ ability to cast an informed vote in local elections. Individual-level political resources do not sufficiently explain these effects. Local news conveys valuable information that is not easily replaced by non-local sources of political content. The decline in local newspaper revenue and consumption represents a threat to representation and accountability in local elections.

My findings have significant normative consequences for democratic outcomes in a nation with shrinking levels of local coverage. Journalists and scholars often lament the decline of local newspapers, but they rarely quantify precisely what is lost in this downward trend. I demonstrate that the coverage provided by local newspapers informs their readers of their political options, enabling them to cast informed and responsive votes. As some audiences migrate towards nationally framed news and others turn away from news consumption completely, they forego the irreplaceable benefits of surveillance of politicians by the local press. Polls show that Americans increasingly feel disconnected from their representatives and government. They are losing faith that politicians faithfully represent their interests (Montopoli, 2011). Without understanding their options, voters’ preferences in local elections might settle into a disgruntled status quo. All politics will become less local if Americans consume less local news.

The Changing Dynamics of News Consumption

This is a particularly important moment to examine the differential effects of local and national newspaper consumption. Local newspapers are experiencing a crisis that has
dramatically depleted their ability to cover politics in their regions and in the nation. Over the past decade, the traditional revenue sources for American newspapers have cratered. Between 2006 and 2011, print advertising revenue in newspapers fell by more than 50% (Edmonds et al., 2013), forcing some newspapers (e.g., the Rocky Mountain News and Seattle Post-Intelligencer) to close. Others, such as the Harrisburg Patriot-News and the Ann Arbor News, only publish several times a week or have moved online entirely. This crisis of revenue and relevancy has left remaining newspapers with fewer reporters and less space to cover politics (Edmonds et al., 2013).

Americans still want to know about their community, and they continue to consume local newspapers for that information even if less is available (Kaniss, 1991; Miller & Nesbitt, 2007). The primary goal of news organizations is to locate an audience that can and will pay for access to information and deliver what that audience wants (Hamilton, 2006; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). Locally framed stories relate better to audiences, are easier to produce than stories with a national focus (Belt & Just, 2008), and are published more frequently in the face of competition from national sources (Waldfogel & George, 2006). Challenged by the economic imperative to construct more local news with fewer resources, many newspapers have retreated from political coverage, leaving Americans with a lack of information about politics in their region (Waldman, 2011). For example, twenty-seven states no longer have a newspaper with a dedicated Washington bureau reporter (National Press Club, 2014) and state house pressrooms are emptier than ever (Edmonds et al., 2013).

As the reporting capabilities of local newspapers suffer, alternative sources of news are not picking up the slack. Online-only “hyperlocal” news ventures, such as
AOL’s *Patch*, have failed (Bercovici, 2013). Television news stations are not immune from the economic pressures facing newspapers: in fact, one in four local news stations no longer produces original content (Potter, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2013). Local newspapers publish more coverage on Congress (and local politics in general) than do local television stations (Hess, 1991; Vinson, 2003), which devote less than 18% of their coverage to city, county, and regional government combined (Baldwin et al., 2010). A study of eleven major television markets revealed that local races accounted for just 6% of all elections-related stories. In the large Los Angeles market, no stories aired about House elections (U.S.C., 2005). The scant political television coverage is concerned with the horserace and campaign strategy (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), while newspapers provide more information about candidates and their positions (Patterson & McClure, 1976; Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989). This comparative lack of political coverage—one-fifth of the campaign stories, by some estimates (Druckman, 2005)—gives local newspapers a greater role in informing the electorate than local television (Robinson & Levy, 1986; Dunaway, 2008). Local newspapers remain the best source for local political news.

If local newspapers continue to diminish, where might politically interested Americans turn for their news? National newspapers are stronger and more widely available than ever before. I define national newspapers as those that publish a national edition and report about politics with a national perspective. All other newspapers are defined as “local” because each serves a distinct regional market. Newspapers with a nationwide market for their content (e.g., the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*) are increasing their circulation by incorporating online subscriptions (Stynes, 2013). These newspapers benefit from their established brands,
selling their content online and creating a new source of income that local newspapers are struggling to establish (Ahlers, 2006). Whether measured in page views or minutes spent reading, local news outlets attract only a small portion of citizens’ attention online (Hindman, 2011).

In order to determine how newspaper choice influences knowledge, one must understand which segments of the population are choosing to read national newspapers. People will select the news that most interests them, but their interest may be dictated somewhat by availability. If less national coverage appears in local newspapers and national sources are more readily available, consumers may switch from local to national newspapers (Waldfogel & George, 2006). People reading local newspapers may be exposed to more nationally relevant news, but there is likely to be little or no local news in national newspapers. As national newspapers become a viable option for more Americans, the importance of modeling news consumption as a choice and determining what political effects that choice may have increases. National knowledge may displace local knowledge if people devote more of their time to consuming national news sources.

National newspapers tend to have a higher educated and wealthier audience (Mahapatra, 2013). Education is a useful proxy for political knowledge and media influence (Price & Zaller, 1993), making changes in media consumption across education levels especially important. In Figure 3.1 (below), data from the Pew Research Center reveal a growing divide in newspaper choice by education level.
Figure 3.1. Type of newspaper consumed* by levels of education, 1998 and 2010.

Local newspaper readership has decreased across all categories of education. The most recent data show that college graduates are twice more likely to report reading a national newspaper than persons who never finished high school. Those without a high school diploma are more than twice as likely as college graduates to report reading no newspaper at all. Those with the most education are not going “newsless” at the rate of others. Instead, they are switching from reading local newspapers to reading national newspapers. These data illustrate a disturbing trend for local news: the most educated Americans are switching to national newspapers while less educated Americans are

Data come from the Pew Center’s biannual State of the Media reports. Datasets are accessible at http://www.journalism.org/.

* The Pew questions ask whether respondents read “a daily newspaper” and whether they read several of America’s largest newspapers, including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. The Washington Post was not asked in both cycles, and is therefore not included here. Respondents who do not claim to use those particular newspapers, but do report reading a “daily newspaper,” are considered to be local newspaper readers only. The category of “national newspaper readers,” therefore, may contain those who read local and national newspapers.
opting out of newspapers entirely. All segments of the population are consuming less local news, while readership of national newspapers remains steady.

A national newspaper will likely impart different knowledge to its readers than a local newspaper. Choosing a national newspaper will (on average) expose readers to more stories about national political occurrences than reading a local newspaper (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2004; Gardner & Sullivan, 1999).\(^2\) The Washington Post, for example, publishes four times more stories on the president than an average local newspaper (15 stories per day vs. 3.5; Cohen, 2010). National newspapers possess the resources to deploy reporters to cover politics outside their region. In presidential campaigns, for examples, their reporters can cover the election closely by travelling with the candidate (Crouse, 1973). Readers of these newspapers should be exposed to the most news on national politicians, elections, and issues, making them better informed on those subjects.

**H1: Reading a national newspaper makes people more knowledgeable about national politics than reading a local newspaper.**

I expect the knowledge patterns predicted by H1 to *reverse* for local political knowledge. There are few alternatives to local newspapers for information on local elections: when local newspapers disappear, voter turnout drops sharply in local races (Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2013). Local news sources help citizens hold local officials accountable because of the local political information they convey. Where media

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\(^2\) Gerber, Karlan, and Bergen (2007) found no evidence of national newspaper influence on knowledge of specific news stories. A lengthy process such as an election, however, may result in different effects.
coverage of local politics is weak, politicians are held less accountable and can act accordingly (Stromberg, 1999, 2004; Besley & Burgess, 2002). For example, federal spending is lower in areas with exogenously lower coverage of congressmen (Snyder & Stromberg, 2010). Similarly, states with isolated capital cities are more susceptible to corruption (Campante & Do, 2013). Local newspapers should provide the coverage that engenders surveillance knowledge of local politicians and enhances responsiveness.

Although national newspapers cannot possibly cover each region of the country in depth, their ample resources allow them to cover politics on the national level and appeal to large numbers of potential customers. Their coverage cannot, and does not attempt to, replicate local newspapers’ depth of coverage of particular areas. Little advantage can be gained from focusing on one region while catering to a nationwide audience. Local newspapers, despite having fewer resources, spend comparatively more on locally situated stories. Reading a local newspaper exposes citizens to more localized information about local politics, making them better informed.

**H2: Reading a local newspaper makes people more knowledgeable about local politics than reading a national newspaper.**

Regularly published information on local representatives is critical to maintaining responsive, effective, and fair governance. Local newspapers are a major source of this information. Voters learn about candidates over the course of a campaign, allowing them to choose according to their political inclinations (Gelman & King, 1993). Elections are opportunities to examine an incumbent’s record and evaluate his or her behavior in office. Voters can punish (or “sanction”) their representatives by voting against them if
they disapprove of their incumbents’ performance and deem a challenger better. Without information about their other options, voters may succumb to the tendency to vote for “the devil they know”—the incumbent (Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2013).

Informed voting—a critical mechanism of democracy—benefits greatly from the coverage local media provide. Keeping incumbents responsive requires the recruitment and promotion of strong challengers. All candidates must introduce themselves to the electorate before they can attract votes and volunteers, and they depend on the media to do so (Levy & Squire, 2000; Goldenberg & Traugott, 1980; Ansolabehere, Snowberg, & Snyder, 2006; Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2013). I expect the surveillance knowledge enhanced by local newspapers (predicted in H2) to lead to higher levels of informed voting, particularly for non-incumbent candidates. Challengers must rely more strongly upon local news coverage to become known if they wish to empower those who read local newspapers to vote for them.

**H3: Reading a local newspaper enables people to cast informed votes holding their incumbent candidate accountable.**

**Data and Measures**

Studies of particular newspaper effects on political knowledge and vote choice face a serious limitation: most nationally representative datasets simply ask respondents if they read a newspaper. This lack of distinction between local and national newspapers makes isolating readership of one or the other impossible. Fortunately, the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Election Studies (NAES) asks respondents which newspaper they read. Using this reliable measure of news consumption, I can test my theory by isolating
the effects of reading local and national newspapers. Although these data do not enable me to test time-series effects of newspaper decline over time, they provide a valuable snapshot of media consumption in 2000 before the steep decline of local newspapers. This “before” picture illustrates trends that have no doubt grown over time. Nevertheless, future research will need to confirm this trend by exploiting changes in readership of specific newspapers.

Circulation figures illustrate the gap between national and local newspapers. The three largest newspapers by circulation (including digital) in the United States are national newspapers: the Wall Street Journal; the New York Times; and USA Today (Alliance for Audited Media, 2013). The smallest of these, USA Today, boasts over a million more subscribers than the next largest newspaper, the Los Angeles Times. Even in 2000, the national edition of the New York Times accounted for over 50% of its circulation, while less than 1% of the total circulation of the Los Angeles Times was outside of California (Waldfogel & George, 2006; Audit Bureau of Circulation, 1999). I classify the Washington Post as a national newspaper in this study because of its national edition as well as its reputation for covering national politics, despite its smaller circulation totals (Patterson, 2007).

The NAES interviewers asked respondents if they read one of thirty-one major newspapers on a list, including the four national newspapers identified above. If their chosen newspaper was not on this list, the interviewer recorded the name of the newspaper as a verbatim response.³ I use these responses to determine newspaper

³ “Verbatim” entries are not entered into the data as numbers, but rather coded exactly as the interviewer hears and types them into the file. This question does not capture those who read multiple newspapers.
readership choice. Respondents are able to name their news source reliably using this approach, and this measure consistently predicts change over time in knowledge of candidate issue positions (Dilliplane, Goldman, & Mutz, 2013). I categorize each respondent according to his or her newspaper consumption: whether a respondent reads a local newspaper (1) or not (0), and whether a respondent reads any newspaper (1) or no newspaper (0). This specification permits me to recover the effects of national newspaper readership and to compare my three groups of interest: those who read local, national, or no newspaper. Further details concerning interpretation appear in the results sections below.

**National knowledge.** My hypotheses require dependent variables to capture three types of political information: knowledge of contemporary national politics; general political knowledge (i.e., civics knowledge); and knowledge of local politics. The NAES contains several variables that could be used for this purpose, but they are not consistent between 2000 and 2004. In 2000, there are no variables measuring generic national political knowledge—the types of civic knowledge recommended by Delli Carpini & Keeter (1996). In 2004, by contrast, numerous political and campaign knowledge questions appear. Each survey contains a detailed battery of questions on the positions held by that year’s presidential candidates. I constructed indices of four campaign

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Given the nature of my questions, however, I would expect that respondents who read both newspapers would make any effects more difficult to detect.

*Descriptive statistics for major covariates and alternate measures of political knowledge are given in the Appendix in Table A3.*
knowledge questions asked in 2000 and 2004, as well as generic political knowledge (asked only in 2004) and used these indices to test H1.5

Local knowledge. Local political knowledge is much more difficult to capture in a nationally representative survey. I want to measure current knowledge of local politics, not merely knowledge of the enduring features of local contexts. Ideally, data on highly local politics such as city or county elections would be used. However, no existing dataset provides such local information for a broad national sample with the necessary media consumption measures. Given this limitation, I focus on Congressional races in keeping with previous work on local media effects (Snyder & Stromberg, 2004). Congressional campaigns, particularly House campaigns, receive scarce attention in the national press but significant interest from local newspapers (Arnold, 2004; Cook, 1989). House races are a strong test of local knowledge because they are the most localized elections that are nationally relevant. If I find evidence that newspaper choice effects citizen knowledge of Congressional races, I would expect those effects to be stronger in smaller local elections.

I capture local knowledge by assessing whether or not respondents can name the candidates in their House election. Building name recognition is arguably the most important task for any candidate, and this task is largely accomplished through the media (Levy & Squire, 2000). The NAES records respondents’ answers to the candidate recall

5 In 2000, the campaign questions asked whether respondents knew: (1) that Bush wanted a higher tax cut; (2) that Bush wanted stock market accounts for Social Security; (3) that Bush opposed abortion; and (4) that Bush favored the death penalty. The campaign questions in 2004 asked which candidate favored: (1) making the Bush tax cuts permanent; (2) eliminating the estate tax; (3) putting Social Security in stock market accounts; and (4), stem-cell research funding. The 2004 political knowledge questions asked if respondents knew: (1) the current Vice President; (2) the current House majority party; (3) the fraction of votes in the House needed to overturn a presidential veto; and (4), which branch of government determines the constitutionality of laws. Respondents who were asked all four questions were included in this analysis.
question as a verbatim text entry. Verbatim responses include many spelling mistakes and typos, and recoding the thousands of responses by hand would be time-consuming and (more importantly) impossible to replicate. To address these concerns, I coded a program using a substring-matching algorithm that combed through the verbatim entries to determine if the respondent named his or her representative, according to a standard of error accounting for spelling mistakes. I ran this program for each candidate in each election, creating my measure of incumbent and non-incumbent recall by respondent in House elections.

Spontaneous name recall of candidates is a strict measure of political knowledge that is far more demanding than the actual task of recognizing a name on a ballot (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987). Rates of incumbent recall are famously low (Stokes & Miller, 1965). Previous studies’ findings vary from 45-60% (Jacobson, 1991) to 32% (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987), with lower recall for challengers: 20-30% and 12%, respectively. In my sample, the raw numbers of candidate recall are even lower: 14.5% recall of incumbents and 4.9% for non-incumbents. Recall is often contrasted with recognition: one’s ability to identify representatives from a list of names (Abramowitz, 1975; Mann, 1978; Tedin & Murray, 1979; Mann & Wolfinger, 1980). Nearly all voters can recognize their incumbent’s name from a list. The ratio of incumbent to non-incumbent recognition is roughly the same as in recall measures (Jacobson, 1991). Recall

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6 The details of this intensive process, which required the use of an agrep() algorithm, are detailed in Appendix A in the section “String matching using AGREP in R: Process and Error Thresholds.” Results of accuracy testing appear in Appendix A in Figures A1 and A2.
7 Unfortunately, the NAES does not contain a measure of recognition, only recall.
results in far more variance than recognition, and using recall instead of recognition does not lead to substantively different conclusions (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987).

For my main tests of local knowledge, I am most interested in voters’ ability to recall the name of their non-incumbent candidate(s). The difference between national and local coverage of incumbents and non-incumbents is stark, even in contested races. In the recent upset of Eric Cantor in the Republican primary for Virginia’s 7th District, the Richmond Times-Dispatch featured sixty articles on challenger Dave Brat in the two months before that election—nearly one every day—whereas Brat received only three mentions in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today combined. When Democratic challenger Rick Nolan upset Republican incumbent Chip Cravaack in Minnesota’s 7th district in 2012, the Duluth News-Tribune dedicated sixty-five articles to the challenger (despite endorsing Cravaack), while only one article in the three national newspapers combined mentioned Nolan during the two months prior to Election Day.

Incumbents have many ways to become familiar to their constituents. Non-incumbent candidates have only a narrow window for informing voters about their existence, let alone establishing positions on issues (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987). Non-incumbents must rely more on local news to spread their message, since they are unlikely to be featured in national news. Local newspaper coverage of congressional campaigns is traditionally thought to favor incumbents (Herrnson, 2000). Non-incumbent candidates also feature quite heavily, and can be treated more kindly than incumbents (Arnold, 2004). Previous studies also have shown that media exposure is a stronger determinant of non-incumbent recall than incumbent recall (Jacobson, 1991; Mann &

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8 In races with a retiring incumbent, both candidates are coded as non-incumbent.
Wolfinger, 1980). I expect a respondent’s ability to recall the non-incumbent candidate(s) in their House race to be indicative of their local political knowledge.

**Vote choice.** I derive my measurement of “informed voting” from a quirk in a survey question in the NAES. The NAES provides another verbatim-coded variable asking respondents to name their preferred candidate for the House. If respondents were unable to name their preferred candidate, however, they were asked which political party would receive their vote. Some respondents know the name of their choice, while others simply rely on partisan attachment without learning the specifics. If respondents are able to name their preferred candidate, it stands to reason that their voting preference is more informed than a respondent who merely prefers a generic Democrat to a generic Republican. Though not a perfect manifestation of accountability, knowing a challenging candidate’s name is a logical first step towards learning about his or her issue positions and plans for the district. The structure of this question enables an effective measurement of informed voting in House elections.

**Analysis**

My statistical analysis must determine the effect of newspaper choice on political knowledge while controlling for myriad influences. H2 requires an analysis that distinguishes between the candidate(s) named and accounts for the possibility of giving two correct answers. To accomplish this step, I reshape the data so that each respondent appears twice: one entry for if he or she could name the Democratic candidate and one
entry for if he or she could name the Republican candidate. I analyze whether respondents recalled their incumbent candidate’s name and/or their non-incumbent candidate’s name. Finally, I compare incumbent candidate recall and non-incumbent candidate recall across newspaper choice in H2 as my test of local election-specific knowledge.

I must account for variation across respondents, candidates, and congressional districts in order to determine accurately the effects of local and national newspaper readership. I include an array of control variables in each analysis and utilize a series of fixed effects regressions as a robustness check. These control variables can be sorted using three groups: individual; district; and candidate. Individual-level controls address the fact that socio-economic resources strongly influence knowledge and engagement with politics. I include demographic variables for education, family income, race, gender, and age because they are indicators of politically relevant resources (Zaller, 1992). I include politically relevant variables to account for attitudinal factors, including: party ID (Republican and Democrat dummy variables); strength of party identification (strong or not); frequency of following politics; and, in H2, a variable denoting whether the respondent was of the same party as the candidate in question, given that party identification is the best predictor of vote choice (Campbell et al., 1960).

Guarding against bias from particular races is important because congressional elections differ dramatically by district. When there is a strong challenger and a weak

---

9 Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level to account for this reshaping of the data. Data reshaping was not necessary for testing H1 or H3. The vote choice variable in H3 can only represent one candidate or another, not both. Elections with a victorious independent (VT-At large and VA-05 in 2000) were omitted from all analyses.

