The Battleground Effect:
How the Electoral College Shapes Post-Election Political Attitudes and Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Every four years, Americans elect a president through the curious institution called the Electoral College. As a result of its structure, which prioritizes states over individual votes, presidential candidates focus on only a handful of states, the so-called battleground states, while virtually ignoring the rest of the country. In this dissertation, I examine the consequences of this campaign strategy for voters' post-election attitudes toward politics and U.S. senators' voting behavior immediately after the election.

Using public opinion data from the National Election Studies and the National Annenberg Election Survey, I find that the differences in levels of trust, efficacy, and interest between safe and battleground state residents are minimal. However, when accounting for differences in states' political cultures, I detect battleground effects. Voters living in states with more traditional political cultures are hardly affected by candidates' battleground strategies whereas voters in states with moralistic political cultures are more efficacious, trusting, and interested in politics when their state is also a battleground state.

The particulars of presidential campaign strategies also subtly affect senators' roll call voting. Senators who share the president's party and represent battleground states are slightly more supportive of presidential policy positions than those representing safe states. I propose that these senators returned favors they enjoyed during the campaign season. Moreover, if they ran for reelection themselves, they are even more supportive.

This dissertation shows candidates' battleground strategies have effects that extend beyond Election Day at both the elite and mass levels, thereby expanding our conception and understanding of the role of presidential elections and campaign effects in American politics.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a 2007 letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, an American voter wrote the following about her role in the presidential selection process:

> I grew up in Hawaii, cursed by a paltry number of electoral votes, a relatively late primary, the absence of a 'battleground' designation and a lonely time zone that results in the media's announcing the winners before many Hawaii residents have had a chance to vote. A major presidential candidate would be a fool to waste any time there. When I moved to Pennsylvania, my voting power drastically increased, both *literally* and *psychologically*.[1]

This voter refers to some of the significant effects of the curious institution called the Electoral College through which Americans elect their chief executive. Under the Electoral College, each state is awarded a number of electoral votes equal to its total number of U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives.[2] For presidential candidates to win office, they need to win 270 of 538 electoral votes. While not required by the Constitution, all states except Maine and Nebraska award all their electoral votes to the winner of the statewide popular vote.[3] Even a single vote margin in Pennsylvania, then, provides its winner with 21 Electoral College votes while a single vote margin in Hawaii would provide its winner with 4 Electoral College votes. It is unlikely, however, that the margin would ever be so close in Hawaii, a solidly Democratic state. In addition

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[1] From "A Letter to the Editor," *New York Times*, August 18, 2007 (emphasis added).
[2] For instance, Minnesota currently has eight representatives and two senators for a total of ten electoral votes.
[3] Maine and Nebraska award two votes to the winner of the statewide popular vote and the remaining by congressional district.

to Pennsylvania's numerical advantage in votes, it is a politically competitive state. Taken together, this means that Pennsylvania is showered with attention from presidential candidates while Hawaii is all but ignored. In other words, the winner-take-all system in combination with the 270 rule leads presidential candidates to develop Electoral College strategies, meaning that they spend their time and money almost exclusively in a handful of battleground states (Shaw 1999, 2006).

Whereas the above voter celebrates her new-found voting power in Pennsylvania, political commentators and scholars have long decried the Electoral College exactly because of its unequal treatment of the states and their residents (e.g. Dahl 2000; Longley 1994; Loomis 2006; Richie 2007; Wayne 1992). After the most recent election, the *New York Times* published an editorial stating the following:

> [The Electoral College] actively disenfranchises voters and occasionally (think 2000) makes the candidate with fewer popular votes president. (…) [T]he system excludes many voters from a meaningful role in presidential elections. If you live in New York or Texas, for example, it is generally a foregone conclusion which party will win your state's electoral votes, so your vote has less meaning — and it can feel especially meaningless if you vote on the losing side. On the other hand, if you live in Florida or Ohio, where the outcome is less clear, your vote has a greatly magnified importance.[4]

These two examples of public discourse on the electoral process seriously implicate the Electoral College in shaping citizens' relationship with their government, in particular by determining citizens' voting power in presidential elections. In theory, citizens' voting power is greatest in the less populous states because these states are

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[4] From "Flunking the Electoral College," *New York Times*, November 18, 2008.

overrepresented in the Senate.[5] As such, an Alaskan voter has a much greater chance of casting the deciding vote in their state's presidential election than a Californian voter. However, as both quotes illustrate, some states have relatively ideologically homogenous electorates making the outcome a "foregone conclusion" and, as a result, the major party candidates pay no or very little campaign attention to these states.[6] In sum, one's ability to influence executive politics greatly depends on one's geographic location. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the NYT editors conclude, "American democracy would be far stronger without [the Electoral College]."