10 I also include a variable indicating the time period sampled to account for learning over the course of the election period.
incumbent, for instance, the challenger would likely be better known than in a district
with a strong incumbent and a weak challenger. I account for this variation with election-
specific data in each district, including: data on competitiveness, if the election features
an open seat; if the election contains only one candidate; and if the election features a
quality challenger. I must capture variation between the candidates in each race. Each
candidate’s spending must be accounted for, because advertising is a powerful alternative
source of election information (Jacobson, 1978). In H2, I include variables denoting
whether the candidate recalled is an incumbent or a non-incumbent and the natural
logarithm of spending by each candidate in the race. With these variables as a baseline, I
adapted my equations and analytical strategy to address each hypothesis.

To test H1, I estimate the Equation 3.1 (below) separately for the campaign
knowledge index in (1) 2000 and (2) 2004, and (3) the political knowledge index in 2004:

\[ y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Local_i + \beta_2 Any_i + \Gamma_1 Ind_i + \Gamma_2 CD_{d(i)} + \Gamma_3 Cand_{c(i)} + \varepsilon_i \]  (3.1)

where \( y_i \) is the number of correct answers in the given index, \( Local_i \) denotes whether a
respondent reads a local newspaper, \( Any_i \) denotes whether a respondent reads any
newspaper, \( Ind_i \) is a set of individual-level control variables, \( CD_{d(i)} \) is a set of
congressional district-level control variables, \( Cand_{c(i)} \) is a set of congressional
candidate-level control variables, and \( \varepsilon_i \) is a stochastic disturbance term. 13 Subscript \( i \)
denotes each individual, while subscripts \( d(i) \) and \( c(i) \) denote variables measured at the

11 An election is coded as competitive if either candidate’s final margin falls between 45 and 55%.
12 My thanks to Gary Jacobson for providing data on Congressional elections.
13 I include the candidate and congressional district variables for the sake of consistency between
specifications, as these are featured prominently later on. The particular features of a congressional race
may influence presidential campaign learning as well, if (for instance) a competitive local House race
crowds out coverage of the presidential contest in the local news.
district and candidate level for each respondent $i$, respectively. As described above, this ordinary least squares (OLS) analysis allows me to recover the effect of national newspaper readership through addition and careful interpretation of the coefficients on my press variables. The effect of reading a national newspaper compared to reading no newspaper is given by $\beta_2$. The effect of reading a local newspaper compared to reading no newspaper is given by $\beta_1 + \beta_2$. Finally, the effect of reading a local newspaper compared to the effect of reading a national newspaper is given by $\beta_1$.

The structure of the variable denoting candidate recall necessitates a restructuring of the data to test H2. Since respondents may name one candidate, neither candidate, or both candidates, I reshape the data by candidate. Each respondent appears in the data once for each candidate in their district, and I account for autocorrelation with standard errors clustered by respondent. I test H2 by assessing the relative ability of local and national newspaper readers to recall the names of the incumbent and non-incumbent candidates in their House election in Equation 3.2:

$$y_{c(i)} = \alpha_t + \beta_1 Noninc_{c(i)} + \beta_2 Local_i + \beta_3 Any_t + \beta_4 [Noninc_{c(i)} \times Local_i] +$$
$$\beta_5 [Noninc_{c(i)} \times Any_t] + \Gamma_1 Ind_i + \Gamma_2 CD_{d(i)} + \Gamma_3 Cand_{c(i)} + \epsilon_{c(i)} \quad (3.2)$$

where $y_{c(i)}$ indicates correct recall of a candidate’s name, $Noninc_{c(i)}$ indicates whether a candidate is the incumbent (0) or the non-incumbent (1), $Local_i$ denotes whether a respondent reads a local newspaper, $Any_t$ denotes whether a respondent reads any newspaper, $Noninc_{c(i)} \times Local_i$ is an interaction term between candidate incumbency and local newspaper readership, $Noninc_{c(i)} \times Any_t$ is an interaction term between

---

14 In the specification presented in Table 3.1, I have replaced the $CD$ variables with congressional district fixed effects as an additional robustness test.
candidate incumbency and reading any newspaper, and $\varepsilon_{c(t)}$ is a stochastic disturbance term clustered by respondent identifier.\(^{15}\) Control variables and subscripts are the same as in Equation 1. The interpretation of each coefficient is structurally the same as above, but includes the interaction terms. For example, the effect of reading a local newspaper on non-incumbent candidate recall is given by $\beta_2 + \beta_3 + \beta_4 + \beta_5$. This strategy allows me to isolate the relative impact of newspaper choice on recall of incumbent and non-incumbent candidates.

I test H3 using the same model as Equation 3.1, with two key exceptions. First, the dependent variable is intended vote choice rather than political knowledge. I use two measures of intended vote choice in Table 3: persons who know the name of the candidate for whom they intend to vote (1 yes, 0 no); and those who express any vote choice at all, verbatim or partisan (1 yes, 0 no). Those who can recall the name of their preferred candidate are interpreted as casting a more informed vote than those who merely prefer a partisan. Second, I added a variable indicating whether a respondent identifies with the same party as the incumbent candidate, since party identification determines vote choice.

I conducted each analysis using two fixed effects specifications as a stricter test. Fixed effects hold a specified unit fixed and examine variation within that unit, completely accounting for across-unit variation. Variables that do not change within those units are dropped from the analysis. I tested H2 and H3 across three specifications: no fixed effects; congressional district fixed effects; and candidate fixed effects. In the

\(^{15}\) The gamma denotes the corresponding vector of coefficients for each set of covariates, with each subscript denoting the group: 1 for individual-level; 2 for congressional-level; and 3 for candidate-level covariates.
congressional district fixed effects specification, variables measured at the congressional
district level are disregarded in the analysis. In the candidate fixed effects specification,
the congressional district and candidate controls are omitted. In most cases, no significant
differences appeared between fixed effects specifications, so each specification is not
included in every table below. Only Table 3.2 displays the results of all three fixed
effects specifications.

National and Local Political Knowledge: Testing H1 and H2

Who knows more about national politics and campaigns—consumers of local newspapers
or consumers of national newspapers? National newspapers focus more directly on issues
of national importance, but local newspapers also Congress and presidential campaigns.
Table 3.1 provides the results of my analysis.16

---

16 I ran this analysis with a binary dependent variable as an additional test, dividing the total questions
answered into two categories, 0-2 and 3-4. This analysis appears in the Appendix in Table A1.
Table 3.1. OLS analysis of newspaper knowledge index by newspaper readership type in 2000 and 2004. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>(1) Presidential Campaign</th>
<th>(2) Presidential Campaign</th>
<th>(3) Politics &amp; Constitution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a local newspaper(^a)</td>
<td>-0.182*** (0.037)</td>
<td>-0.298*** (0.059)</td>
<td>-0.182*** (0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read any newspaper(^b)</td>
<td>0.295*** (0.040)</td>
<td>0.277*** (0.065)</td>
<td>0.193*** (0.032)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Covariates not listed; identical to Table 3.2)

Fixed effects

Congressional District

F-tests: Coefficient, f-stat, (p-value).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads national newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td><strong>0.295</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.277</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.193</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.321 (0.000)</td>
<td>18.123 (0.000)</td>
<td>36.847 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td><strong>0.113</strong>*</td>
<td>-0.021 (0.000)</td>
<td>0.011 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.181 (0.000)</td>
<td>0.331 (0.056)</td>
<td>0.257 (0.612)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper</td>
<td>-<strong>0.182</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>-0.298</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>-0.182</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.412 (0.000)</td>
<td>25.370 (0.000)</td>
<td>42.583 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.916 (0.053)</td>
<td>0.037 (0.102)</td>
<td>0.628 (0.065)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>14,912</td>
<td>6,243</td>
<td>19,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2)</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>0.293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) This coefficient recovers the difference between the effect of reading a local newspaper and the effect of reading a national newspaper. The actual effect of reading a local newspaper is the sum of the coefficient on “Reads any newspaper” and “Reads local newspaper.” These coefficients are displayed and described in the F-tests section of the table.

\(^b\) This coefficient recovers the effect of reading a national newspaper because it captures variation among newspaper readers not explained by the coefficient on “reads local newspaper,” above.

All analyses contain congressional district-level fixed effects. Knowledge indices differ slightly by year, as explained in text. Robust standard errors (clustered at the county level) in parentheses. Significance thresholds delineated as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Reading a national newspaper leads to greater knowledge about national politics and campaigns than does reading a local newspaper. The 2004 results are quite definitive: reading a local newspaper is associated with hardly any more knowledge of campaign or political questions than not reading any newspaper, whereas reading a national newspaper results in much more knowledge. Reading a national newspaper translates to 18% more
questions answered correctly than reading a local newspaper in 2000, and 30% more questions answered correctly in the 2004 sample. Reading a local newspaper conveys scarcely more knowledge about presidential campaigns than abstaining from newspapers: 11% more campaign questions were answered correctly in 2000 by local newspaper readers, with no advantage at all in the 2004 sample. Reading a national newspaper results in 18% more correct answers to national knowledge questions than reading a local newspaper. This contextual knowledge helps readers to receive and understand other political information—a distinct advantage for citizens who read a national newspaper.

These findings strongly support H1—so much so that they call H2 into doubt. Any advantage gained from exposure to reading a local newspaper might be cancelled out by the higher political sophistication afforded to readers of national newspapers, since they should be able to assimilate new information more easily. The difference between exposure and reception is critical in this instance. Although those reading a local newspaper may be exposed to more local information, their relatively lower levels of political sophistication can prevent them from successfully receiving and absorbing that information. National newspaper readers may receive comparatively less local information, but if they absorb it more readily they might appear to be more knowledgeable in surveys. Table 3.2 provides the results of my test of H2.

17 Another measure, interviewer perception of respondent knowledge, reliably captures political knowledge in some cases (Zaller, 1986; Sekhon, 2004). Although this rating is general, not specific to local or national political knowledge, I find that local newspaper readers are likely to be rated as significantly less knowledgeable about politics than national newspaper readers. Given that most verifiable questions in the NAES regard national politics, this finding provides some verification for my findings in H1. Full results are presented in the Appendix in Table A4. I thank Joshua Dyck for his suggestion to utilize this variable.
Table 3.2. OLS analysis of candidate recall by newspaper readership and candidate type across fixed effects specifications. Includes f-tests of differences in coefficients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate</td>
<td>-0.041***</td>
<td>-0.073***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a local newspaper(^a)</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.028**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read any newspaper(^b)</td>
<td>0.061***</td>
<td>0.060***</td>
<td>0.055***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate X Reads local newspaper</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.040***</td>
<td>0.028**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate X Reads any newspaper</td>
<td>-0.089***</td>
<td>-0.089***</td>
<td>-0.077***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congressional district covariates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running unopposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate covariates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ln(Candidate spending)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same party as candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong partisan identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual covariates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education (&lt; HS omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A. or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (18-29 omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income (&lt; $25,000 omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follows politics
(Hardly follows omitted)
Now and then
-0.001 (0.004) (0.004)
Sometimes
0.020*** (0.004) (0.004)
Most of the time
0.110*** (0.005) (0.005)
White
0.033*** (0.004) (0.004)
Female
-0.029*** (0.003) (0.003)
Time period
(Before Labor Day omitted)
September
0.011*** (0.004) (0.004)
October 1 – Election Day
0.031*** (0.004) (0.004)
Fixed effects:
None District Candidate
F-tests: Coefficient, f-stat, (p-value).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recalls incumbent candidate</th>
<th>Recalls non-incumbent candidate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads national newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td><strong>0.061</strong>* (32.119) (0.000)</td>
<td><strong>0.028</strong>* (9.380) (0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.060*** (30.991) (0.000)</td>
<td>-0.029*** (8.912) (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.055*** (24.149) (0.000)</td>
<td>-0.023*** (5.282) (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td><strong>0.056</strong>* (143.948) (0.000)</td>
<td><strong>0.035</strong>* (15.814) (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.054*** (133.835) (0.000)</td>
<td>0.034*** (12.857) (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.054*** (132.881) (0.000)</td>
<td><strong>0.027</strong>* (7.885) (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.212) (0.645)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.006 (0.349) (0.555)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.000 (0.001) (0.973)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.278 (0.117) (0.156)</td>
<td>-0.095 (0.397) (0.216)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>39,743 (39,743) (39,686)</td>
<td>39,686 (39,686) (39,686)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.117 (0.000) (0.005)</td>
<td>0.167 (0.000) (0.005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^ This coefficient recovers the difference between the effect of reading a local newspaper and reading a national newspaper. The actual effect of reading a local newspaper is the sum of the coefficient on “Reads any newspaper” and “Reads local newspaper.” These coefficients are displayed in the F-tests section.

This coefficient recovers the effect of reading a national newspaper because it captures variation among newspaper readers not explained by the coefficient on “reads local newspaper,” above.

Robust std. errors (clustered at the respondent level) in parentheses. Significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

No advantages in incumbent candidate recall result from the choice of reading either type of newspaper, though reading any newspaper is more advantageous than reading none. This finding supports H2: if reading a national newspaper imparts more
background political knowledge, then we would expect those consumers to know more about incumbent candidates on account of the incumbent’s built-in name recognition advantage. The lack of an advantage for more sophisticated respondents suggests that local newspapers help to close this knowledge gap. A steady diet of local information can compensate for deficiencies in political sophistication and level the political knowledge playing field.

With regard to non-incumbent recall, however, reading a national newspaper puts respondents at a disadvantage. Non-incumbent recall is lower than incumbent recall in every category. This finding is to be expected because incumbents enjoy many advantages in the area of name recognition—local newspapers are dominated by coverage of incumbents (Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Therefore, the core test of H2 is the difference between local and national newspaper readers’ ability to recall the names of non-incumbent candidates. Reading a national newspaper only makes respondents 3.5% less likely to recall their non-incumbent candidate’s name than readers of a local newspaper, and the difference is statistically significant (p < 0.01). In relative terms, reading a local newspaper leads to an approximately 50% increase in non-incumbent candidate recall compared to reading a national newspaper.

This finding is somewhat surprising considering the greater political sophistication that results from consumption of national newspapers (from Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1, respectively). Despite their advantages, consumers who choose to focus on national news are less informed about local politics. This effect endures across fixed effects specifications and is statistically significant in F-tests for differences in coefficients, meaning particular districts or candidates do not explain it. To illustrate the
effect of news choice, I calculated predicted probabilities of candidate recall. These results are presented in Figure 3.2.\textsuperscript{18}

**Figure 3.2.** Predicted probability of House candidate recall by newspaper readership and candidate incumbency, with congressional district fixed effects.

Reading a national newspaper makes respondents less knowledgeable about campaigns in their own congressional districts. While 23\% of people choosing national newspapers could name their incumbent, only 6\% of them can name the non-incumbent(s) in their district’s fall election. Note that respondents who read no newspaper are equally likely to recall the name of their non-incumbent candidate as those reading a local newspaper. This finding likely reflects the myriad ways campaigns can spread their messages, and future research will examine further how newspaper-less

\textsuperscript{18} Predicted probabilities are computed using the specification with congressional district fixed effects, with fixed effects included in the predicted probabilities.
consumers receive their political news. Nonetheless, reading a local newspaper makes respondents nearly twice as likely to recall their non-incumbent candidate as reading a national newspaper. Despite their higher levels of political knowledge and sophistication, citizens who consume national news are at a disadvantage when it comes to learning about local campaigns.

Does this effect hold for all sub-national elections? If H2 is correct, the effect should diminish in less local elections. I performed the same analysis on Senate candidate recall in 2000. I expected that reading a local newspaper gives no informational advantage over reading a national newspaper in Senate elections, which are more nationalized than House elections (Fenno, 1982). A search of the New York Times during the final two months of the 2010 mid-term elections reveals approximately 50% more articles on Senate elections than on House elections, despite the existence of 435 House races and only 37 Senate elections. Not only do Senate races command more national attention than House races, but also the per-race coverage is significantly larger even in a year of massive turnover in the House.\textsuperscript{19} Utilizing the NAES measure for Senate candidate recall, I created similar categories and estimated Equation 2 using the Senate data. Predicted probabilities calculated from these regression results appear in Figure 3.3 below.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Search terms were \textit{Senate election} and \textit{Representative election}, from September 1 to November 2, 2010. The total numbers of articles was 1,560 for the House and 2,350 for the Senate.
\textsuperscript{20} Senate regression results with congressional district fixed effects—the same specification used to construct the predicted probabilities in Figure 3—appear in Table A2 in the Online Appendix.
There is no comparable decrease in knowledge associated with reading a national newspaper in the case of non-incumbent Senate candidates: the effect of reading local and national newspapers is roughly equal. The more pronounced effects in House races confirm my assumption that this effect is stronger in more distinctly local electoral contests.

Can Newspaper Readership Shape Vote Choice?

Does newspaper choice impact the type of political behavior that campaigns care about most: vote choice? The NAES contains another verbatim response variable in

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21 The NAES contains a variable denoting respondents’ ability to rate their Senator (but not House member). This measure is commonly used as to capture political knowledge (see Lipsitz 2011). The use of this variable as an alternate measurement of political knowledge causes no significant difference between local and national newspaper readers for non-incumbent Senate candidates. Full results appear in Appendix A in Table A5.
which respondents were asked whom they preferred to vote for in their upcoming election. If respondents could not provide a name, they were offered the choice of stating their preference for the Republican or Democratic candidate.

I utilized three different sample restrictions to examine the effect of newspaper consumption on vote choice and preference strength. I estimated Equation 3 on the entire sample to examine the effect of my independent variables on respondents’ ability to express a verbatim voting preference (Column 1). Next, I restricted the sample to those who preferred the incumbent (Column 2) and those who preferred the non-incumbent (Column 3) in order to determine whether these individuals were more likely to be able to produce the name of their preferred candidate, or to express only a partisan choice. Table 3.3 shows the results of this estimation:
Table 3.3. OLS analysis of expressed vote preference across measures of candidate and partisan recall and candidate incumbency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample restriction</th>
<th>(1) Prefers Incumbent</th>
<th>(2) Prefers Non-incumbent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a local newspaper( ^a )</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read any newspaper( ^b )</td>
<td>0.025**</td>
<td>0.075***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same party as incumbent</td>
<td>0.064***</td>
<td>-0.277***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Covariates not listed; identical to Table 3.2)

Fixed effects

Congressional District

F-tests: Coeff., f-stat, (p-value).

Reads national newspaper vs. Reads local newspaper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F-stat</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads no newspaper</td>
<td>6.450</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.831)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td>34.415</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.028*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.469)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20,949</td>
<td>7,146</td>
<td>6,260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R-squared

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( ^a \) This coefficient recovers the difference between the effect of reading a local newspaper and the effect of reading a national newspaper. The actual effect of reading a local newspaper is the sum of the coefficient on “Reads any newspaper” and “Reads local newspaper.” These coefficients are displayed and described in the F-tests section of the table.

\( ^b \) This coefficient recovers the effect of reading a national newspaper because it captures variation among newspaper readers not explained by the coefficient on “reads local newspaper,” above.

\( ^\) Standard errors in parentheses. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 3.3 demonstrates subtle but significant relationships between newspaper readership and vote choice. Reading either a local or a national newspaper is shown to
make respondents more likely to recall the name of their preferred candidate’s name (Column 1). Among those who prefer incumbents, reading a local or national newspaper makes respondents roughly equal in their ability to name their preference compared to non-newspaper readers (Column 2). Once again, the major difference appears in the case of non-incumbent candidates (Column 3). Among supporters of non-incumbents, reading a local newspaper renders respondents 2.8% more likely to recall their preferred candidate’s name than reading a national newspaper—an important discrepancy in knowledge of choices and strength of preference. Local newspapers matter because reading them makes voters more likely to sanction their incumbent, a key mechanism for democratic accountability (Snyder & Stromberg, 2010). The regular threat of punishment by informed voters is an important check on politician behavior. As local newspapers continue to lose their ability to cover politics well—or disappear entirely—the power of voters to influence their representatives fades.

**Discussion**

Future research on this topic will examine particular regions to find micro-level evidence of the national results presented here. The demise of a newspaper also provides an opportunity to examine citizen behavior and newspaper content production both before and after that event, an approach similar to recent historical scholarship on newspapers (Gentzkow, Shapiro, & Sinkinson, 2011). This approach will further enable me to distinguish newspaper effects on vote choice in this age of local newspaper decline.

As national news sources proliferate, more Americans are reading about politics from a national perspective. My results show that when Americans read a national
newspaper, they recall less about politics in their own communities. Reading a national newspaper imparts greater knowledge about presidential campaigns and the state of national politics—traditional measures of political knowledge in surveys—but it also causes poorer recall of the candidates for office in a reader’s home district. Choosing a national news source detaches people from their local politics, and can make it more difficult to cast an informed vote that can hold incumbent politicians accountable. As it becomes increasingly difficult to base voting decisions on locally relevant issues, politicians will face fewer repercussions for turning their attention to national, ideological concerns.

The differential impact of local and national news consumption on political knowledge is an important and previously understudied media effect. Americans’ collective shift away from local newspapers has political consequences. Americans face the choice of consuming national, local, or no news every day, as online access increases and nationwide newspaper distribution makes the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today widely available. If current trends continue, national newspaper consumption may become the norm. Younger Americans are abandoning local daily newspapers and consuming national news at a high rate: in 2013, nearly three times as many Americans aged 18-29 reported reading the New York Times as reported reading a “daily newspaper” (32% to 12%; Mahapatra, 2013). In this chapter, I identify the danger in this development: when Americans choose to read national newspapers, their connection to their local communities diminishes.

If national newspapers continue to flourish at the expense of locally constructed news, America’s local elections may be decided by factors divorced from communities
and tied up in the partisan squabbles of Washington. The nationalization of politics at the local level is a threatening trend, leading to polarization in state houses (particularly since 2010) and dangerous disparities in the provision of public goods (Zengerle, 2014). When voters increasingly consume national news instead of local news, we can expect their votes to reflect national ideological concerns. In the absence of a steady diet of information on the state of the community, partisanship—not responsiveness to local issues and needs—may become the only available heuristic lens for vote choice, deemphasizing responsiveness while increasing polarization.

Voting remains the most powerful mechanism by which Americans are heard by their officials, but people must know their choices before they can make them. If the connection between local issues and political representation is severed, feelings of alienation and historic levels of dislike of Congress will continue to rise. A healthy, local press contributes to the proper functioning of American democracy by empowering new candidates and local concerns to enter public discussion. Representative government is based on the idea that “all politics is local,” such that representatives are beholden to their informed constituents. When the preponderance of media sources presents all politics as national, it creates a much different set of incentives for strategic politicians. The nationalization of America’s political media could lead to deteriorating responsiveness and electoral competition. National political news is not a desirable or acceptable substitute for the indispensible information contained in America’s local newspapers.
Chapter 4

News from the Field:

Campaign Influence on the Construction of Local News

The relationship between local media and campaigns is symbiotic. The media need campaigns to provide local campaign activity and access, and campaigns need the media to transmit their preferred messages with the trust and authority cultivated by local news organizations. Despite ample scholarship on political communication at the national level, scholars know little about this local symbiosis. In this chapter, I explore whether campaigns can influence the amount of coverage that the news media produce in cities and towns where they have strategically chosen to invest their limited resources. Using original datasets from three election cycles (2004, 2008, and 2012), I compare campaign coverage in areas with varied campaign resources. I find that candidates receive more attention from the press in areas where they make larger campaign investments. I show that this effect is not due to sample bias or campaign investment in friendly areas, using robustness checks and placebo tests. Rather, the campaign investment itself seems to drive this shift in coverage.

Traditional forms of media remain a significant source of political information for the electorate, and influencing their coverage is an important goal of campaigns. Campaigns recognize the value of affecting the stories appearing in local media in battleground states, and they aim to inspire such coverage (Byers, 2012) with targeted appeals in local outlets. Local media translate the events and processes of national
campaigns into locally relevant stories, attracting readers’ interest and selling newspapers across a politically diverse media market. It is not a given that local newspapers will cover non-local elections. Campaigns give local newspapers a reason to devote their limited resources to coverage of a non-local race when they invest locally.

**News Incentives and Campaign Coverage**

Local news remains the primary news source for most Americans. Nearly three-quarters of adults (72%) follow local news and information closely, and they overwhelmingly turn to newspapers for that news (Pew, 2012). The locally framed coverage that local newspapers produce for their readers is difficult to replace online or with national news. In fact, local television and newspapers remain the most-trusted news sources among voters’, and people turn to local media more frequently than any other source for daily election news (Rainey, 2012). Even if local newspapers’ traditional sources of revenue are declining, they remain important to consumers.

Regional news sources deliver a focused local product with the goal of cultivating and capitalizing on regional identity (Kaniss, 1991). Newspapers aim to capture the interest and trust of their intended consumers and to provide space for advertisers to reach geographically specialized audiences. For local sources, readers’ trust is a clear comparative advantage in the news marketplace. As the news marketplace continues to diversify, local media may aim to maximize their advantage by steering their coverage towards even more local topics and frames (Waldfogel & George, 2006). This emphasis on proximity is true online as well: local news sites remain focused on the local market and are a heavily utilized source on Election Day (Chyi & Sylvie, 2001; Tewksbury,
2006). The currency of local news sources lies in their history and in the regional identity of which they are a part (Kaniss, 1991).

Political campaigns and media are strategic actors, seeking to produce a set of messages for defined audiences with tightly constrained available resources. The news media are a set of bureaucratic organizations, which produce diverse messages for multiple consumers and discuss the day’s events in ways that generate the greatest revenue. The goals of any news organization are to locate an audience that can and will pay for access to information, and to deliver the sort of content that the audience wants (Hamilton, 2006; Pan & McLeod, 1991). News sources must choose their content based on what will maximize readership and advertising dollars. In higher educated or wealthier areas, for example, the news media may find it easier to attract customers who willingly pay for their local news. Even local news organizations with built-in advantages face a limited geographic revenue pool.

Political news is not constructed in a vacuum. It is necessarily formed in collaboration between politicians and reporters. The news media are political institutions influenced by those in power and susceptible to politicians’ ability to provide quotes and translate complex stories (Schudson, 2002; Livingston & Bennett, 2003). Although politicians often appeal to the press outside of election years to increase support for laws or to raise their public profiles, political campaigns generate particular incentives to push messages by any means possible. Within a limited time frame and constrained resources, campaigns must accomplish many difficult and varied tasks. Essential actions include persuading undecided voters, contacting and turning out their supporters, and maintaining a positive media image. All of these campaign activities are of particular interest to the
media, which prefers to cover strategy and polls when possible (Dunaway, 2008, Iyengar et al., 2004, Kahn, 1991, Patterson, 1994, Capella & Jamieson, 1997). Campaigns should be able to stimulate local news coverage by situting these activities in particular news markets.

Every campaign activity should advance the goal of maximizing the odds of obtaining a majority of votes—or, in the case of presidential elections, 270 electoral votes (Shaw, 2006). Presidential campaigns choose a subset of states and invest the vast majority of their resources in those “battleground states,” targeting cities and counties to assemble a winning margin (Demissie, 2012). Campaigns’ ability to target voters has improved recently thanks to massive datasets assembled from consumer information, census reports, political party records, and publicly available voter files. Improved data allows campaigns to minimize the possibility of mobilizing their opponent’s voters and to target particular messages to those voters most susceptible to their influence (Hillygus & Shields, 2008; Issenberg, 2012b).

Campaigns invest resources (e.g., television spending, establishing local field office[s], and sending the candidate to that area for an appearance) in strategically determined locations. Staffers in these field offices seek to recruit volunteers, a task that is inseparable from the local media environment. Consumers of local news are more likely to participate in community activities (Moy et al., 2004), including local politics (Verba, Brady & Schlozman, 1995; Nicodemus, 2004; McLeod, Scheufele & Moy, 1999). Though campaigns sometimes know where their previous support was strongest (Cho & Gimpel, 2010), they also aim to recruit new volunteers to make contact with
potentially like-minded voters. When campaigns invest in an area, voters are more likely to get involved and become interested (Gimpel et al., 2007).

Although many studies examine prominent campaigns through the lens of large news outlets, national and local news organizations interact with campaigns differently (Flowers et al., 2003). If campaigns are earning support in specific cities and towns, they may also earn media coverage there (Wasserman, 1999). Since local newspapers aim to translate national stories into local contexts, staffers and campaign-created spectacles can significantly assist their efforts both by providing stories about local participation and events and by providing them with a local contact for quotes and information.

Establishing a campaign presence in a community provides an easy, proximate source for presenting local angles on national campaigns and their strategies. The campaign supplies media with story frames of local involvement and events (Dunaway & Stein, 2013). Local news organizations also have access to wire reporting—ready-made political coverage that costs a fixed fee but provides analysis at no local reporting costs. When they can construct their own local stories, local papers may be less likely to pay fees and likelier to utilize in-house reporting to please their readers.

A campaign’s ability to stimulate local news story production should be enhanced when it invests in a particular community. Choosing to compete in a given region subsidizes the comparative cost of producing news stories about the campaign and election. In particular, presidential campaigns—inherently national in scope—need to create local competition if local newspapers are to cover them. These considerations of campaign strategy and news-making illustrate the central hypothesis of this chapter: newspapers aim to publish more original, locally framed news about exciting and broadly
relevant political contests; and presidential campaigns should help them accomplish this goal when they choose to create a local campaign presence.

**Hypothesis:** Newspapers in areas where a campaign invests its resources will publish more content about the election than newspapers in areas without a campaign presence.

**Data and Measures**

Testing this hypothesis requires accounting for the dispersion of campaign activities, differences in newspaper resources and locations, and variations between elections. Data must include both the quantity of local news content and the location of campaign resources across several elections. To satisfy these conditions, I have assembled three samples from the Newsbank database of American newspapers, combined with an original dataset of county-level variation in campaign field office placement during the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections.

**Campaign presence.** The geographic spread and sheer amount of resources possessed by presidential campaigns presents interesting strategic choices for testing my hypothesis. Presidential races attract widespread attention in the news because every region of the country can vote in the election. Legislative and city-level races, by contrast, are geographically specific and tend to receive less press coverage (Kiolbassa, 1997; Arnold, 2004). Presidential campaigns cover the largest area, which leads to variation in areas of campaign investment that is helpful for estimating these hypothesized effects.
The measure I used to represent campaign presence is the county-level location of Democratic campaign field offices. Field offices are one way campaigns can invest in particular localities: they can air advertisements in those markets; send the candidate themselves; and/or send surrogates and endorsers to speak on the candidates’ behalf. For my purposes, field offices are the most durable measure of campaign presence in an area. Field offices function as coordination points for the get-out-the-vote efforts that have become increasingly prominent in recent years (Masket, 2009; Darr & Levendusky, 2013). An important part of modern campaigns, they are often established several months before Election Day (Nielsen, 2012). Hence, areas with field presence are a good measure of campaign investment: they engage voters; persist for several months; and conduct regular activities on behalf of the campaign.

**Sample of newspapers.** The 2004, 2008, and 2012 elections represent a confluence of useful data and trends for testing this hypothesis. Although having a longer cross-section of elections for testing would be optimal, there are benefits to using these three. The elections of 2004, 2008, and 2012 were distinguished by campaigns’ increasing investment in field presence (Panagopoulos & Wielhouwer, 2008). Full-text online availability of newspapers also began to take off around this time—an important practical consideration for this project. I utilized Newsbank, the most thorough online full-text newspaper resource available to me, to construct my nationwide sample. There are several options for online full-text newspapers, including Lexis-Nexis, Newsbank

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22 Although having field offices from only one party is a limitation, other studies have demonstrated that findings are not significantly different when analyzing the effects of field offices from both parties. For examples in the 2012 election, see Darr & Levendusky (2014) and Masket, et al. (2013). Data on field office locations come from GWU’s Democracy in Action website: http://www.gwu.edu/~action/. Future research could use 2012 data from both parties to examine questions concerning competition and party-specific effects.
(sometimes referred to as Access World News), and ProQuest. There is little variability between these sources in the amount or quality of the content that they archive (Ridout, Fowler & Searles, 2011).

It is important that my sample of newspapers be geographically unbiased. The Newsbank sample includes newspapers from all fifty states in all three years sampled.23 My sample should also reflect the bias that already exists in newspaper locations. There are around 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States, leaving over 1,700 counties without a daily newspaper headquartered there (Editor & Publisher, 2008). Though newspapers undoubtedly circulate in these counties, the focus of these newspapers is likely to remain in their home city or town (Kaniss, 1991). As Figure 4.1 shows, vast areas of the nation do not contain a daily newspaper headquarters.

Figure 4.1. Counties with and without a newspaper headquarters, 2008.*

Figure 4.1. Counties with and without a newspaper headquarters, 2008.*

*Data from Editor and Publisher International Yearbook, 2008.

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23 Alaska is not included in my analysis because of inconsistencies in their electoral reporting boundaries.
Rural areas are particularly underserved by daily newspapers, as are counties of lower populations. Many of the counties in Idaho, Maine, Utah, and Nevada, for instance, do not have their own newspapers and must rely upon larger cities nearby. There also seems to be a historical component to newspaper availability. Most of the counties in the Northeast and the upper Midwest (Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois) contain their own newspaper, even in rural areas. Any online sample of newspapers should be biased in the same manner that newspaper locations themselves are spread unevenly through the country. Table 4.1 compares several critical demographics of the areas containing newspapers in the Newsbank sample in 2008 to areas with a newspaper in the Editor and Publisher census of daily newspapers.

Table 4.1. Qualities of counties with and without daily newspaper headquarters, and counties with newspapers included and not included in the Newsbank sample of American newspapers, 2008.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban/rural score (1-9; higher = more rural)</td>
<td>Population, 2008</td>
<td>Median income by county, 2008 ($)</td>
<td>N of counties (total = 3,113)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper located in county</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>205,939.10</td>
<td>47,218.81</td>
<td>1,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No newspaper in county</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>32,199.74</td>
<td>42,167.86</td>
<td>1,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsbank newspaper in county</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>260,653.60</td>
<td>47,820.32</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Newsbank newspaper in county</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>42,087.96</td>
<td>42,791.71</td>
<td>2,323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, 2008.

The most significant differences between counties with and without newspapers are their urban/rural scores and their population, as implied by the map in Figure 4.1.24

On average, counties with newspapers are larger and closer to metropolitan areas than...

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24 The Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture determines urban/rural scores. Scores of 1-3 corresponding to metropolitan areas, while scores 4-9 classify non-metropolitan areas.
counties without newspapers. This is particularly noticeable in the differences in average population: counties with newspapers contain more than 150,000 more residents than those without, though a few outliers (such as Los Angeles County, California or Cook County, Illinois) undoubtedly influence these means. Newspapers find more potential customers in these larger, more urban counties. Those customers are also better equipped to spend money on the news, as they earn (on average) $5,000 more per year than Americans in counties without newspapers. Newspapers’ locations are biased towards metropolitan, wealthy areas.

The locations of newspapers within Newsbank’s sample matches the bias of American newspapers. The gap between urban/rural scores is almost identical to that in the Editor and Publisher data (~ 2.2), while the population gap is slightly larger. The gap in median income is also nearly the same (~ $5,000). There are 381 fewer counties with Newsbank newspapers than counties with daily newspapers, but the demographic differences between the two samples are not disqualifying. Newsbank is a valid and geographically representative database for testing my hypothesis.

I include the entirety of Newsbank’s Database of American Newspapers for one day in 2004, one day in 2008, and one day in 2012. Though this sample is narrow in each election, it includes a broad and substantial number of newspapers. Practically, a nationwide study of the entire post-Labor Day period of the campaign is not feasible: the data collection process would be too time-consuming. I selected these three days—October 22, 2004, October 24, 2008, and October 26, 2012—based on their similar distance from Election Day (two weeks out) and their relative insulation from major campaign events or exogenous shocks from world events. On these days, candidates were
travelling in different states, the final debate was at least a week in the past, and the stock market was quiet compared to surrounding days.\footnote{The final weeks of October 2008 were a period of great upheaval in the markets: though the Dow Jones rose 171.48 points the day before, this change was actually the smallest change in the week from 10/20 to 10/28, when the average daily movement of the Dow Jones (in either direction) was 388 points. Stories in the news regarding the major events of 2004’s pre-election period—namely the Iraq War and Abu Ghraib—were consistent across the days surrounding October 22\textsuperscript{nd}. In 2012, 10/26 came several days before the landfall of Hurricane Sandy, and there no major market fluctuations occurred.}

**Newspaper content.** I conducted two searches for these selected days: one for campaign-relevant stories and one blank search to return all stories published in Newsbank’s database. The political search contained three components: the last names of the two major candidates (i.e., “Kerry OR Bush”); the date; and an exclusion term for letters to the editor.\footnote{The search term used was [Not “Letter* NEAR3 editor”] in Newsbank’s search engine.} Letters to the editor are interesting in their own right, but because they are not reported news, they are inappropriate subjects for this study. I used the blank search to measure the number of articles (and total words in those articles) included in each paper that day as a way to measure each particular newspaper’s “news hole” (Galvis, Snyder, & Song, 2012). The amount of total content in a given newspaper is a reasonable proxy for newspaper resources, which should be accounted for in any analysis of newspaper output (Schaffner & Sellers, 2003). By using the number of stories returned by Newsbank, I capture this critical control variable within Newsbank’s sample, minimizing the amount of sample bias created by relying upon Newsbank.\footnote{Newsbank provides a list of available newspapers for a variety of date ranges. I have narrowed each year’s sample to those date ranges and cross-checked that list with the actual newspapers returned by a blank search.} This measure of available space serves as a valuable control variable in my regression analyses.

These Newsbank searches produced two types of measures of newspaper content per election. For each of the categories described above (presidential campaign news and
total content), I created measures of total stories and total words in those stories for each newspaper using a program in the Python computer language that scraped search results from Newsbank’s database. This program created a dataset of newspaper stories containing variables denoting the name of the newspaper, the city and state in which it was located, the words per story, and the headline of each story. From that point, I collapsed each measure within individual newspapers to generate observations representing each newspaper’s content on the day in question.

The newspaper data was then matched to relevant county-level political and demographic variables to create the final dataset for analysis. This process required matching each newspaper’s listed city and state to its county, which I accomplished by merging with a dataset containing all place names in the United States and correcting the minimal number of errors by hand. The resulting datasets provide a representative picture of newspaper coverage on the presidential election (and all other news) on each of these three days across a sample of the nation’s newspapers.

**Methods and Analysis**

It is important to account for the strategic nature of campaign resource allocation and the variation between newspapers and locations. Previous studies of the effect of field offices on partisan turnout have accounted for the strategic nature of campaign field investment by utilizing fixed effects and a battery of significant political and demographic variables that may affect field placement (Masket, 2009). The fact that multiple newspapers may exist within any given county precludes the use of county-level fixed effects for single-election analysis.
Campaign resources are allocated strategically to accumulate 270 electoral votes, making methods that assume random assignment inappropriate. Since field offices’ primary purpose is to mobilize partisans and utilize volunteer labor to get out the vote, we can expect that parties will deploy them in areas of competitive states with a favorable partisan composition, as well as more competitive “swing counties” (Darr & Levendusky, 2013). Partisan factors can influence the production of news separate from campaign activity, especially with regard to tone, favor, and bias (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). Given the size of my sample and that the search string includes both candidates’ names, the bias of individual newspapers is less of a concern for this analysis.