But equally consequential for democratic politics, both quotes suggest a strong psychological component to voters' geographic locations under the Electoral College. In other words, how one feels about one's political power also depends on one's geographic location. The letter writer who moved from Hawaii to Pennsylvania states her voting power increased psychologically, a sentiment echoed by the editors of the New York Times who say that someone's vote can feel meaningless in the electorally safe states, especially if that person is on the losing side. This implies citizens' attitudes on (their role in) politics vary across safe and battleground states but perhaps also within these states between winners and losers.

Conducting a systematic examination of these claims, I reveal that these attitudes indeed vary in predictable ways across individuals and states. In particular, I present

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[5] Every state has two senators, regardless of population size and thus at least three electoral votes, based on two senators and one representative.
[6] As I discuss below, this is not the only factor going into candidates' battleground strategies but it is the most important.

evidence that citizens' attitudes toward politics differ as a function of their location in combination with individual characteristics, e.g. low income and partisanship, and state-level differences in political culture. For instance, whereas location does not affect partisans' beliefs, Independents are much more likely to believe a vote can make a difference when living in a battleground state. A more comprehensive examination of Electoral College effects, I also investigate how battleground strategies affect U.S. senators' voting behavior after the election, conceptualizing this as another way in which the presidential selection system can alter the relationship between citizens and their government. I find that senators from battleground states are more supportive of the newly elected president than their safe state counterparts.

Thus far, little research has examined Electoral College effects on post-election political attitudes and behavior. The few studies that do exist – and which I discuss in detail below – are ambiguous regarding the size and direction of these effects. The effects of the Electoral College on candidates' campaign strategies, on the other hand, are much better understood. These strategies, I theorize, are the mechanism by which the Electoral College influences mass attitudes and elite behavior. In sum, this dissertation assigns the Electoral College a much more critical role in American politics than previously conceptualized and concludes it plays a constitutive role in citizens' relationship with their government.

During the campaign season, presidential candidates spend the bulk of their time and money in ten, perhaps fifteen, states. As soon as the applause after their acceptance

speech is over, candidates hop on their private jets or busses to tour these battleground states.[7] During this time, reaching the 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency is candidates' top priority. The travel and advertisement patterns of candidates are motivated almost exclusively by which states are perceived battlegrounds. Little consideration is given to states that are no longer "competitive." Take, for instance, Illinois. In 2000, both candidates Bush and Gore regarded Illinois as one of the states that could swing the election. They visited it a combined total of 17 times in the two months leading up to Election Day; any given week between the conventions and Election Day, Illinois received an average of two presidential candidate visits. Fast forward to 2004: Illinois had moved into the "leaning Democratic" column and was therefore on neither candidate's mind and received no attention: Illinois received zero visits and zero advertising dollars.

This strategic and selective attention to different state by presidential candidates dates back to at least the 1970s (Althaus, Nardulli, and Shaw 2002)[8] and thanks to research by scholars such as Daron Shaw, Thomas Holbrook, and Ken Goldstein, we now have a detailed understanding of candidates' resource allocations across the states. For

[7] In recent election years, targeting of states has started much earlier. However, the general campaign kicks off after the party conventions in late August/early September, which is when candidates are in full-fledge campaign mode.

[8] Presidential candidates' concern about winning states, rather than individual votes, is as old as the Electoral College (see Ferling 2004), but presidential candidates did far less campaigning in the 1800s (see Boller 1984; Crotty 1978; Witcover 1977). Thus, their campaign tactics did not resemble anything what we see today. Nardulli et al. (2002) argue that 1960 was the first modern campaign in which both candidates spent considerable time on the road to mobilize and persuade voters.

instance, we know which states received most visits in 1988 and where Bush and Gore spend most of their campaign dollars in 2000.