“News content” is a somewhat vague concept: a newspaper may produce more stories on the campaign, more words per story, or both, as a result of a campaign presence in the area. My theory predicts only greater content production; it does not give clear predictions about story frequency or story length. For the sake of thoroughness, I utilize measures for total campaign-relevant stories and words in each subsequent analysis. Table 4.2 displays the summary statistics for the dependent variables of interest and depicts the differences between years and independent variables quite starkly. These critical covariates may cause differences in the amount of content these newspapers generate—the dependent variable of interest in this study—that could mistakenly be attributed to the influence of the independent variable (campaign presence).
Table 4.2. Variation in newspaper content in counties with and without candidate presence. (Only includes counties with newspapers in Newsbank sample.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign presence in county</th>
<th>Words, total</th>
<th>Stories, total</th>
<th>Campaign words, total</th>
<th>Campaign stories, total</th>
<th>% Campaign words</th>
<th>% Campaign stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19,574.43</td>
<td>43.154</td>
<td>1,976.35</td>
<td>3.202</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>6.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=367)</td>
<td>(1,053.97)</td>
<td>(2.267)</td>
<td>(146.43)</td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34,255.63</td>
<td>74.282</td>
<td>5,051.20</td>
<td>8.034</td>
<td>12.77%</td>
<td>9.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=101)</td>
<td>(2,760.92)</td>
<td>(6.263)</td>
<td>(500.04)</td>
<td>(0.811)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full sample</td>
<td>22,736</td>
<td>49.858</td>
<td>2,638.52</td>
<td>4.243</td>
<td>9.34%</td>
<td>7.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=468)</td>
<td>(1,054.56)</td>
<td>(2.306)</td>
<td>(167.67)</td>
<td>(0.261)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13,070.29</td>
<td>29.730</td>
<td>760.42</td>
<td>1.289</td>
<td>5.03%</td>
<td>3.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=480)</td>
<td>(611.04)</td>
<td>(1.315)</td>
<td>(56.52)</td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19,915.85</td>
<td>45.393</td>
<td>1,606.05</td>
<td>2.797</td>
<td>7.09%</td>
<td>5.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=311)</td>
<td>(1,029.62)</td>
<td>(2.288)</td>
<td>(152.69)</td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full sample</td>
<td>15,761.78</td>
<td>35.888</td>
<td>1,092.89</td>
<td>1.882</td>
<td>5.84%</td>
<td>4.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=791)</td>
<td>(561.33)</td>
<td>(1.232)</td>
<td>(70.63)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12,234.07</td>
<td>28.664</td>
<td>793.58</td>
<td>1.248</td>
<td>5.35%</td>
<td>3.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=579)</td>
<td>(489.80)</td>
<td>(1.090)</td>
<td>(68.58)</td>
<td>(0.085)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19,505.17</td>
<td>43.288</td>
<td>1,404.10</td>
<td>2.530</td>
<td>6.93%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=225)</td>
<td>(1,022.99)</td>
<td>(2.166)</td>
<td>(116.12)</td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full sample</td>
<td>14,268.89</td>
<td>32.757</td>
<td>964.43</td>
<td>1.607</td>
<td>5.79%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=804)</td>
<td>(468.32)</td>
<td>(1.017)</td>
<td>(59.87)</td>
<td>(0.085)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses.

These statistics demonstrate that a higher amount and percentage of campaign-related stories are published in newspapers in areas with campaign presence than in those without it, and there is simply less content across the board in 2008 than in 2004. The 2012 data closely resembles 2008 across the entries in Table 4.2, including the total number of newspapers. The content disparity between 2004 and later years is likely due to the much higher number of newspapers in 2008 and 2012, which means that additional small newspapers were part of the sample. Areas with campaign presence clearly contain more content about the campaign—regardless of measurement—than areas without a campaign presence.
More importantly, the ratio of campaign coverage between areas with campaign presence and those without it is roughly similar in all three elections. This proportional difference exists for both campaign words and stories and for overall words and stories in the Newsbank sample for each newspaper. The final two columns in Table 4.2, which measure percentage of campaign-related stories, address this concern. Places with campaign presence appear to devote over two percent more space to campaign content, averaged across all three elections. The consistency of these descriptive statistics in different election cycles gives me confidence that any observed differences in campaign content cannot be not explained simply by quirks of the sample, though I will subject this possibility to further scrutiny in several later tests.

My statistical analysis must account for the dispersion of the data, while incorporating covariates that address potential sources of variation between newspapers’ customer bases and content production. I use a set of covariates that may influence newspaper output: Democratic vote share in 2000, population, median income, percent African-American, and percent of residents with a Bachelor’s degree. These variables address the role of partisan motivation and preference in news production, consumption, and targeting by campaigns. Newspapers in heavily Democratic areas cover Democrats more frequently (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010), and Democrats (the Obama campaign in particular) target African-American areas for more voter contact (Demissie, 2012). Areas with more people provide a larger customer base for newspapers, particularly if those customers are wealthy and highly educated. Finally, as discussed earlier, I include a measurement of the total content collected by Newsbank in each newspaper.
I use a negative binomial count model to test the effect of campaign presence on total stories and total words per newspaper in each election to account for the unevenly dispersed variance of the data. Regional variation in campaign competitiveness also suggests the need for state-level fixed effects and robust standard errors clustered at the county level, in order to account for unobserved differences between counties and states. The state-level fixed effects absorb the impact of contemporaneous state elections and other variation between states. This specification strategy controls for several possible correlates of news production and minimizes confounding from geographic variation.

The exact specification of the negative binomial count model used is described in Equation 4.1, below:

\[
\log(y_i) = \alpha + \beta_1 Presence_i + \Gamma_1 Demographics_i + \beta_2 TotalContent_i + \delta_{s(i)} + \varepsilon_{i(c)} \tag{4.1}
\]

where \(y_i\) represents the number of stories or words (as appropriate) returned by a search of candidate names, \(\alpha\) represents the intercept, \(Presence_i\) denotes my binary variable measuring campaign presence, \(\Gamma_1 Demographics_i\) denotes the vector of demographic variables described in the previous paragraph, \(TotalContent_i\) represents the total amount of all content per newspaper in the Newsbank sample, \(\delta_{s(i)}\) is a set of state-specific fixed effects, and \(\varepsilon_{i(c)}\) is a stochastic disturbance term clustered at the county level.

I also employ joint hypothesis tests of coefficients across my three elections. This additional test allows me to examine the significance of my hypothesized effects while minimizing election-to-election variation. It is not enough to average the coefficient and
standard error on campaign presence of each election and assign significance. A new statistic must be constructed to determine joint significance across the samples. The null hypothesis for the joint significance test is constructed according to a simple average of the constituent parts of a null hypothesis test, 

\[ H_0 = \frac{\beta_1}{\sqrt{\text{se}_1^2}} \]

as represented below:

\[
H_0: \left[ \frac{(\beta_{\text{Presence2004}} + \beta_{\text{Presence2008}} + \beta_{\text{Presence2012}})}{\sqrt{(\text{se}_{\text{Presence2004}}^2 + \text{se}_{\text{Presence2008}}^2 + \text{se}_{\text{Presence2012}}^2)}} \div 3 \right] = 0
\]

The results of this test for statistical significance \((p < 0.05)\) apply to the estimate of an average of the coefficients on campaign presence in each year. The joint test of my primary coefficients in each analysis should provide a more generally applicable estimate of the statistical significance of my primary hypothesized effects.

The coefficients resulting from a negative binomial regression are difficult to interpret, and are not presented here: instead, the ensuing tables display “incidence rate ratios” that give a more straightforward interpretation of the effect. The incident rate ratio for each independent variable denotes the probability of an event (the dependent variable) given a one-unit change in the independent variable. Incident rate ratios greater than one indicate the percent increase in the count of dependent variable, while incident rate ratios below one represent the percent decrease in the count of the dependent variable. Using these specifications, I can determine the impact of campaign presence on newspaper output while accounting for variation between regions.

**Results: Does Local Investment Stimulate Campaign Coverage?**

When campaigns strategically invest in an area, do they encourage the creation of more campaign news in local newspapers? In non-local elections, newspaper reporters may
find it easier to write about the election when campaign activities occur near them. Table 4.3 gives the results of a nationwide test of the hypothesis in three election cycles.

Table 4.3. The effects of campaign presence on campaign content production in a nationwide sample of newspapers: 2004, 2008, and 2012. Incidence rate ratios from negative binomial regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Words</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence</td>
<td>1.184</td>
<td>1.250*</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td>1.456*</td>
<td>1.031</td>
<td>1.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in county)</td>
<td>(0.180)</td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.179)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote</td>
<td>0.655</td>
<td>1.154</td>
<td>0.955</td>
<td>0.596</td>
<td>2.332</td>
<td>0.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share, 2000</td>
<td>(0.332)</td>
<td>(0.634)</td>
<td>(0.442)</td>
<td>(0.494)</td>
<td>(1.824)</td>
<td>(0.578)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td>0.994</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>1.079**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.040)</td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.989</td>
<td>0.860**</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.059)</td>
<td>(0.048)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.097)</td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>1.001</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.005</td>
<td>0.999</td>
<td>0.994</td>
<td>1.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree, 2000</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree</td>
<td><strong>8.803</strong>*</td>
<td>2.034</td>
<td>1.672</td>
<td>3.504</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td>0.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total content per</td>
<td><strong>1.016</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.021</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.025</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.051</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.081</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.091</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspaper-day</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effects?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>261.489</td>
<td>295.847</td>
<td>429.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint hypothesis test:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2.144</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.669</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z-stat:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value:</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>1135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

The results of Table 4.3 confirm the predictions of my hypothesis. Newspapers in areas with a campaign presence publish higher quantities of campaign news content than newspapers in areas without a campaign presence. Joint hypothesis tests across all three cycles show that campaigns can encourage significantly more stories (p < 0.05) and more total words in stories about the campaign (p < 0.1) in areas where they choose to invest
their resources. Incident rate ratios reveal that in areas with a campaign presence, newspapers produce an average (across all three elections) of 20% more words and stories about the election than newspapers in areas that campaigns ignore. This effect varies somewhat in size and significance between elections, but these results support H1 in tests across these three election cycles.28

Local campaign investment has a clear impact on campaign news in local newspapers’ election coverage, at least in terms of the raw amount of content produced. The total amount of content of all kinds produced by a newspaper represents the scope of its coverage and its available reporting resources. These additional resources may be responsible for the increases in story and word totals observed above. I measure the percentage of campaign content in the total content output (as measured by a blank Newsbank search) in these newspapers to account for this possibility. The specification of this test incorporates the same independent variables as described above, but uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression instead of a negative binomial count model because the dependent variable is not a count variable. These results are presented in Table 4.4.

28 I subjected these findings to further scrutiny by conducting a placebo test, the results of which are presented in Table B1 in Appendix B. Placebo tests identify when selection bias might be affecting the results by exploiting temporal variation: using campaign presence at time t to predict outcomes at time t-1. Since a future event cannot predict a past one, a significant coefficient suggests that perhaps an omitted variable may be driving the findings. Campaign presence in 2012, for example, should not significantly predict the number of stories published in an area in 2008. These tests reveal that, unfortunately, future campaign presence significantly predicts 2004 content production. This could be a function of the Kerry campaign’s relatively smaller scope, or the reduced number of newspapers in the 2004 sample. Encouragingly, there are no placebo effects of 2012 campaign presence on 2008 local newspaper content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2) *</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence (in county)</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.011*</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.032*</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote share, 2000</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.003***</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.004***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree, 2000</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed effects?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

There is a positive and significant effect of a local campaign presence on the percentage of newspaper space devoted to campaign news in joint significance tests across all three elections. Newspapers in areas with a campaign presence devoted (on average) 1.3% more space to campaign coverage than newspapers in areas lacking campaign investment. This total amount of coverage includes sports, arts, obituaries, and all of the other content newspapers create. Though 1.3% may seem like a small amount, it likely represents a meaningful shift in the composition of a newspaper’s political news section. Campaign strategy can influence both the amount of campaign content and the percentage of news space devoted to the campaign in local newspapers.
These results from my nationwide sample show the power campaigns hold over the quantity of their earned media coverage, but elections vary greatly between states and cycles. In presidential elections, for instance, not all states are contested equally. Campaigns spend the most money and resources in winnable states that help them exceed 270 electoral votes (Shaw, 2006). Most candidate appearances, advertisement buys, and get-out-the-vote activities occur within these states (Gimpel et al., 2007). It is possible that the effects observed above are explained by the myriad campaign activities that occur in battleground states, not local field presence. As a robustness check against this alternative explanation, I restricted the sample to battleground states only (by election) and replicated the analysis from Table 4.3. These results are displayed in Table 4.5.
Table 4.5. The effects of campaign presence on campaign content production in newspapers in battleground states: 2004, 2008, and 2012. Incidence rate ratios from negative binomial regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, battleground states only</td>
<td>1.034</td>
<td><strong>1.783</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.740</strong></td>
<td>1.256</td>
<td><strong>1.558</strong>*</td>
<td>1.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.202)</td>
<td>(0.312)</td>
<td>(0.403)</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
<td>(0.335)</td>
<td>(0.859)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote share, 2000</td>
<td><strong>0.182</strong>*</td>
<td>0.322</td>
<td><strong>0.295</strong></td>
<td>0.033***</td>
<td><strong>0.190</strong>*</td>
<td>1.341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.177)</td>
<td>(0.238)</td>
<td>(0.278)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td>(2.733)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>1.094</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>1.173</td>
<td>1.102</td>
<td>0.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td>(0.301)</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td><strong>0.752</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.873</strong>*</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td><strong>0.699</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.828</strong>*</td>
<td>1.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
<td>(0.517)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td><strong>1.014</strong>*</td>
<td>1.005</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td>1.016</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree, 2000</td>
<td><strong>11.393</strong>*</td>
<td>3.804</td>
<td>4.206</td>
<td>15.785</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>0.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.873)</td>
<td>(4.277)</td>
<td>(6.805)</td>
<td>(33.616)</td>
<td>(1.010)</td>
<td>(0.331)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total content per newspaper-day</td>
<td><strong>1.013</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.017</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.027</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.040</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.070</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.099</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed effects?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>9.714</td>
<td>1.623</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>6709.838</td>
<td>1,139.904</td>
<td>57.019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

There is an even larger effect of local campaign presence on the quantity of published newspaper campaign content within battleground states. In joint hypothesis tests across all three elections, there are significantly more stories (p < 0.01) and words (p < 0.05) in counties where campaigns establish a local presence within battleground states. An average of 55% more stories and words are published in areas where campaigns invest than in areas they ignore across all three elections. This effect is noticeably higher in 2008 and 2012 (78.3% and 74% more stories, respectively), when there was a more aggressive and comprehensive field effort by Barack Obama’s campaigns in 2008 and
2012 than by John Kerry’s campaign in 2004 (Darr & Levendusky, 2014). In the parts of the nation where the election is most hotly contested, local newspapers seem to be more susceptible to the influence of a local campaign presence on their election coverage.

The Obama campaign’s aggressive field operations make 2008 and 2012 particularly interesting cycles in which to examine my hypothesized effects. There were nearly twice as many counties with Obama field offices in 2008 and 2012 than counties with Kerry field offices in 2004, as the previous tables show. In these counties, a local Democratic campaign was something new—and potentially more newsworthy. I examine this possibility by testing my hypothesis in 2008 and 2012 while restricting my sample to counties without a Kerry field office in 2004. These results are displayed in Table 4.6.

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29 I conducted a similar analysis for field offices in non-battleground states across the three election cycles, presented in Table B2 in Appendix B. Neither words nor stories increased significantly in joint hypothesis tests across all three samples. Interestingly, local campaign presence had a significant and positive effect on both words and stories in 2004, but not 2008 or 2012. Non-battleground state field offices may conduct different activities than those in contested states (Darr & Levendusky, 2014), and future research should try to understand them better.
Table 4.6. The effects of campaign presence on newspapers’ campaign content production in areas without 2004 campaign presence: 2008 and 2012. Incidence rate ratios from negative binomial regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content measurement</th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample restriction</td>
<td>Areas without Democratic campaign presence in 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year measured</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2008</td>
<td>1.391**</td>
<td>1.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.193)</td>
<td>(0.282)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2012</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.243)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote share, 2000</td>
<td>1.635</td>
<td>5.202*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.158)</td>
<td>(5.206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>0.846***</td>
<td>0.597***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.048)</td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td>0.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.055)</td>
<td>(0.087)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree, 2000</td>
<td>1.153</td>
<td>0.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.962)</td>
<td>(0.378)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total content per newspaper-day</td>
<td>1.023***</td>
<td>1.102***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed effects?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>128.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td>227.937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joint hypothesis test:
Z-stat: 2.814***  2.057**
P-value: 0.005  0.040

Observations 981  924  981  924

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

The Obama campaign’s broader field investment strategy earned them more coverage in newspapers. In areas where Kerry did not establish a local presence but Obama did, newspapers published significantly more stories (p < 0.01) and words (p < 0.05) about the campaign in joint significance tests from 2008 and 2012. Incident rate ratios reveal that on average, newspapers in Obama’s targeted areas published an average of 30% more content (stories or words) on the election—a larger amount than the 20%
estimated nationwide across all three cycles (see Table 4.3). Campaign activities spurred by investment in areas where campaign presence is less common may be considered more “newsworthy” by local newspapers. A more aggressive field strategy can facilitate more voter contact and generate additional earned media coverage.

**Discussion**

Presidential campaigns are increasingly contested within limited, strategically determined places. This has resulted in larger amounts of money being spent in smaller areas. Several studies have shown that these strategic choices can influence the behavior and attitude of residents, but they have not explored the effects of regional campaign investment on local media. The amount of political information available to citizens has important downstream consequences for political participation and decision-making. Campaign news is a critical way for citizens to learn about their options in an election, and the availability of political news can have a meaningful impact on interpersonal communication and knowledge (Mondak, 1995). If more information on candidate activities and possibilities for engagement reaches the people who read local news, it could spur greater citizen involvement (McLeod, Scheufele & Moy, 1999; Gershtenson, 2003). Decisions about where campaigns choose to compete can result in the media passing more information along to potential voters, in addition to direct contact from the campaigns themselves.

30 Newsbank also contained many more newspapers in their sample in 2008 and 2012. As a robustness check, I examined whether the effects of campaign presence were significantly larger in areas without a newspaper in the 2004 Newsbank sample. None of the results reached significance. This full table appears as Table B3 in Appendix B.
Future research should add data and explore additional dynamics of earned media in local markets. It may be possible to test whether the “news hole” measures of total stories and words or newspaper circulation is a more influential representation of newspaper resources. An ideal dataset might combine field office placement, number and timing of candidate (and surrogate) visits, and the amount of spending on television advertisements in a given county. Particular electoral contexts, such as Indiana and Montana in 2008, could be useful for examining the particular effects of uncommon campaign activity on the creation of local political news. This approach would permit a more complete measurement of campaign activity, while capturing the totality of geographic campaign variation across the nation much better than the battleground state measure alone. Finally, a set of tests utilizing data from both Democratic and Republican campaigns could address questions of competition and partisan differences. These additional sources might enable a more robust analysis of campaign-media interactions and the collaborative production of campaign news content.

If campaigns can affect the types and tone of campaign stories away from the eye of the much larger national media, that possibility raises questions about the role of the media in campaigns. The competitive context of elections is determined by campaigns, and the local media are largely responsive to these decisions. Local newspapers do not cover national campaigns with equal volume around the country. Media organizations depend upon campaigns to supply them with newsworthy events, opening them up to “management” by campaign decisions and investments.

The findings in this chapter demonstrate that campaigns wield considerable power over the construction of local news coverage in the areas where it is most useful to them.
In areas where investments by non-local campaigns are uncommon, these effects are even larger. Local journalists want to report on meaningful political contests, and campaigns can help them—at the price of wielding more influence over the resulting content. It is unrealistic to think that local newspapers will cover non-local campaigns equally—or at all—if campaigns themselves do not encourage this coverage. Local media coverage has the power to stimulate participation and inform citizens (Snyder & Stromberg, 2010; Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993), and campaigns’ strategic choices greatly influence the creation of campaign content. The media earned by campaigns through their regional investments shapes the information available to Americans in elections, and may bias their decision-making in those campaigns’ favor.
Chapter 5

Presence to Press:

How Campaigns Earn Local Media

Campaigns seek to reach voters where they live, directly or indirectly—in their communities, in their homes, and through the local news. Local media coverage conveys credibility and contributes to fundraising and volunteer recruitment (LaPotin, 2011). Campaigns are utilizing unprecedented levels of funding and data to implement their direct voter contact strategies, but there is no substitute for the benefits of positive local press coverage. The significance of earned media places a high priority on cultivating and maintaining a good relationship with local newspapers. If a campaign invests more resources in an area, will it generate more positive earned media?

I develop a theory exploring how the strategic interaction of campaigns and local press generates press coverage. I expect that selective regional investment by campaigns will lead to positive earned media in local newspapers, which strive to provide their readers with broadly interesting, locally framed political news. Local sources are trusted and emotionally resonant with their consumers, which can encourage more powerfully persuasive media effects (Kaniss, 1991; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). Where campaigns establish a local presence, they provide events, connections, and an accessible frame for local news. This investment gives the local media an accessible frame and perspective on the election, implicitly subsidizing the cost of covering the campaign. Newspapers with
fewer resources should accept these prompts more frequently, rendering the effect of campaign influence more powerful in smaller, resource-strapped outlets.

I test this theory using an original dataset on local campaign presence and newspaper coverage from the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. Using the perennial battleground state of Florida as my setting, I create a sample of closely matched pairs of newspapers across elections, campaign presence, and partisan context. I separate and classify these newspapers according to their resources and partisan surroundings across either, neither, or both election cycles. I conduct a content analysis of news stories from 21 randomly selected days in each election cycle for each newspaper. My findings demonstrate that regional campaign investment generates positive local media coverage of the presidential election, but only in resource-poor newspapers. These smaller newspapers are most susceptible to campaign influence and provide more positive coverage when a campaign invests in their area.

The decline of the local press in recent years makes these findings particularly relevant to contemporary campaign strategy. As more newspapers lose resources, campaigns may have increasing power to shape their own coverage. Newspapers are critical mechanisms for ensuring democratic accountability and responsiveness. If strategic elites are enjoying greater success in determining what the press says about them, this essential function of the local press may be weakening. Understanding campaigns’ ability to influence their own news coverage is critical if, as McCain campaign manager Steve Schmidt put it, “the ability of campaigns to run circles around journalists in some places is strong, and it’s not healthy” (Issenberg, 2012b).
Local Media Coverage and Presidential Campaigns

In recent elections, campaigns have utilized unprecedented funding and data resources to contact voters directly with targeted appeals. Presidential campaigns are predominantly contested in a set of strategically determined “battleground states” (Shaw, 2006; Gimpel, Kaufmann, & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2007). Within these statewide elections, campaigns must decide which counties should receive investments of campaign resources (Coffey et al., 2011; Demissie, 2012). In 2004, 2008, and 2012, presidential campaigns set up a local presence in hundreds of communities to coordinate their voter contact activities and provide a local conduit for campaign participation (Darr & Levendusky, 2014; Masket et al., 2013). Campaigns thus establish a local “presence,” with assigned staff, active volunteers, and regular activities in a strategically determined subset of towns. The voter turnout mechanism for the only “national” campaign in American politics is more accurately described as a coordinated coalition of local campaign operations.

One goal of a local campaign presence is to generate earned media. Campaigns strive to attract media attention that serves their purposes (Flowers, Haynes, & Crespin, 2003). Earned local media coverage allows campaign messages to be validated by a trusted third party, imbuing the message with greater credibility (Sotomayor, 2014). Readers depend upon their local newspapers and find their coverage believable (Kaniss, 1991; Edmonds, 2013). Messages received through trusted media sources can be more persuasive than those conveyed by advertising or other direct messaging (Miller & Krosnick, 2000). Campaigns often use local headlines in advertisements or direct mail, adding credibility and corroboration to positive and negative claims alike (Sotomayor,
The persuasive, enduring usefulness of earned local media coverage throughout the election makes it an attractive commodity for campaigns.

Campaigns do not determine their press coverage, however. That responsibility falls to the reporters and editors at each newspaper (Hamilton, 2006; Lacy, Coulson & Cho, 2002). Newspapers face a tradeoff: they need to cover stories that appeal to their audiences while reducing reporting costs. Local newspapers must choose the political topics towards which to devote their (increasingly limited) resources, particularly since federal, state, and local elections often occur simultaneously. Many newspaper markets do not line up neatly with political boundaries, forcing local newspapers to choose which elections to cover (Snyder & Stromberg, 2010; Arnold, 2004). Elections that only affect a small subsection of a newspaper’s market are less likely to receive attention in the local press, because newspapers tend towards coverage of statewide and federal races (Kiolbassa, 1997). Newspapers prefer to cover more broadly consequential political contests, but they often lack the capability to do so.

Recently, these constraints have become particularly acute as local newspaper resources have diminished. Local newspapers have been unable to attract enough revenue from online advertising to compensate for their lost print revenue (Edmonds et al., 2013), forcing layoffs of 28% of their reporters since 2007 (Jurkowitz, 2014). Political bureaus in particular faced steep cuts, both in statehouses (Enda et al., 2014) and in Washington (Kurtz, 2008; National Press Club, 2014). Editorial spending and newspaper staffs have shrunk by more than a quarter since 2006 (Waldman, 2011). Large, well established newspapers are not immune from these trends. The Baltimore Sun, for example, produced 73% fewer stories in 2009 than in 1991 (Pew, 2010). Staff reporters at the Raleigh News
& Observer of North Carolina fell from 250 in 2004 to 103 in 2011 (Hamilton, 2009). In short, newspapers of all sizes are losing the capability to produce rigorous, objective, and locally framed content.

Despite this loss of capacity, newspapers remain the most important form of media for press coverage of the local campaign—largely because no other form is an adequate substitute. There has been no corresponding increase in local news availability online, as so-called “hyperlocal” websites have gained little traction on the web (Hindman, 2011). Local television stations are a poor substitute for local newspapers because they contain less coverage of statewide races (Druckman, 2005), less coverage of the issues in statewide races (Dunaway, 2008), and less substantive coverage of presidential candidates (Just, Crigler & Buhr, 1999). Local newspapers remain the predominant source of locally constructed political news, despite their recent challenges (Edmonds et al., 2013). Without local newspapers, it is not clear how voters will acquire with the information needed to facilitate democratic competence and accountability in elections.

**Theory and Hypotheses**

I develop several hypotheses based on the theory outlined above. My first set of hypotheses shows how a local campaign presence likely influences the amount and type of coverage in the local media. Next, I argue that indicators of campaign influence on story construction should appear more frequently in areas with a campaign presence. This effect may be contingent on the capacity of the local newspaper in question. Finally, I
argue that campaigns can earn positive coverage—but only when newspapers are particularly vulnerable to their influence.

In this chapter, I focus on non-local campaigns with high levels of resources: presidential campaigns. Non-local politicians must invest resources and effort to cultivate press coverage in local newspapers in unfamiliar areas. Presidential campaigns are a particularly useful example of strategic resource investment, due to their immense capacity to deploy a campaign presence in hundreds of communities around the nation.

Resource-rich campaigns make themselves more attractive subjects of local coverage by subsidizing the cost of political reporting, particularly in this time of weakness for local newspapers. A local campaign presence can help establish a rapport with the local press, making coverage of campaign organizing and activity a more attractive subject for reporting. If voter contact is the “meat” of campaign activities, media opportunities could be considered the “gravy” (Harber, 2011). Campaign staffers seek to establish regular communication with reporters and conduct events with volunteers and surrogates. In these ways, a campaign presence can serve the same purposes as a candidate visit without expending a campaign’s scarce resources: its candidate’s time.

Studies of campaign influence on local press coverage often focus on media events involving an appearance by the candidate themselves (Jones, 1998; Rickershauser-Carvalho, 2008, Althaus, Nardulli, & Shaw, 2010). These high-profile events, though powerful, do not occur in a vacuum. Press coverage is the product of cultivated relationships between a campaign and local reporters. If campaign staffers are familiar to local media, they may be asked to provide quotes to local media in the context of
politically significant events, potentially influencing how those events are framed (Livingston & Bennett, 2003). Staffers can also personally invite reporters to events and interact with them socially when they are located near a newspaper.

By establishing a local presence, campaigns can also instigate politically significant events at a much lower cost than the price of events with the candidate present. A deputy state field director for the Obama campaign in 2008 confirmed this strategy to me in an interview: “day of action” events (involving many volunteers contacting voters at once) and visits by campaign surrogates were used to attract coverage. Although local operations were primarily conducted to facilitate contact operations at voters’ doors and on the phones, this staffer confirmed several other goals: “field was used to generate local media hits.” In a separate interview, an experienced Massachusetts field staffer articulated the media function of a local campaign presence: “Field is exponentially more important when media is around.” Campaigns subsidize their own media coverage by bringing events that showcase their local support to the local press. A local presence makes the campaign easier to cover, and it should increase the number of stories published about the election in those strategically chosen areas.

H1a: Newspapers from areas with a campaign presence will publish more stories on a national election than those without a campaign presence.

The relationship between campaigns and local reporters is not determined solely by the efforts of the former. Local news sources have different levels of resources.

---

31 This staffer did not wish to be named.
32 Norman Birenbaum, former field staffer for Elizabeth Warren.
available for political coverage. Every media outlet must decide which news stories to publish. Reporting capability plays an important role in this decision. The news budget influences the time, personnel, and spending available per story (Epstein, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). More revenue means more reporters can be hired to report on different aspects of politics, making it more likely that newspapers will choose to spend those resources on national political reporting (Cohen, 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008).

Newspapers with more resources publish more content on their local representatives and on the president than smaller newspapers (Arnold, 2004; Dunaway, 2011; Eshbaugh-Soha & Peake, 2008; Peake, 2007). Previous scholarship demonstrates that each additional 100,000 readers lead to 10% more stories on the president’s policies and actions in office (Cohen, 2010). The same dynamic should hold true during presidential elections. Larger newspapers have the resources to produce more coverage of many elections, while smaller newspapers may require some instigation to cover the presidential race or politics at any level higher than local offices (Shea & Burton, 2010). Unless an event in the national campaign is translated into a locally relevant story, small newspapers have little reason to report it. Therefore, I expect larger newspapers to publish more stories about the election than smaller ones.

**H1b: Larger newspapers will publish more stories on the election than smaller newspapers.**

H1a and H1b describe two factors that likely influence the amount of campaign-relevant stories in a newspaper. Campaigns are not merely concerned with story totals, however. They seek a certain kind of story with a positive tone and with information that
will attract and inform supporters. If campaigns can stimulate more reporting through their regional investment, the stories that result should contain evidence of campaign-press interaction. This evidence should be found in attention paid to voter mobilization activities, local framing of the race, and quotes from supporters.

Voter contact is the primary goal of most campaign events, so coverage of mobilizing activities such as voting and volunteering should increase in areas of campaign presence. Media content can encourage citizens to believe that their actions can make a difference by sharing stories of local activities that extol the virtues of participation (Nicodemus, 2004; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). If campaigns use local presence to generate earned media, the resulting coverage should portray political campaigning positively and inform citizens about how to get involved (Lemert et al., 1977).

**H2a: Newspapers from areas with campaign presence should contain more mobilizing information than newspapers in areas without campaign presence.**

More locally framed stories also should appear in areas of campaign presence. Campaign staff can exploit their familiarity with local reporters to provide statistics and arguments about regionally important issues, as my interview subjects confirmed above. Without nearby events or locally significant arguments from the campaigns, reporters may find it more difficult to describe a national race with a local frame. One way to make a story relevant locally is to include quotes from local citizens. Campaigns also ease this task for media by establishing a local presence. Press releases containing selected quotes from local supporters could be attractive subjects for stories, and local presence places campaign staff in closer contact with area supporters (Donahower, 2012). Reporters may
substitute towards stories requiring less effort to produce, particularly at a time when newsroom staffs are being cut and reporters are stretched thin.

**H2b:** Newspapers from areas with campaign presence should contain more localized frames than newspapers in areas without campaign presence.

**H2c:** Newspapers from areas with campaign presence should contain more quotes from local citizens than newspapers in areas without campaign presence.

Newspapers’ resources and reporting styles provide opportunities for campaigns. Smaller newspapers are constrained by their lack of resources, which limits their original reporting to local events and elections. Campaigns are empowered to craft this locally focused coverage and supply it to newspapers when they invest in the area. In a time when “beat reporters” are more accurately described as “the point person for press releases on a particular topic,” campaigns wield greater power than ever (Waldman, 2011). In their efforts to attract supporters, generate positive headlines for use in advertisements, and put forth an image of positivity from local citizens, campaigns may find that local newspapers are willing partners. The same indicators of campaign influence in H2—mobilizing information, frame location, and quotes from local citizens—should be more prevalent in newspapers with fewer resources for creating original election news stories.

**H3:** Smaller newspapers from areas with a campaign presence should (a) publish more stories with mobilizing information; (b) publish more locally framed stories; and (c) publish more stories with quotes from local citizens than larger newspapers from areas with a campaign presence.
The quantity of earned coverage in local newspapers is not the only thing that campaigns care about, however. Campaigns wish to attract positive earned media that unambiguously portrays their candidates in a positive light (Cohen, 2010), and they try to establish good relationships with the press in order to do so (Harber, 2011). Well-organized campaigns provide reporters with everything they need to write positive stories, since news creators must pick and choose which facts to report (Shea & Burton, 2010). A well-organized campaign connects local reporters with positive quotes from local supporters by holding a newsworthy event or sending out quotes in a press release (Donahower, 2012). Providing the raw materials for a story is the most direct and effective way campaigns can encourage the production of a positive story.

This sort of rapport is more easily cultivated when campaigns have staff on the ground in a community who make regular contact with reporters in person and over the phone (Harber, 2011). Candidates cannot simply sweep into town and win over reporters: relationships take months to build, and an early start is critical (Sotomayor, 2014; Harber, 2011). Pre-existing relationships with reporters can multiply the positive impact of campaign activities (LaPotin, 2011). By placing dedicated staff and resources in an area, campaigns become enmeshed in the community and position themselves for repeated contact with local reporters. I expect a campaign presence to ease the cultivation of these relationships, leading to positive coverage of the candidate and positive quotes from local supporters in nearby newspapers.

H4a: Newspapers in areas with a campaign presence should publish more positive stories on that campaign.
Smaller newspapers’ potential susceptibility to campaign influence (as proposed in H1b above) may also affect the tone of their political coverage. Since campaigns portray themselves in a positive light, the resulting coverage should be more complimentary of the candidate and his or her organization. Where political elites invest their resources into a community, small newspapers are more likely to reward them with positive coverage (Eshbaugh-Soha & Peake, 2008). Campaigns should therefore expect a greater return on their investment of subsidized, positive media content in smaller local newspapers.

**H4b: Smaller newspapers from areas with a campaign presence should publish more positive stories on that campaign than larger newspapers from areas with a campaign presence.**

**Data, Sampling, and Coding**

Detecting campaigns’ ability to earn local media requires reliable measurement of both campaign presence and newspaper content across a variety of geographic and campaign settings and newspapers. A significant potential for omitted variable bias exists when one assesses the many and varied influences upon newspaper content creation. Newspapers differ greatly between (and within) states in their intended readership, partisan slant, and reporting resources. Rather than controlling for all of these factors, I choose to match and stratify on the most important newspaper-level factors—location and newspaper resources—while categorizing newspapers according to my dependent variable of campaign presence. Matching on the largest known influences on the slant and volume of
political news enables more powerful inferences about the influence of local campaign activity on news construction.

I employ a within-state analysis of matched pairs of newspapers across a random sample of twenty-one days during the final two months of two recent elections, 2004 and 2008. Newspapers were matched and categorized according to the variables with the greatest potential to influence their political coverage: campaign presence; reporting resources; and partisan surroundings.  

I choose the state of Florida for the setting of my analysis. Florida provides several advantages towards satisfying the requirements listed above. As a constant battleground state, Florida experiences substantial and regular attention from presidential candidates seeking to win its substantial number of electoral votes. Florida is a geographically vast state with a diffuse population: 60% of the state’s population lives within ten miles of the state’s 1,350 miles of coastline (E.P.A., 2002; Beaver, 2006). Florida’s cities and towns, though numerous, are often diffuse enough that little overlap exists between their local newspaper markets. Florida’s newspapers are also well represented in the newspaper content database Newsbank, which was the most comprehensive online database of newspaper content available during this period. By sampling within a single state, I hold state-level campaign activity constant, accounting for a major potential threat to causal inference.

Newspaper sampling strategy. In my content analysis, I use eight newspapers, categorizing them according to the three critical variables described above: (1) whether

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33 Newspapers focus most of their attention on the city or town where they are located (Kaniss, 1991). I adopt the county of its headquarters as a consistent (if inexact) measurement of the area of a local newspaper’s primary area of attention.
there was a Democratic campaign presence, measured as a field office in their home county in 2004 and/or 2008; (2) their reporting resources, as represented by circulation size in 2008, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation; and (3) their partisan surroundings, measured by the vote share of Democratic nominee Al Gore in the newspaper’s home county in the 2000 presidential election. These factors account for my primary independent variable of interest, field presence; the resources of the newspaper, for testing H1b, H3, and H4b; and the partisan composition of the newspaper’s county, an important confounding factor for newspaper coverage (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). The newspapers are listed and categorized in Table 5.1, below.

### Table 5.1. Florida newspapers by Democratic field investment, 2004 and 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>The Daily Commercial (Leesburg, FL) [GVS: 43.5%; C: 24,330]</td>
<td>Bradenton Herald [GVS: 47.4%; C: 38,064]</td>
<td>The Ledger (Lakeland, FL) [GVS: 46.4%; C: 54,036]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ocala Star-Banner [GVS: 46.4%; C: 39,926]</td>
<td>Charlotte Sun [GVS: 47.0%; C: 37,241]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Treasure Coast News/Press-Tribune** [GVS: 45.2%; C: 89,450]</td>
<td>Sarasota Herald-Tribune [GVS: 48.4%; C: 84,291]</td>
<td>Florida Times-Union [GVS: 43.6%; C: 127,661]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


** The city of Stuart, Florida is the headquarters of the Treasure Coast Press/News-Tribune newspaper group, which is comprised of the St. Lucie News Tribune, the Vero Beach Press Journal, and the Stuart News. Martin County, where the city of Stuart is located, did not have a Democratic field office in 2004 or 2008, though Indian River County (Vero Beach) and St. Lucie County (Port St. Lucie) did in 2008. Since the newspaper group co-produces content and the headquarters is located in Martin County, I use the Stuart News as my representation of the political content produced by this newspaper group.

Campaign field presence is operationalized using the county-level location of Democratic campaign field offices. Field offices are points of coordination for the get-
out-the-vote efforts that have become more prominent in recent years. They are an increasingly important part of modern campaigns and are often established several months before Election Day (Nielsen, 2012). The staff and volunteers housed in field offices engage with voters, hold events, and interact with local media on behalf of the candidate over the course of several months. These offices stimulate turnout and can help campaigns win closely contested states (Darr & Levendusky, 2014), demonstrating their worth as a good measure of active campaign presence.