It is not enough, however, to approach the study of battleground states with questions that reflect the strategic calculation that presidential candidates and their staff use when approaching each state. Campaigning in particular states not only affects candidates' quests for 270 electoral votes but, I argue in this dissertation, also affects the citizens and other political candidates in ways that depend on whether they live in a battleground state. Voters in Ohio, Pennsylvania, or New Mexico have a sense of greater representation and voice in the election outcome than citizens in non-battleground states. Presidential candidates visit these voters' towns, parks, and schools; they encourage them to vote and promise that their vote will make all the difference. Presidential candidates rarely address people in non-swing states—Wyoming, New York or California, for example—except during fundraisers.[9]

In the wake of Election Day, candidates and pundits divide and dissect the electoral map, but newly-elected presidents undergo a radical change. Instead of claiming to represent the geographic constituencies that elected them into office, president-elects and presidents claim to represent the entire country. They eagerly propagate this image from day one. President Obama told the American people on the night of Election Day, "Americans (…) sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and always will be, the

[9] This of course can change. After all, California was a battleground state in the 1980s. The larger point I am trying to make is that safe state residents are not visited nor heard.

United States of America." While I do not doubt Obama's sincerity, this statement stands in stark contrast to how he campaigned. Like other candidates, he spent most of his time in battleground states, ignoring more than half of the states in the union. Bill Clinton made a similar statement in his 1996 victory speech: "Today the American people have spoken. They have affirmed our course. They have told us to go forward. America has told every one of us -- Democrats, Republicans and Independents -- loud and clear: it is time to put politics aside, join together and get the job done for America's future." And, "Today, our economy is stronger, our streets are safer, our environment is cleaner, the world is more secure *and, thank God, our nation is more united*" (emphasis added).

Soaring rhetoric aside, the questions still remain: Are citizens in Ohio and Wyoming similarly ready to recognize the newly elected president as representing national, as opposed to parochial, interests? Are they equally optimistic about government's responsiveness to their needs? Similarly, are senators who campaigned with (or against) a given presidential candidate at the state level ready to support the president-elect's policy proposals?

While there have been many studies on the Electoral College, few examine the repercussions the Electoral College has for American politics beyond Election Day. Instead, political science literature is neatly divided into studies of campaigns and studies of governance, allowing for little overlap between the two (but see Sulkin 2005; Tenpas 1997). But given the excessive campaign attention to the battleground states, there is reason to believe the Electoral College shapes presidential candidates' campaign behavior

which in turn shapes post-election politics at both the mass and elite level. Few studies have examined whether relations with government are fundamentally different among voters living in battleground states and those living in safe states. Similarly, no studies have examined how senators respond to working with a national president compared to "the parochial president" they campaigned with.

Examining the effects of the Electoral Colleges has on citizens' experience with politics is important for a number of reasons. First, elections are the most important and obvious link between citizens and their representatives and offer a chance for citizens to express their preferences and repudiate current office holders if they disagree with their performance. By treating citizens differently depending on their geographic location and promoting their policy positions more frequently in electorally competitive states (Hendriks, DeVries, and De Landtsheer 2006), candidates give citizens of battleground states a greater voice and more involvement in the electoral process than voters in safe states. Moreover, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), along with other political commentators, argue for an informed and knowledgeable citizenry as our democratic ideal. But to make an informed decision, citizens need to have access to relevant information (Redlawsk 2004; but Lau and Redlawsk 1997). As such, presidential elections come closer to the democratic ideal in the battleground states than in the safe states (see Gimpel et al. 2007 for a similar argument).

This, ironically, means that the Electoral College has consequences opposite to what the Framers of the U.S. Constitution had in mind. Afraid of "an immediate choice of

the people,"[10] the Framers designed a presidential selection process that could serve as a check on the popular will. Thus, instead of a direct popular vote, a number of "men capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station, and acting under circumstances favorable to deliberation"[11] – i.e. the electors – would choose the next American executive. Whereas today's role of these electors is merely symbolic, the contours of the Electoral College have remained largely in tact. This means that, today, battleground states receive so much attention from both the campaigns and the mass media that within these regions certain democratic features are actually enhanced: turnout rates go up (Hill and McKee 2005) and voters are more politically engaged (Gimpel et al. 2007; Lipsitz forthcoming).

Second, while presidential elections are primarily interactions between voters and presidential candidates, campaigns have invaded almost every aspect of American politics (Edwards 2007) and can have far-reaching consequences that go well beyond who ends up in office. For instance, winning congressional candidates have been found to take up campaign issues of their unsuccessful opponents (Sulkin 2005) and presidents' campaign efforts to help same-party candidates into office during midterm elections shapes how those candidates vote on roll-call after the election (Herrnson and Morris 2006). In other words, campaign strategies not only affect if and for whom citizens vote; they also shape how elected officials subsequently represent their constituencies.

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[10] Quoted in Dahl (2000).
[11] Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist Paper #68*.