I classify newspapers as having high or low resources. Higher-resource newspapers should sell more copies, generating more revenue that they can use to hire more staff reporters. Circulation size is a reliable and commonly used representation of a newspaper’s available resources (Arnold, 2004; Dunaway, 2008). Using an approach similar to Arnold (2004), I rank-order Florida’s thirty-eight newspapers before grouping them into quartiles by total circulation. These categories are clearly distinguished from each other: the smallest newspaper in the high resources category circulates over 30,000 more copies than the largest newspaper in the low resources category. The low resource newspapers come from the lowest quartile of Florida newspapers, while the high resource newspapers come from the second and third quartiles. This classification strategy enables me to test for the effect of differences in the reporting resources of newspapers.

Darr & Levendusky, 2013 and Masket et al., 2013. The McCain-Palin campaign established one office in each of the counties I examine, ensuring that Republican investment is equal across the sample in 2008 (the only year for which there is Republican field office data in this study). Data on field office locations come from GWU’s Democracy in Action website: http://www.gwu.edu/~action/.

Data come from the 2008 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook. Arnold (2004) uses this strategy to divide all American newspapers into sextiles by cumulative circulation. I wish to compare a smaller number of newspapers (within one state); therefore, I used fewer categories (quartiles). A full table of Florida’s newspapers, ordered by quartile, appears in the Appendix (Table C1).
The partisan composition of a newspaper’s readership market is another demonstrated influence on that newspaper’s coverage of politics. Newspapers in Democratic-leaning areas speak more favorably about Democrats and their preferred policies, and vice versa for Republican areas, in order to reflect the preferences of their potential customers (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010; Mullainathan & Schleifer, 2005). Geographic partisanship influences the slant of a newspaper even more strongly than its ideology of the ownership group (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). Since partisan balance of a newspaper’s primary market is the most powerful confounding variable for story tone (and thus the biggest threat to inference), it was essential to match very closely on partisan balance for each newspaper. Newspapers in heavily Democratic areas may cover Democrats more positively regardless of campaign investment. I therefore required newspapers from counties with an even partisan split—preferably one slightly less favorable to Democrats.

Newspapers that closely match on market partisanship and circulation size are very rare, yet they are essential to obtaining reliable inferences in this study. Florida once again contains newspapers that satisfied these strict matching conditions. Every newspaper in my sample comes from a county that voted for Al Gore, the Democratic nominee in 2000, at a rate of between 43.5% (The Daily Commercial (Leesburg, FL)) and 48.4% (the Sarasota Herald-Tribune). By isolating Democratic vote share in a narrow, 5% band just under 50%, I ensure that the areas measured are genuinely competitive and balanced. Neither party should automatically expect more positive coverage in these

36 2000 vote share (the partisan environment at $t-1$) is used to avoid confounding with results from the periods sampled ($t_1$ & $t_2$).
newspapers, so campaigns may be more incentivized to earn it. Without campaign prompting, newspapers in these competitive areas may be less likely to construct positive coverage of their own volition and may craft more balanced stories to appeal to their balanced audience. I thus minimize the role of partisan context in news construction and avoid newspapers from areas of Democratic dominance.

The partisan slant of a newspaper’s editorial staff also affects the tone of newspaper coverage. A given newspaper’s coverage of political candidates on the news pages is significantly influenced by the endorsement on its editorial page, and voters can be persuaded by these endorsement decisions (Kahn & Kenney, 2002; Ladd & Lenz, 2009). The effects of endorsement depend partially on the existing slant of the newspaper, which is affected by its geographic surroundings, as described above (Chiang & Knight, 2011). Hence, one must account for each potential confounding influence, even if matching on both is impossible. I match on home county vote share while controlling for endorsement in the previous election closest to the periods sampled (in this case, the 2000 presidential race).

I collected the samples for my content analysis from a search of the Newsbank database of stories published on twenty-one randomly selected days between Labor Day and Election Day. The twenty-one days sampled include three examples from each day of the week, in order to account for variations in length between editions published on different days of the week. Newspapers may generate more political content on Sundays or on another day, e.g., the Boston Globe’s “Capital” section on Fridays (Hare, 2014).

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37 I use “days” to refer to the count of days before the election, not an actual calendar date, in order to improve comparability between elections.
The search terms used were “Kerry OR Bush” in 2004 and “Obama OR McCain in 2008.” I also added an exclusion term for letters to the editor, and removed any letters to the editor from the final analysis that the filter missed. Because I am focusing on the values behind news creation, letters to the editor would be an inappropriate measure.

**Content analysis coding.** I assess media content using a detailed content analysis. Content is coded at the story level, rather than by day or by sentence (Cohen, 2010). Stories are first categorized by relevance: whether the focus is primarily on the presidential race; if it is secondary to a focus on state and/or local politics; or if a story is a mistake caused by the word search. (I exclude these unrelated stories). Next, I take note of the location and type of each story—an important measure of a campaign’s ability to encourage the adoption of local frames. Stories are coded as “1” if they adopt a local frame (defined as the newspaper’s home county and bordering counties); “2” if the story refers to campaign events elsewhere in the state; and “3” if the story is nationally framed (including stories from outside the state). If a story contains multiple frames, it is coded according to its most local frame, since demonstrated reporting effort is necessary to relate the subject matter to local concerns.

Locally framed stories discuss the election in the context of local activities and citizens’ actions. Excitement over the 2008 election spurred high levels of voter registration across the state. The *Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville’s local newspaper, interviewed several first-time voters and placed the increase in local context:

> In Mandarin alone, the number of registered voters as of early September was 44,269, up almost 10 percent since 2004. Mandarin High School students even beat out all other schools in a countywide student voter registration drive earlier this year. (Andres, 2008)
Not every story involving local citizens contains a local frame, however. In a 2008 story from *The Ledger* of Lakeland, Florida, for instance, the author relies entirely upon national statistics to explore religious trends. The only local reporting comes from interviews with local pastors. The views expressed, however, are rooted in religious opinions, not in the concerns of their local church:

‘McCain didn't excite most evangelicals I know … we’re scared to death of Barack Obama. We see him as a threat to religious liberty,’ [Lynne Breidenbach, co-pastor of Family Life Fellowship] said. (McMullen, 2008)

The frame of the story is coded as national, since local concerns are not used to contextualize the issues and strategy of the national election.

I adopt a cautious approach to coding the tonality of stories. Tonality can be coded in three ways: statement-level, story-level, and sentence-level (Cohen, 2010). Knowing the psychology of how readers interpret a story’s positive, negative, or neutral tone is difficult. I code each article as positive or negative only if it is unambiguous: i.e., a story is positive if it contains no phrases that can be coded as negative. I also employ Jeffrey Cohen’s definition of positive and negative statements: if the coder were the candidate, would the statement in the story hurt or help him or her (Cohen, 2010)? Using this approach, I classify stories according to measures of tone for each candidate, coded as -1 (negative statements only), 0 (entirely neutral or both positive and negative statements), or 1 (positive statements only).

Purely positive stories often center on the actions of a particular campaign, since it can exercise more control over the newsworthy occurrence. In 2004, for example, a nationwide tour of musicians supporting John Kerry visited Florida. Kerry’s supporters attended the concerts to hear acts such as Bruce Springsteen and R.E.M., and they were
encouraged to vote and participate in the election. News reporters covering the events reflected this positive messaging in their stories:

Phoebe Cohen, a member of the League of Conservation Voters, an environmental group in Orlando, passed out flyers from her group in front of the arena. Her friend Jeff Shelby was dressed in an over-sized John Kerry costume, similar to those seen at parades. ‘We are endorsing John Kerry,’ she said. ‘He is a dream come true for the environmental community.’ (Dunn, 2004)

By holding local events, campaigns can also use surrogates—public officials or celebrities speaking on behalf of the candidates—to criticize their opponents. When describing an event, journalists cannot help but summarize the speaker’s message:

[Former New York City Mayor Rudy] Giuliani criticized Democrat Barack Obama, calling him too liberal and “way off the charts.” He also alleged that a liberal agenda would give criminals second chances they don't deserve through numerous liberal Supreme Court appointments. (Hunt, 2008)

If a campaign is well connected with the local press, however, it may be able to issue a statement in response, transforming a negative story into a neutral one.

Obama campaign officials countered by attacking McCain's record in the U.S. Senate, saying in 1994 he voted against Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden's crime bill that put 100,000 officers on the streets and led to a decline in murder. (Hunt, 2008)

Using local press contacts to convey prepared counter-points, the Obama campaign was able to neutralize some of the impact of Giuliani’s pre-election visit to Jacksonville.

Quotes are included as an indicator of reporting cost and localism. Journalists attempt to find quotes to illustrate stories. Campaigns can make positive quotes more accessible to local reporters by providing them directly or easing reporters’ access to the candidate, staff, surrogates, and local supporters. Quotes are classified by speaker in the following categories: candidate/running mate; high-level state official (governor, senator, or judge); national officials and experts; campaign staffers; and local citizens. For
example, Giuliani’s quote is marked as negative quote for Obama by a national official, while Phoebe Cohen’s quote is marked as positive for Kerry from a local citizen.

I also measure whether newspaper coverage contains content that encourages political participation. In Florida’s newspapers, early voting received extensive coverage:

Robin Estess took time out from husband Steven Christesen's medical practice Tuesday to cast her vote. She said she plans to cover for every employee in the next few days so they have time to get out and vote early also. “I really envision people still standing in line on Nov. 4 and the polls closing,” Estess said.

(Hackworth, 2008)

My coding scheme captures mobilizing information in the context of the campaign by noting whether a story describes any of several subcategories of campaign actions: signing up volunteers; phone banking; door knocking; gatherings and house parties; fundraising; rally attendance; and non-partisan voter registration and early voting information. These categories encompass the most common types of political participation by local citizens, particularly those types encouraged by campaign staff.

This coding scheme provides a comprehensive account of the ways in which campaigns may influence newspapers’ political reporting. Several variables capture the hypothesized mechanisms of effect—e.g., localized frames, quotes, and mobilizing information—in addition to the effects on quantity and tone specified in the hypotheses. Using this array of dependent variables, it should be possible to discern the impact of campaign presence on the construction of stories in the local newspaper.

**Results: Can Campaigns Earn Local Media?**

Campaign influence on newspaper coverage may manifest itself in the quantity of campaign news or in the shape and content of that news, depending on the resources
available to each newspaper. H1 deals with quantity, H2 and H3 examine the content and construction of newspaper coverage, and H4 examines the tone of that coverage.

Descriptive statistics on the number of stories in high and low resource newspapers by election and by campaign presence should shed light on illustrate these trends and provide the basis for difference-in-means tests of H1a-b. Table 5.2 gives these statistics both as totals for the sample and as stories per newspaper per week in one election cycle.

| Table 5.2. Story totals by newspaper type, year, and campaign presence. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | Total stories   | Stories per    | Total stories   | Stories per    |
|                 | (1)             | newspaper/week | (3)             | newspaper/week |
| 2004            | 140             | 8.43           | 67              | 5.51           |
| 2008            | 164             | 8.23           | 85              | 7.55           |
| No campaign presence | 100             | 6.07           | 47              | 4.45           |
| Campaign presence | 204             | 9.42           | 105             | 7.63           |
| Full Sample     | 304             | 8.32           | 152             | 6.65           |

In areas with a campaign presence, newspapers publish significantly more campaign stories—averaging 6.07 (std. dev. = 2.43; n = 100) stories per week compared to 9.42 (2.69; 204) in newspapers from areas without campaign presence ($t_{304} = 10.52$, $p < 0.01$ for a two-tailed t-test). When there is more campaign news to report, newspapers will report it. Newspapers with greater capability to report on campaigns publish more campaign news, even when campaign presence is not explicitly considered. High resource newspapers publish significantly more campaign stories: an average of 10 (2.72; 152) stories per week, compared to 6.65 (2.36; 152) in newspapers with fewer resources ($t_{304} = 11.45$, $p < 0.01$ for a two-tailed t-test). These findings provide some confirmation of H1a and H1b. Campaigns can stimulate political reporting, and newspapers need
resources to report thoroughly on campaigns. Further exploration of the interaction between these two forces, however, requires more sophisticated measures and methods.

Do local newspapers in areas with campaign investment publish stories with more evidence of campaign influence? H2a-c offer predictions about the specific forms that campaign coverage may take in areas with a campaign presence. To test these hypotheses, I utilize an OLS regression analysis of campaign presence on an array of dependent variables derived from my coding scheme: mobilizing information (Column 1); frame location (Column 2); and quotes by local citizens (Column 3). H3a-c explore the strategic interaction of campaign investment and newspaper resources. The results of the tests of these hypotheses appear in columns 4-6, test the same dependent variables as H2a-c, but introducing an independent variable indicating newspaper resources and a variable denoting the interaction of newspaper resources and campaign presence.

I test H3a-c using an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with a full interaction of my dummy variables for field presence and newspaper resources (low = 0, high = 1). An interaction of this sort changes the interpretation of all coefficients. The coefficient on campaign presence alone, for example, does not represent the main effect: instead, it indicates the impact of campaign presence (1) on the political content of a small newspaper (0). The coefficient on the variable labeled “High resource newspaper” expresses the effect of having no local presence on the campaign coverage in a large newspaper. Finally, the interaction term captures the impact of campaign presence on areas with a large newspaper. The results for tests of H2 and H3 appear in Table 5.3.
When newspapers large and small are considered together, campaign investment appears to have little impact. In columns 1-3, there is no significant effect of campaign presence on the inclusion of mobilizing information, the location of a story’s frame, or quotes from locals in newspaper stories. Newspapers may generally be able to resist a campaign’s preferred types of coverage. These results show that a local campaign presence alone is not enough to influence all newspapers.

The coefficients in Columns 4-6 do not necessarily confirm H3, but they affirm that a newspaper’s capacity to produce coverage is worth examining. These coefficients represent the percentage of content influenced by the indicated variable. For clarity, I discuss the results in terms of story counts (stories each week per newspaper in each
Election stories in large newspapers in areas without campaign presence are significantly less likely to contain quotes from locals (p < 0.01): two stories per week, compared to two and a half in small newspapers from areas also lacking campaign presence. Obtaining these quotes requires local reporting effort. Without local campaign competition, larger newspapers may use their resources on national frames and figures instead of exploring the race’s impact in their community. Although none of the individual interaction terms are significant, the sum total of the coefficients suggests that newspaper resources influence the construction of political coverage.

When campaigns interact with newspapers of differing resources, can they influence the tone of coverage they receive? I utilize the same empirical strategy as above to test H4a and H4b, examining two independent variables: story tone for the Democratic candidate and the tone of all quotes in the article for the Democratic candidate. The results are presented in Table 5.4.

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38 Predicted story counts were computed by multiplying predicted probabilities for each possible outcome by the story counts in small and large newspapers (152 in each), and dividing the outcome by the number of newspapers per category (five for small, three for large), the number of elections sampled (two), and the number of weeks sampled (three).
Table 5.4. OLS evidence of the influence of campaign presence on story and quote tone in local newspapers, 2004 and 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H4a: All newspapers</th>
<th>H4b: Larger vs. smaller newspapers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story tone for Democrat</td>
<td>Quote tone for Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence (in county)</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large newspaper</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence × Large newspaper</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorsement in 2000</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.091)</td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A newspaper’s resource level is critical to determining campaigns’ power to generate positive news coverage. In Columns 1 and 2, there is no effect of campaign presence on story tone. This result follows the pattern of results in H2, by demonstrating that campaign presence alone cannot influence the tone of media coverage. In Columns 3 and 4, however, I find a strong and significant interactive effect of campaign investment and newspaper size on story tone (p < 0.05). Large newspapers in areas with campaign presence actually publish fewer positive campaign stories per week than large newspapers without campaign influence (0.83 vs. 1.4). No amplification of campaign influence exists in newspapers with more capacity to cover politics: instead, larger newspapers are able to counterbalance campaigns’ attempts to control tone. When campaigns invest in markets with a larger newspaper, they struggle to attract purely
positive coverage—and they may lose some when those newspapers are capable of reaching out to both sides.

The best way for a campaign to earn positive media in the local news is by locating its resources in a market with a small newspaper. Four times more positive stories per week were published in small newspapers in areas with campaign presence than in those without it (2.15 vs. 0.48). This substantial effect demonstrates campaigns’ leverage in their strategic interaction with local media. Without a local hook—often provided by the campaign—local newspapers have little incentive to cover larger races. When campaigns do invest in smaller areas, however, they are rewarded with positive coverage. As additional evidence, campaigns have more success feeding positive quotes to small newspapers. A campaign presence in the area leads to four times more stories with (net) positive quotes in small newspapers (1.53 to 0.37), but 25% fewer such stories in large newspapers (0.8 to 1.07). Reporters are more likely to be exposed to positive quotes about a campaign in areas with campaign presence. Only in small newspapers, however, does a local presence more positive quotes appear published articles without counterbalancing statements.

A is a clear earned media benefit exists for campaigns that invest in areas with smaller newspapers, but some drawbacks emerge as well. Campaigns can be more confident that the coverage they encourage will be published. Earning positive coverage in high resource newspapers is more difficult, but these newspapers are the most widely read (Arnold, 2004). Campaigns must strategically navigate the tradeoff between their ability to influence tone of coverage and the number of voters who will read that

39 This variable measures whether the sum total of quotes in an article was positive, negative, or neutral.
coverage. Investment in areas with low resource newspapers may be more useful for pushing specific messages and generating headlines that can be used in advertisements. If “all publicity is good publicity,” then focusing on larger sources might be preferable. Without coverage in high resource newspapers, campaigns limit potential exposure to their earned media message. Depending on the specifics of their messages and needs, campaigns could establish a presence in an area based upon local media possibilities.

Conclusions

Campaigns can influence the coverage they receive in low resource local newspapers when they establish a campaign presence near a newspaper’s headquarters. Newspapers with more resources are better at resisting campaign influence because they are more capable of collecting news independently. Earned media is not exclusively a product of campaign effort. It is a strategic interaction between campaigns and local media in which the comparative strength of local news sources plays an essential role. Campaigns can influence the characteristics and tone of stories most effectively when newspapers are vulnerable.

This chapter takes an important first step towards understanding the strategic dynamics of earned campaign media in local newspapers. As campaign resources increase and data improves, more campaigns are establishing local offices—particularly in subnational elections and in Republican presidential campaigns. Future research should exploit this development to investigate other states, the dynamics of partisan competition, and other competitive contexts. Another useful study might examine media coverage of campaigns in the same newspapers over the course of several elections,
measuring the relationship between circulation decline and production of earned campaign coverage.

If campaigns are incentivized to invest in field offices in previously ignored small towns, more people may well be encouraged to participate in the political process. Small local newspapers give campaigns additional returns on their investment in regional organization. These findings provide additional reasons for campaigns to invest locally in smaller towns and communities. Numerous studies argue that investing in particular locales can facilitate more effective get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts in those areas (Masket et al., 2013; Darr & Levendusky, 2014). The results here suggest that part of that effect is due to increased positive coverage of that campaign in the local media. The losses in rigorous campaign reporting may be counterbalanced by gains in participatory activity if campaigns continue to invest in big cities and small towns alike.

At a time of local newspapers vulnerability, campaign fundraising and voter contact techniques are ascendant. Lower-resource newspapers are more susceptible to campaign influence, but many larger newspapers also are losing their capabilities and independence. Public affairs news has dramatically diminished, regardless of how it is measured, even in major cities (Schaffter, 2010). The local coverage that remains is less independent and ambitious, with less information, investigation, and analysis (Downie & Schudson, 2009; Waldman, 2011). Much of the decline in these papers coincides with falling print advertising revenue, which began in earnest in 2006 and has not recovered (Edmonds et al., 2013). This decline makes all newspapers more vulnerable to campaigns’ efforts to generate their preferred coverage in the local media.
Local media coverage should ideally provide a rigorous check on campaign claims, counterbalancing the ever-present influence of paid media. When newspapers become yet another outlet for campaign press releases, they contribute less to the information that citizens require for making sense of the political world. The press’ role in the process of ensuring political accountability is to interpret and supplement the messages of political elites, not merely to transmit them (Jamieson & Waldman, 2004). With more money than ever devoted to paid advertising, campaigns do not need the help. Reporters at all levels are being forced to react to stories, with less time to investigate and question their causes (Waldman, 2011). If the trend away from original reporting—what veteran reporter Walter Shapiro recently called “the slow death of traditional statewide campaign journalism” (Shapiro, 2010)—continues, newspapers will cease to be an effective check on campaign messaging. Campaigns will find it increasingly easy to control the flow of election information through the news media.
Chapter 6

Conclusion: A Future for Local Election News

The steep decline of local newspapers in recent years represents a major shift in the traditional environment of American media that may be detrimental to American politics. Local newspapers inform and empower voters, but their coverage is subject to influence and distortion by campaigns. In the preceding chapters, I outlined a theory describing how the strategic considerations of newspapers and campaign organizations interact to inform the public through political coverage. I utilized original data from recent elections to demonstrate both how local newspapers equip citizens to participate more effectively in politics, and how campaigns can distort that process to their benefit.

The decreasing cost of content distribution and the proliferation of political news options challenges local newspapers’ dominance in their home markets. In Chapter 3, I show that even the sophisticated political content contained in national newspapers does not replace the political information local newspapers convey. When consumers choose to read national newspapers, they learn significantly more about national politics, but they know less about local elections. Reading a local newspaper enhances one’s ability to name his or her non-incumbent House candidate by 3.5%, a 50% higher rate of recall than is associated with reading a national newspaper. Choosing local news increases informed voting against incumbents by 2.8%—approximately 20% more in relative terms—compared to reading a national newspaper, illustrating the civic value of local
newspaper readership. Reading a local newspaper helps Americans hold their incumbent accountable through their votes.

Given the important role newspapers play in voters’ decision-making processes, I expect campaigns to try to influence their coverage at every opportunity. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that when campaigns invest in a local presence, they make it easier for newspapers to cover non-local campaigns and publish more content on those elections. In areas with a campaign presence, newspapers publish significantly more stories on elections than newspapers in areas campaigns ignore: 18% more stories in the nationwide sample and 13% more news space devoted to campaign coverage. These newspapers also devote more of their available space to campaign coverage. The publication of news about campaigns is at least partially contingent on the regional efforts of the campaigns themselves.

Campaigns can shape the tone and content of their coverage as well. In Chapter 5, I use a content analysis of matched pairs of newspapers in the state of Florida to determine the effects of local newspaper and campaign resources on the tone and content of election news. As in Chapter 4, I find that newspapers in areas with campaign presence publish more election news than newspapers in areas without campaign presence. Newspapers with greater resources also publish more stories on presidential campaigns than smaller newspapers. When campaign organization is present in an area with a resource-poor newspaper, however, the campaign receives approximately four times as many positive stories (and stories containing positive quotes) as when it ignores similar areas with a small newspaper. Vulnerable newspapers are more susceptible to stimuli for stories from campaigns, which utilize their local presence to cultivate relationships with
local reporters and to feed them positive stories. Newspapers with additional resources are better able to resist campaigns’ efforts. At a time when many newspapers are shrinking, campaigns can significantly influence political media.

The results of the empirical chapters of this dissertation establish the importance and vulnerability of today’s local newspapers. In this chapter, I discuss the limitations of these findings and potential avenues for future research on this topic. Studies utilizing different electoral and geographic contexts could provide additional, useful evidence supporting several aspects of my theory. Finally, I discuss some practical suggestions for local newspapers and campaigns to improve the production of plentiful and thorough campaign coverage in the years ahead.

**Limitations and directions for future research**

As with any empirical study, the results described above must be interpreted in light of certain caveats and limitations regarding causality, data availability, and generalizability. The effects on individual voters and newspaper content that I measure in this dissertation are the results of observational studies. I utilize ordinary least squares regression (in Chapters 3 and 5) and negative binomial count models (in Chapter 4) to determine the size, significance, and direction of effects. In each case, I include control variables and fixed effects as necessary to explain theoretical and geographic variation.

Because these analyses are not experimental, they lack clear causal identification. The questions examined here involve habitual news consumption and complex real world interactions between campaign staff and newspaper reporters that would be difficult to evaluate in a laboratory or field experimental setting. In this case, the lack of causal
identification was outweighed by a fundamentally observational question. Nevertheless, experimental methods could be utilized to examine similar (if not directly related) questions, however. Laboratory experiments could aid in determining whether individuals have higher regard for coverage from their local newspaper or from national newspapers. A field experiment in which newspapers were randomly assigned to homes also could be useful, but it would be highly expensive (see Gerber, Karlan & Bergen, 2007). I will continue to search causal leverage on this topic to obtain better causal identification.

Several issues regarding data availability and choices also merit discussion. For reasons I describe in n. 22 and 33, I utilize data only on field offices from Democratic campaigns. I have the data on the Romney campaign’s 2012 offices, and hopefully the Republican campaign in 2016 will open enough field offices to enable testing across multiple election cycles. All newspaper samples are from one database (Newsbank), which does not include all American newspapers. For 2008 and 2012, Newsbank contains approximately 80% of American newspapers (~1,200 out of ~1,400; Editor and Publisher, 2008). Although the universe of newspapers would be ideal, this large sample covers most of the newspapers from every state. My analyses also rely only upon newspapers—one part of the local news ecosystem. Many of the statistics and examples presented earlier show that newspapers are the most thorough and commonly utilized medium for local political news, but television and radio are important sources as well.

40 I have had discussions with my colleague Alex Garlick about an experiment of this type, based partially upon his working paper “The Local Premium.” We are continuing to explore possibilities for the design of such a study.
Future research should explore this theory in light of other local media sources using content analysis of transcripts and media market boundaries.

I plan to address some of these concerns by conducting a series of studies augmenting this dissertation, with the goal of broadening and further verifying my theory of campaign-media interaction. The analyses in this dissertation provide a basis for many future research possibilities testing this theory. Using different forms of campaign investment, local media, and electoral contexts, I hope to continue to explore this topic.

**Appearances.** A candidate’s time is arguably a campaign’s scarcest resource. Candidate appearances are first and foremost events intended for the media (Jones, 1998; Rickershauser-Carvalho, 2008), but no study has attempted to quantify the distortion that appearances cause in local media coverage. I collected original data on candidate visits in 2004 and 2008, and I possess data on the 2012 elections as well (including the Republican primary). Employing the same technique used in Chapter 4, I can collect data on newspaper content from Newsbank, use Python to quantify the amount of coverage a candidate visit earns, and determine whether the distortion an appearance causes is statistically significant. Campaigns should be able to earn local newspaper coverage both before and after candidate events: staff should such publicize events at least several days in advance, and cultivate several days of follow-up stories after the event is over.

Local context also should influence the press effects of a candidate appearance. Newspapers in states without regular campaigning in presidential elections—e.g., Montana and Indiana in 2008—should respond more strongly to candidate visits than states with frequent electoral competition. Newspapers in habitual battleground states are more accustomed to reporting on presidential campaigns, and their initial levels of
reporting are higher (as demonstrated in Chapter 4). An appearance may stimulate greater coverage in states where presidential campaigning is uncommon.

Appearances also offer another opportunity to test the influence of a more durable candidate presence. Candidates may target their appearances in areas with campaign presence because the local organization there generates publicity and directs supporters to the rally or event. If local campaign staff built connections with local reporters, as I hypothesize in Chapter 5, the coverage surrounding candidate appearances may be more positive as well. I can collect a subsample of political reporting around appearances in several matched pairs of markets, similar to Chapter 5, to test this hypothesis. If coverage of appearances were more positive in areas with campaign presence, it would provide additional evidence that local campaign staff build relationships with reporters in order to gain positive coverage.

Candidate visits potentially influence political learning, particularly if people read their local newspapers. Initial tests of this question revealed that candidate visits have little general effect on voters’ evaluations of candidates. One could use the geocoded NAES data to test whether candidate appearances increase citizens’ knowledge of candidate positions and whether local news consumption and partisan identity moderate this effect. Campaigns push voters towards their predicted vote choice (Gelman & King, 1993), but it is less clear whether specific proximate activities by a candidate inform and persuade voters. If heightened media reports surround an appearance, that coverage could inform voters about candidates’ issue positions. By combining my key concepts of campaign influence on the press and political learning from local newspapers, this study would connect the findings in Chapters 3 and 4.
Primaries. Presidential primaries are a particularly intriguing test case for campaign influence on local media. Candidates focus their attention and significant resources almost exclusively on the early primary states of Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina for the eight months (or longer) before those states cast their votes. The primaries in these states are high profile elections with national stakes, but they resemble local elections in practice. Some candidates strategically focus on the state in which they are strongest (e.g., Rick Santorum in Iowa in 2012), while others rotate between trips to all three (e.g., Mitt Romney in 2012). Press coverage can be difficult to earn, however, since local media in these states are accustomed to campaigning.

It would be interesting to determine how primary candidates earn local media with their early state appearances, and whether those dynamics change as the election approaches. Chapters 4 and 5 examine news coverage in the two months before Election Day, but campaigns initiate their investments much earlier and should use that time to build rapport with local reporters. Primaries provide the opportunity to examine this overtime component of local campaign investments and expand the conclusions in Chapters 4 and 5. I could collect a sample of newspaper coverage in each of these states in the several months leading up to their election. Using the detailed PBS NewsHour Politics Calendar from 2011 and 2012, I could then assemble a database of candidate appearances in these early primary states and compare it to local newspaper coverage surrounding those dates. Utilizing a limited sample of several selected newspapers, it should be feasible to collect and analyze newspaper content over the scope of the primary. I expect the effect of an appearance on the amount of coverage to be highest at the beginning of a candidacy, but that coverage will not necessarily be more positive. As the primary contest
approaches, it may become more difficult for one candidate’s actions to earn greater coverage given the intensity of campaigning in the state.

Primaries also provide an opportunity to study the “invisible primary”: the period before campaigning begins in earnest when candidates attempt to attract endorsements, money, and support from local and national figures (Cohen et al., 2008). Media coverage helps candidates build a profile and demonstrate their commitment to these early primary states, and its role in the invisible primary should to be better understood. Local investments should help campaigns gain endorsements and local media coverage during this critical time. The PBS NewsHour Politics calendar contains data on the exact location of candidate appearance and whether candidates appeared with local political figures (such as county party chairmen and state legislators). The calendar also names the local media outlets visited by campaigns, and whether an event was a fundraiser. This data could be used to analyze the geography of the invisible primary in early primary states. If certain local media outlets, contributors, and local county chairs receive more visits, the data could indicate their centrality to the invisible primary in that state. Moreover, the names of politicians appearing with candidates could be entered as search terms in a news coverage analysis, providing an estimate of earned media from local endorsements and joint appearances.

Case studies. A qualitative approach will illustrate mechanisms that cannot be tested with available quantitative data. I will conduct a series of in-depth interviews with campaign press liaisons, campaign field staff, social media staffers, and local newspaper reporters and editors. These interviews should help me better understand obvious and subtler ways that local campaign presence influences newspaper reporting. The
fundamental interaction in this project is between the supporters and staff of campaigns and local newspaper reporters. Interviews with more of these critical actors should illuminate my mechanisms and provide further insights.

Subnational case studies, such the 2012 Senate election in Massachusetts, could help illustrate the generalizability of my findings in this dissertation. I wish to learn whether the effects observed in national elections hold across electoral contexts. Senate campaigns possess the resources to make significant local investments, and I have town-level data on field offices for both the Elizabeth Warren and Scott Brown campaigns in the 2012 Senate election. This contest will be useful for locating campaign effects on newspapers and vote share in particular cities and towns, supplementing my county level results in Chapters 4 and 5. Massachusetts aggregates vote share at the town level, and nearly every town has a local newspaper. Isolating town-by-town campaign effects on newspaper content in newspapers might provide a more exact measure of “local” news than aggregating at the county level.

Another study could employ a stricter causal mechanism to test the forces underlying news creation. My theory partially rests on the idea that newspapers craft their political coverage to appeal to the readers in their geographic market. Utilizing micro-level data on newspaper content, one could analyze the impact of recent newspaper closures in two-newspaper cities on news production. Several studies use newspaper closures as leverage to examine behavior (Shaker, 2014; Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2013), but none assesses how a newspaper closure influences content production in other local news sources. The closure of the Rocky Mountain News, for example, might not be so troublesome to Coloradans if many people merely switched to the Denver Post and the
Post increased its circulation and political content accordingly. A comparison of Denver Post coverage of the 2008 and 2012 elections—before and after the Rocky Mountain News closed—would provide causal leverage for assessing changes in the content of political news.

The empirical analysis in this dissertation equips me with the necessary basis for continued exploration. America’s diverse electoral and media landscape paves the way for numerous potential investigations on this critical subject. In the 2016 election, I plan to be proactive on this subject. Some of the data on local newspapers in primaries should be easier to collect in real time. The 2016 invisible primary is already in full swing, and I plan to use the summer of 2015 to examine activities in Iowa and New Hampshire and to locate a calendar with similar detail to the PBS calendar of 2012. As campaigns and local media continue to adapt and interact in future elections, more avenues of research on this topic will emerge.

**Practical suggestions for campaigns and local newspapers**

My results suggest a bleak future for local newspapers and political accountability, in which campaigns gain greater influence over decreasing quantities of news. Some potential solutions to the problems of newspaper decline and campaign influence exist, however. Newspapers are collaborating and shifting their focus from profit incentives to content production. The government can take steps to ensure access and availability of data on state and local government. Campaigns are increasing their regional competition, which could balance their press effects while flooding regional
markets with more election news. Recent trends make the problems facing local political news particularly acute at this moment, but they are far from unsolvable.

**Newspapers.** Economic trends in the media landscape over the past decade have raised the prospect of a political climate without locally constructed news. Profit driven news corporations responded to declining advertising revenues by cutting payroll and shrinking their circulation, leaving readers with less quality options for local news. As fewer media voices raise local concerns, news consumers may hear more about nationally relevant issues and less about the needs of their own communities. A tipping point may be approaching. As local coverage becomes less available and seems less important, increasing number of Americans may turn to national news for their political information.

If the market for local news is not profitable, nonprofit news organizations can help to fill the void. Several large nonprofit organizations, such as The Associated Press and National Public Radio, already are dominant forces on the national scene. The AP is adapting well to online distribution and remains a critical source of content for almost all local newspapers lacking the resources to generate original reporting on national politics (Lewis, 2007). The AP also has established regional branches to provide more local reporting: in Ohio, for example, the AP regional office for East Michigan-Ohio has offices in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo. Although Ohio’s smaller towns might receive less coverage under this model, their newspapers can cut costs by purchasing regionally relevant content from the AP.

Many newspapers already exist as nonprofits, and online-only nonprofit local news organizations are becoming successful. Daily newspapers such as *The Day* of New London, Connecticut and the *Anniston Star* of Alabama are controlled by trusts, with
profits reinvested in the newspapers (Lewis, 2007). *The Texas Tribune*, a nonprofit news organization founded by a venture capitalist and veteran reporters, now has the largest state house bureau in Texas (Texas Tribune, 2015). When owners are committed to local news and invest in the best reporters and technology, a nonprofit model can succeed at the state level (Shorenstein Center, 2014). Newspapers opting out of the for-profit system entirely can find success with a donations model similar to National Public Radio.

Among for-profit newspapers, a collaborative local news model could continue to produce locally relevant content by pooling resources. Jointly staffed offices between local newspapers (e.g., the Tallahassee bureau recently established by the *Miami Herald* and the *Tampa Bay Times*) cover local politics at a level impossible for either newspaper individually (Nesmith, 2014). If local newspapers aim to continue to profit and to cover politics well, sharing content and assignments may well be in their best interests.

The value of local newspapers lies in regionally focused coverage that informs citizens about the issues facing their communities and the actions of their politicians. The organizations described above are discovering new and innovative ways to produce content focused on the actions and needs of their states and regions. In smaller communities, local newspapers may remain the only source of such extremely local information. When it comes to reporting on state government and city officials, however, innovative and sustainable journalism models are already beginning to emerge.

**Government.** Local political reporting depends on the government for access to politicians and information on government policies. The government is invested in the continued health of local news sources, and “ensuring localism” is an explicit policy goal of the Federal Communications Commission (Waldman, 2011). Government reforms
geared towards transparency of information and ease of access could help not only newspaper reporters, but also local citizens and hyperlocal bloggers, generate more informative reporting (Waldman, 2011).

The federal government should have a particular interest in the continued strength of local newspapers, given the amount of power granted to the states for implementation of national policies. The federal government could help states generate more transparency and make coverage of state government easier by establishing state-based C-SPAN networks (Waldman, 2011). Better access might lead to better policy implementation if local media are enabled to hold state officials accountable. These networks also might cover local candidate events and press conferences, helping campaigns gain exposure from an impartial network source.

Campaigns. Campaigns profit from strong local media organizations because earned media is less expensive than paid media. The results in Chapter 5 show that campaigns can earn positive coverage in small local newspapers, but these newspapers have a limited reach. For campaigns, successful newspapers constitute a critical delivery system of free exposure to large quantities of voters. When local news sources are weak campaigns can influence their coverage—but in the eyes of fewer readers. Should local news sources disappear, however, campaigns would be forced to rely upon paid advertising and expensive mailers to spread their message. Local newspapers save campaigns money and convey messages through a more trusted, impactful medium.

Campaign competition on the ground in cities and towns, and not just on the airwaves, should produce better outcomes for voters and the local press. In House elections, competitive campaigns receive significantly more news coverage (Hayes &
Lawless, 2015). Competitive elections are good business for newspapers, which ramp up their supply of coverage to meet the demand from interested voters. In presidential elections, local competition could have similar effects. My findings in Chapter 4 show that even in battleground states, a local campaign presence can generate increased coverage. Republicans are beginning to invest in their data resources and local investment strategies in order to match the efforts of Democrats (Darr & Levendusky, 2014). If both campaigns invest in a given region, cultivating the positive earned media observed in Chapter 5, the result might be balanced coverage for both parties. Creating widespread contexts of local competition could help campaigns spread their message and generate newspaper sales as well.

**Campaign coverage and voters**

For several decades, the rise of the nationwide mass media commanded the attention of communications scholars. As campaigns reinvest in local communities and local newspapers experience a sea change in their economic circumstances, it is a good time to reassess the construction and effects of local news. In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how the campaigns’ strategic decisions play an essential role in the creation of political coverage at the local level. When Americans receive less local campaign coverage, as was the case over the past decade, they know less about their electoral options. Local news coverage of political campaigns informs voters, helps sell newspapers, and provides campaigns with an influential and cost-effective way to promote their candidates.
At the present time, campaigns have the upper hand in this strategic dynamic because they can manipulate some newspapers in their favor. Weakened local newspapers pose a danger and an opportunity for political campaigns: they might wield greater control over the construction of coverage, but that message will reach fewer voters. Campaigns and local newspapers are not opposing forces. Achieving their goals means that they must work together. For the sake of voters, campaigns, and democratic accountability, local newspapers must identify ways to adapt to the changing news environment and hold up their end of the bargain.
String matching using AGREP in R: Process and Error Thresholds

The verbatim-coded entries in the 2000 NAES survey contain a broad range of answers to the questions asking whether respondents can name their incumbent House member and/or the candidates for election in the House district that fall. Before the House primary, the NAES asks whether respondents can name the incumbent; afterwards, the survey asks whether respondents can name the candidates for the House election that fall. The candidate variable, therefore, also indicates whether respondents can recall their incumbent in all races except those where their incumbent is retiring. Since these answers are verbatim coded, they range from answers including one name, to multiple names, to truly verbatim answers such as “can’t think” and “mark Roumeka and somebody named Albus but i’m not sure.” Since the strings do not consistently reflect answers to a question asking for a specific name, it is not useful to compare the set of strings containing a respondent’s actual House representative (or candidates) to the verbatim string given. This process requires an algorithm capable of finding the substrings that match most closely to the string containing the “correct” name.