This dissertation includes three studies in order to more closely examine the role of the Electoral College in American politics—two analyzing citizens and one analyzing elites. First, combining individual-level data from national surveys with self-collected state-level data, I examine citizens' attitudes toward government in the battleground states versus the safe states. Second, I examine how voters experience the election outcome—i.e. whether they are on the winning or losing side—in the context of the Electoral College. The third study turns to battleground effects on U.S. senators and their support for presidential policy proposals. All three studies strongly suggest that the Electoral College affects how citizens and senators think and act politically. In this sense, America's presidential selection system shapes the relationship between citizens and their executive and legislative representatives in subtle but powerful ways.

Having set up the general argument of my dissertation, I use the remainder of this introductory chapter to develop my specific research questions and discuss how my dissertation brings together important literatures in political science and political psychology. Finally, I provide an overview of the dissertation. But first I juxtapose the Electoral College and its consequences for campaign strategies with the presidential mandate – a president's claim that, through the election, the American people have spoken and given him consent to enact his campaign promises.[12] This juxtaposition gets

[12] Marjorie Randon Hershey (1994) identifies a policy mandate and a personal mandate, where the first refers to a directive from the American people to enact specific policy proposals and the second refers to a more general mandate to act on behalf of the American people. Whereas political scientists tend to define mandates according to the first interpretation (e.g. Conley 2001), I refer to the more general interpretation. My aim here is not to add to the debate on whether presidential mandates exist or not but merely to

at the heart of my puzzle and illustrates how an examination of both mass and elite behavior is an appropriate approach to solving this puzzle.

“All Politics is Local”

When long-time Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill uttered these words over two decades ago, he referred to the work of senators and representatives. These words, I argue, also apply to the electoral process of America’s only nationally elected position, the president. The Electoral College means that presidential candidates focus on states in order to win a majority of Electoral College votes (Bartels 1985; Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Shaw 1999, 2006). As a consequence, even national elections tend to take the form of several regional contests.

While this electoral system fits hand in glove with a federal system of government (Best 1996), it introduces tensions in American politics when paired with another development within the executive branch: namely, that presidents frequently present themselves as the only true representative of the entire American people. Since Andrew Jackson, presidents have claimed that elections give them a popular mandate to enact policies that affect the whole country (Dahl 1990). As such, the president is uniquely situated, more so than Congress to represent national concerns. This elevates him above members of Congress and makes him the most democratic leader in the system,

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juxtapose presidential candidates’ behavior during the campaign with the image of the modern presidency as national representatives, which presidents themselves often actively propagate (Edwards 1989; Grossback, Peterson, and Stimson 2005).

representing national – rather than parochial – interests.[13] Political scientist and America's 28th president Woodrow Wilson (1908) argued the president is "the only national voice in affairs" who is "representative of no constituency, but of the whole people" (70).

To be sure, Dahl, along with other political scientists, rebukes the notion of a presidential mandate (see Grossback, Peterson, and Stimson 2005), given that most elections outcomes are close and voters are too uninformed or rely on too diverse of an array of mental shortcuts to send an unambiguous message to elected officials. Still, even after very close elections, presidents show a tendency to interpret the election outcome as a mandate from the entire American people. Take for instance Bush's 2004 victory speech. After being re-elected with a narrow 2.5% margin, he claimed, "America has spoken, and I'm humbled by the trust and the confidence of my fellow citizens. With that trust comes a duty to serve all Americans, and I will do my best to fulfill that duty every day as your President."

The irony is that at the same time we hear these claims to a presidential mandate,[14] critiques of the Electoral College have followed, particularly after the 2000 election, castigating the institution as undemocratic and parochial (e.g. Loomis 2006;

[13] Dahl (1990) has called this the "pseudodemocratization" of the presidency because it has actually led to less accountability and transparences on presidents' parts.
[14] In a review article, Jide Nzelibe (2006) gives pointed examples of Congress' and the courts' embraces of the notion of a national president.

Longley 1994; Richie 2007; Wayne 1992).[15] In other words, while presidents make claims to the alleged democratic nature of their office, the rules by which they are elected are portrayed as profoundly undemocratic. This is not surprising, as the Electoral College has increasingly shaped the contours of presidential election campaigns, in large part due to the increasing amounts of money in presidential elections and technological advances in transportation and communications that enable candidates to fully realize their Electoral College strategies (Althaus, Nardulli, and Shaw 2002). This expansion of resources would lead us to expect to see a greater number of states being contested but an inspection of candidate strategies in 1992 and 2004 indicates the opposite is true. For instance, whereas the maximum total number of Republican and Democratic candidate visits to a state was 17 in 1992 (Michigan), this number increased to 43 in 2004 (Florida). However, in 1992, 12 states did not receive a single visit; in 2004, this number rose to 27 – over half of all states (Shaw 1999, 2006). This suggests that instead of spreading their increasing wealth across more states, candidate have only narrowed their geographic attention or what Shaw (2006) calls a "trend toward tighter, leaner targeting" (69).[16]