This can be done in a replicable and consistent way only if the verbatim and name strings are coded consistently before the analysis. Since some representative names contain spaces, dashes, and apostrophes, while many verbatim-coded strings contained any number of non-alphabetic characters inserted by the NAES interviewers, my first
step was to clean the verbatim and name strings of all non-alphabetic characters, using the \texttt{[subinstr]} command in Stata. This standardized the strings and ensured that differences between the strings were the result of spelling and accuracy differences, not differences in non-alphabetical characters.

Once the data was clean, I needed to find a program capable of analyzing strings within longer strings, as described above. I searched for this in Stata, but was unable to find a package capable of this task. Further searching led me to the \texttt{agrep()} function in R. \texttt{Agrep()} searches for approximate matches to a string within a longer string \textit{x}, using the \textit{Levenshtein} edit distance between the string and the closest substring within \textit{x}.\footnote{Full \texttt{agrep()} documentation can be found here: \url{http://tinyurl.com/mk9jx2q.}}

\textit{Levenshtein} distance is a useful concept for string matching, measuring the total number of insertions (adding a new character), deletions (subtracting a character), and substitutions (changing one character to another) needed to change a string into another.

Having located \texttt{agrep()}, my next task was to assemble R code allowing me to test various thresholds and determine which was most useful for my purposes. I constructed an \texttt{agrep()} function for each of my four variable types (incumbent pre-primary, incumbent post-primary, challenger 1, and challenger 2). Each election is different: in some cases, an incumbent runs unopposed, while in others two challengers run to replace a retiring incumbent. My data contain two strings in which to search: incumbents before a primary, and a list of all candidates after a primary. In the pre-primary data, I needed to search for the incumbent's name, while in the post-primary data, I needed to search for
the incumbent name, first challenger’s name, and second challenger’s name.\textsuperscript{42} Since agrep() cannot process null strings, I broke each of these out into a separate dataset. Using a loop for each entry in each dataset, I applied the agrep() function across the relevant entries.

Agrep() allows for different thresholds of error in order to determine a match between a string and a substring. One method is the percentage of a given substring that is allowed to be incorrect while still considered a match, while another is the total number of transformations (insertions, deletions and substitutions taken together) allowed between strings while still considering those strings to be a match. In order to determine the best threshold, I applied the agrep() function at nine different standards of accuracy. First, I tested for exact matches for a given politician last name within the cleaned, verbatim-entered strings. Next, I tested four thresholds of distance percentages: 10\%, 20\%, 30\%, and 40\%. Finally, I tested four thresholds of allowable transformations within possible substrings: one, two, three, and four transformations allowed.

Following the completion of string matching, I needed to verify the accuracy of each threshold of error to determine which was most accurate. I took a random sample of 200 entries from each of the four variable types, hand-coded them for accuracy, and assembled measures of similarity. For each threshold, I measured the number of results in agreement between the hand-coding and script-coding, the number of cases in which the script coded a respondent as correct while I coded them incorrect (false positives), and the number of cases in which the script coded a respondent incorrect while I coded them correct. In every case where there is a second challenger in the dataset, the incumbent is retiring. These cases are marked with a dummy variable.
correct (false negatives). The results of these tests are presented in Figures A1 and A2, below. Figure A1 represents the results of percentage error coding. Figure 2 represents of total number of transformations error coding.

I preferred to maximize the agreement between hand coding and script-coding while minimizing false positives and false negatives. It is also undesirable to have significant imbalance between false positives and false negatives, as this may bias my results. For instance, though the thresholds of exact match and 40% distance are in relative agreement (at 86.6% and 91.6%), exact matching is too stringent (false positives = 0.5%, false negatives = 12.9%) while 40% distance is too permissive (false positives = 8.3%, false negatives = 0.1%). The two best thresholds to satisfy the criteria are 20% distance and a distance of two transformations. These present the most balance between false positives and false negatives, and high rates of agreement (95.9% and 93.1%, respectively). However, the agreement for 20% distance is over 2% higher, and the difference between false positives and negatives is about half that of two transformations, with a slight bias towards false negatives. Based on these results, it appears that the threshold of 20% distance returns the most desirable results across each dataset.
Figure A1: Results of error coding at five thresholds of percentage error allowed in string matching process using agrep().

Figure A2: Results of error coding at thresholds of total transformations allowed in string matching process using agrep().
Table A1. OLS analysis of newspaper knowledge index by newspaper readership type in 2000 and 2004, using binary measure.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: Political knowledge index (type)</th>
<th>(1) Presidential Campaign</th>
<th>(2) Presidential Campaign</th>
<th>(3) Politics &amp; Constitution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units: Binary: 0-2 correct answers = 0, 3-4 = 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper</td>
<td>0.112***</td>
<td>0.098***</td>
<td>0.062***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads any newspaper</td>
<td>-0.078***</td>
<td>-0.106***</td>
<td>-0.059***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Covariates not listed; identical to Table 2)

Fixed effects

- Congressional District

| F-tests: Coefficient, f-stat, (p-value). |                           |                           |                           |
| Reads national newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper | 0.112***                  | 0.098***                  | 0.062***                  |
|                                              | 43.948                    | 14.390                    | 24.225                    |
|                                              | (0.000)                   | (0.000)                   | (0.000)                   |
| Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper | 0.034***                  | -0.008                    | 0.002                     |
|                                              | 11.428                    | 0.294                     | 0.076                     |
|                                              | (0.001)                   | (0.588)                   | (0.783)                   |
| Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper | -0.078***                 | -0.106***                 | -0.059***                 |
|                                              | 24.529                    | 21.441                    | 30.050                    |
|                                              | (0.000)                   | (0.000)                   | (0.000)                   |
| Constant                                   | 0.916                     | 0.037                     | 0.628                     |
|                                              | (0.053)                   | (0.102)                   | (0.065)                   |
| Observations                               | 14,912                    | 6,243                     | 19,692                    |
| $R^2$                                      | 0.243                     | 0.341                     | 0.293                     |

* This coefficient recovers the difference between the effect of reading a local newspaper and the effect of reading a national newspaper. The actual effect of reading a local newspaper is the sum of the coefficient on “Reads any newspaper” and “Reads local newspaper.” These coefficients are displayed and described in the F-tests section of the table.

++ This coefficient recovers the effect of reading a national newspaper because it captures variation among newspaper readers not explained by the coefficient on “reads local newspaper,” above.

All analyses contain congressional district-level fixed effects. Knowledge indices differ slightly by year, as explained in text. Robust standard errors (clustered at the county level) in parentheses. Significance thresholds delineated as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
Table A2. Senate candidate recall by candidate incumbency and newspaper readership. Specification used to generate Figure 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: accurate candidate name recall (1) or not (0)</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate</td>
<td>-0.096*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper</td>
<td>0.015 (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads any newspaper</td>
<td>0.055*** (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate X Reads any newspaper</td>
<td>-0.017 (0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate X Reads local newspaper</td>
<td>-0.025 (0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open seat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running unopposed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality candidate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln(Candidate spending)</td>
<td>0.003** (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.019** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>0.017** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same party as candidate</td>
<td>0.032*** (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&lt; HS omitted)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>0.035*** (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A. or higher</td>
<td>0.038*** (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18-29 omitted)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>0.093*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>0.018*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>0.052*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+</td>
<td>0.074*** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&lt; $25,000 omitted)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $50,000</td>
<td>0.070*** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
$50,000 - $100,000 & 0.022***  \\
$100,000+ & 0.047***  \\
Follows politics  \\
(Hardly follows omitted)  \\
Now and then & 0.080***  \\
Sometimes  & 0.010  \\
Most of the time & 0.047***  \\
Time period sampled  \\
(Before September omitted)  \\
September & 0.152***  \\
October-Election Day & 0.026***  \\
Strong Party ID  & 0.075***  \\
White  & 0.039***  \\
Female & -0.031***  \\
Fixed effects  \\
Congressional District  \\
Constant & -0.123***  \\
Observations  & 33,645  \\
R-squared & 0.265  \\
\footnote{Robust standard errors (clustered at the respondent level) in parentheses. Significance thresholds delineated as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.}
Table A3. Descriptive statistics by newspaper readership type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Primary Newspaper Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows politics</td>
<td>1 = Hardly</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Now and then</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Some of the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = Most of the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1 = HS or less</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Some college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = B.A. or higher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1 = 0-$25k</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = $25k-$50k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = $50k - $100k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = $100k +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer grade of</td>
<td>1 = F, 2 = D, 3 = C,</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respondent’s political</td>
<td>4 = B, 5 = A</td>
<td>(~ B-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches TV news</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 2 = no</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches local TV</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 2 = no</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches national TV</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 2 = no</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed politics in past week</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 2 = no</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of readers per newspaper type</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Largest/best rated type in each category noted in **bold.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample restriction</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a local newspaper</td>
<td>-0.091***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read any newspaper</td>
<td>0.212***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Covariates not listed; identical to Table 2)

Fixed effects

Congressional District

F-tests: Ccoeff., f-stat, (p-value).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads national newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td>0.212***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads no newspaper</td>
<td>64.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
<td>0.121***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads no newspaper</td>
<td>71.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper</td>
<td>-0.910***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads national newspaper</td>
<td>14.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constant

2.279
(0.033)

Observations

26,220
R-squared
0.222

* This coefficient recovers the difference between the effect of reading a local newspaper and the effect of reading a national newspaper. The actual effect of reading a local newspaper is the sum of the coefficient on “Reads any newspaper” and “Reads local newspaper.” These coefficients are displayed and described in the F-tests section of the table.

** This coefficient recovers the effect of reading a national newspaper because it captures variation among newspaper readers not explained by the coefficient on “reads local newspaper,” above.

^ Standard errors in parentheses. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
Table A5. Ability to rate Senate candidates by newspaper readership and candidate incumbency, 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: Ability to rate Senate candidate from 0-100</th>
<th>Can rate Senate candidate (1) or not (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate</td>
<td>-0.295*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a local newspaper+</td>
<td>0.031** (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read any newspaper++</td>
<td>0.067*** (0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate X Reads local newspaper+</td>
<td>-0.007 (0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-incumbent candidate X Reads any newspaper++</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed effects:</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-tests: Coefficient, f-stat, (p-value).</td>
<td>Can rate incumbent candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reads national newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-tests: Coefficient, f-stat, (p-value).</td>
<td>Can rate non-incumbent candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reads national newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads no newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reads local newspaper vs. Reads national newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.047 (0.052)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>17,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\+ This coefficient recovers the difference between the effect of reading a local newspaper and reading a national newspaper. The actual effect of reading a local newspaper is the sum of the coefficient on “Reads any newspaper” and “Reads local newspaper.” These coefficients are displayed in the F-tests section.

\++ This coefficient recovers the effect of reading a national newspaper because it captures variation among newspaper readers not explained by the coefficient on “reads local newspaper,” above.

Robust standard errors (clustered at the respondent level) in parentheses. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
Table B1. The effects of campaign presence on newspapers’ campaign content production in areas without newspapers in 2004 Newsbank sample: 2008 and 2012. Incidence rate ratios from negative binomial regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample restriction</th>
<th>Content measurement</th>
<th>Areas without newspaper in Newsbank sample in 2004</th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year measured</td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2008</td>
<td>1.090</td>
<td>(0.206)</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>(0.315)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2012</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.336)</td>
<td>1.375</td>
<td>(0.434)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote share, 2000</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>(0.368)</td>
<td>0.584</td>
<td>(0.513)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>(0.318)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>1.021</td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
<td>0.959</td>
<td>(0.094)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>1.016**</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree, 2000</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>(0.295)</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total content per newspaper-day</td>
<td>1.038***</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>1.043***</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed effects?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>0.534</td>
<td>142.182</td>
<td>250.182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Words</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, battleground states only</td>
<td><strong>1.634</strong></td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td>1.015</td>
<td><strong>2.023</strong>*</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>1.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>3.103</td>
<td>1.483</td>
<td>1.361</td>
<td><strong>12.217</strong></td>
<td>1.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share, 2000</td>
<td>(0.331)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.117)</td>
<td>(0.546)</td>
<td>(0.235)</td>
<td>(0.172)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>(5.94)</td>
<td>(2.385)</td>
<td>(0.781)</td>
<td>(1.377)</td>
<td>(13.756)</td>
<td>(0.960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td>1.036*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.950</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td><strong>1.090</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.065)</td>
<td>0.951</td>
<td>0.939</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td>1.050</td>
<td><strong>0.848</strong></td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>0.992</td>
<td>1.004</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td><strong>0.980</strong></td>
<td>0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree, 2000</td>
<td><strong>6.503</strong>*</td>
<td>1.976</td>
<td>1.308</td>
<td>1.690</td>
<td>1.407</td>
<td>1.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total content per newspaper-day</td>
<td><strong>1.017</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.023</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.024</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.054</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.088</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.090</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed effects?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>0.486</td>
<td>158.260</td>
<td>173.791</td>
<td>412.667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joint hypothesis test:

- Z-stat: 1.600
- P-value: 0.953

Observations | 102 | 381 | 177

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2004</strong></td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.165</td>
<td>1.078</td>
<td><strong>1.452</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.674</strong>*</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2008</strong></td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>(0.139)</td>
<td>(0.282)</td>
<td>(0.472)</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012</strong></td>
<td>(0.195)</td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.155)</td>
<td>(0.283)</td>
<td>(0.237)</td>
<td>(0.220)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2004</td>
<td><strong>1.620</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.249</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1.334</strong>*</td>
<td>1.374</td>
<td>1.082</td>
<td>1.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2008</td>
<td>(0.082)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign presence in county, 2012</td>
<td><strong>0.757</strong>*</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td><strong>0.758</strong>*</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>1.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic vote share, 2000</td>
<td>1.018</td>
<td>0.974</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>0.993</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td><strong>1.073</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>0.944</td>
<td>1.003</td>
<td><strong>0.858</strong>*</td>
<td>0.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>(0.058)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with college degree, 2000</td>
<td><strong>7.830</strong>*</td>
<td>2.211</td>
<td>1.486</td>
<td>3.807</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td>0.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total content per newspaper-day</td>
<td>(4.785)</td>
<td>(1.607)</td>
<td>(0.976)</td>
<td>(3.973)</td>
<td>(0.881)</td>
<td>(0.853)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level fixed effects?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.629</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>237.006</td>
<td>299.130</td>
<td>422.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1202</td>
<td>1139</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1202</td>
<td>1139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered by county. Significance thresholds as follows: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
Appendix C

(for Chapter 5 – Presence to Press)

Table C1. Florida newspapers ordered by circulation and grouped by total circulation quartile. Sampled newspapers in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper City</th>
<th>Newspaper Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Coral</td>
<td>Cape Coral Daily Breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okeechobee</td>
<td>Okeechobee News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach</td>
<td>Palm Beach Daily News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marianna</td>
<td>Jackson County Floridian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake City</td>
<td>Lake City Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key West</td>
<td>Key West Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Haven</td>
<td>News Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palatka</td>
<td>Palatka Daily News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boca Raton</td>
<td>Boca Raton News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooksville</td>
<td>Hernando Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebring</td>
<td>Highlands Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Augustine</td>
<td>St. Augustine Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leesburg</td>
<td>Daily Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal River</td>
<td>Citrus County Chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama City</td>
<td>News Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Villages</td>
<td>Daily Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Walton Beach</td>
<td>Northwest Florida Daily News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Harbor</td>
<td>Charlotte Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradenton</td>
<td>Bradenton Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocala</td>
<td>Ocala Star-Banner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallahassee</td>
<td>Tallahassee Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Naples Daily News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensacola</td>
<td>Pensacola News Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Ledger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>Diario Las Americas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>El Nuevo Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Florida Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Myers</td>
<td>News-Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daytona Beach</td>
<td>Daytona Beach News-Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Treasure Coast News/Press-Tribune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarasota</td>
<td>Sarasota Herald-Tribune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td>Florida Times-Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Palm Beach</td>
<td>Palm Beach Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampa</td>
<td>Tampa Tribune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lauderdale</td>
<td>South Florida Sun-Sentinel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>Orlando Sentinel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>Miami Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>St. Petersburg Times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basic identifiers

- Newspaper name
- Endorsement for that election cycle.
- Story identification number (consecutive numbering)
- Date of story
- Section (will vary somewhat by paper …)
- Prominence: front page = 1, other = 0
- Story length (word count)
- Edition (regional, main edition, etc)
- Dateline: none/NA = 0, local = 1, in-state = 2, DC = 3, other = 4
- Newspaper characteristics: Corporate owned, Y = 1, N = 0, circulation size (# provided from Editor and Publisher), N = 0; Dem % of two-party vote in 1996 and 2000 across entire market?

Story characteristics

- Focus: Is the article a false positive (totally unrelated relic of word search) (0)? is the presidential election campaign the main focus of the article (1)? Is it secondary to a state/local focus (2)? Is it tangential (3)? Is the focus mixed between various parts of the article, such as a notebook or letters to the editor section of the paper (4)?
- Topic: Is the story irrelevant, mentions the campaign tangentially (0)? Is the story anticipating a future campaign event (1)? Describing a past campaign event (2)? Discussing strategy (3)? Discussing a personal experience with the campaign (4)? Discussing an opinion of one or both of the candidates’ personal qualities or issue positions (5)? Delivering civically relevant information (6)? Mixed (7)?
- Story type. Reported news (1); op-ed piece (2); analysis (3); letter to the editor (4); other (5)?
- Frame Localization: (1); local perspective (national concerns or national staff mixed with a local perspective) (2); statewide story (elsewhere in state, not in media market) (3); exclusively national (no local angle presented).
- Frame type: Strategy (1), issues (2), organization/participation/appearance (3), opinion (4), other/not related (5).
- Mobilization: Does the story contain mobilizing information (information about or encouragement of participation, voter registration, volunteering, participating in events, information seeking) (Yes = 1, No = 0)? Does the story contain positive (1)/negative (-1)/neutral (0) reports of organizational activities (signing up volunteers (1), phone banking (2), door knocking (3), gatherings/house parties (4), fundraising(5), rally attendance (6), information on voter registration or early voting (7)?
- Tone: positive (a positive but no negative comment) (1), negative (a negative but no positive comment) (-1), balanced (both) (0), or descriptive (2).
- Quotes.
  - Quote 1: Is the candidate/running mate quoted/heavily paraphrased? (1)
  - Quote 2: Is a high-level state official quoted (governor (1), senator (2), court (3))?
o Quote 3: Is a local official or expert quoted (party member, House member, state representative, political scientist) (1)? A national figure (2)?

o Quote 4: Is a local campaign staffer quoted (1)? Is a national campaign staffer quoted (2)?

o Quote 5: Is a local citizen (not in an official role) quoted? (1) Letter to the editor? (2)

o How many different people? (# of people quoted)

• Quote characteristics: Does the quote frame the statement locally (1) or nationally (0)? Is its tone positive (+1), negative (-1), or neutral (0) for the candidate (same criteria as above)?

o Following Cohen (2010): Coders were asked to read through each story that mentioned the president and code the first sentence that made a positive or supportive comment about him as well as the first sentence that made a negative or critical comment. Criteria: “Consider the story from the candidate’s viewpoint: if you were that candidate, would you feel that the story hurts or helps you? Positive or negative comments can be found in quotes of someone being interviewed in the story, the description by the journalist, or even a personal comment by the journalist. More specifically, negative news stories will have someone in the story, including the journalist, who will criticize the candidate and/or the candidate’s policy, action, nomination … a positive story will have someone in the story who praises or lauds the candidate and/or their policy, action, statement, event, etc.”
Bibliography


Editor and Publisher. (2008). *The international yearbook*. New York: Editor & Publisher.


Environmental Protection Agency. (2002). “Saving Florida’s vanishing shores.”