In sum, there is a disconnect between how presidents campaign and how they present themselves in office. Put differently, the behavior of presidential candidates is incongruent with the image of the presidency they actively promote once in office. Of

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[15] These critiques come from political scientists, journalists, and political practitioners. The National Popular Vote has a collection of newspaper articles on the issue at www.nationalpopularvote.com.

[16] There is variation among presidential candidates but while one might think President Obama visited many more states as a candidate, the opposite it true. Between Sept. 1 and Election Day, he only paid visits to about half of the states and thus his campaign fits neatly in this trend of increasing geographic targeting.

course, this is not problematic *a priori*. Once the campaign is over, citizens in safe states might not care or forget about the disproportionate attention candidates gave them and willingly accept the candidate who won most electoral votes. In other words, citizens' campaign experiences might not carry over into the governing period, thereby actually validating most political scientists' treatment of campaigns and governance as two distinct, unrelated areas of research.

However, the opposite could also be true. To govern effectively, presidents need a supportive electorate and Congress. But in efforts to advance national policies, such as health care, social security, or education reform, presidents might experience more difficulty in raising support in the regions they ignored during the campaign. Campaign visits signal to voters that candidates care about these voters' needs and will take into account their preferences. Not receiving this kind of attention might make voters skeptical about government's responsiveness, even if one's preferred candidate wins. Moreover, frequent visits and television ads increase the likelihood that voters are exposed to candidates' issue priorities. In fact, the salience of candidates' campaign issues among voters increases in the battleground states over the course of the campaign, in particular among Independents (Hendriks and DeVries 2008). In other words, candidates' unequal distribution of time and money might foster a disjointed electorate, with a more supportive and optimistic citizenry in battleground states and a less supportive and more pessimistic citizenry in safe states. This in turn could affect a president's ability to govern, since a supportive electorate facilitates presidential success,

whereas a cynical electorate hampers this (Hetherington 1998). Similarly, senators from battleground states who have had the opportunity to campaign with the new president-elect might be more willing to support his policy initiatives after the election. Perhaps some senators even increased their own electoral success as a result of intensive campaign attention that comes with representing a presidential battleground.

This leads to the more specific research question I take up in subsequent chapters: What are the implications of the Electoral College and presidential candidates' battleground strategies for shaping the relationship between citizens and government? The above discussion suggests an examination of this question at the public and elite levels: First, do citizens think and feel differently about politics depending on their geographic location in a safe or battleground state? Second, do senators represent their constituents differently depending on whether their state is a swing state?[17]

Linking Campaigns, Institutions, and Post-Election Attitudes and Behavior

My dissertation brings together a number of literatures in political science and political psychology, thereby advancing them in the following ways: It broadens our understanding of campaign effects to include post-election attitudes and behavior; it includes electoral institutions – the Electoral College, in this case – more explicitly into

[17] Some studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that presidents – in particular first term presidents – continue to give disproportionate attention to battleground states during the governing period, (Doherty 2005; Johnson 2005; but see Taylor 2007).[17] In other words, they remain more concerned with electorally signficant geographic regions than with national interests. My dissertation, in contrast, is not interested in the effect of the Electoral College on presidential action but instead on citizen perceptions and senatorial politics.

theories of campaign effects; and, as a result, it thereby provides further support for the link between electoral institutions and political behavior.

This dissertation most directly contributes to the campaign effects literature, which has been occupied with the enduring question "Do campaigns matter?" This question has recently been redefined to "*For whom* and under *what conditions* do campaigns matter?" (Hillygus and Jackman 2003: 583, emphasis in original; Iyengar and Simon 2000).[18] While earlier research on media and campaign effects suggested that elections have minimal effects on citizens' political actions and thoughts (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960), more recent work shows campaigns can change public opinion and political behavior (e.g. Hillygus and Jackman 2003; Shaw 2006). Whereas this existing literature looks at campaigns more generally, I study presidential campaigns within the context of the Electoral College. Thus, uncovering the effects of a specific campaign activity – geographic targeting – on citizens' attitudes and senators' voting behavior brings us closer to an answer to the above question.

Scholars of campaigns and elections have focused mainly on campaign influences on candidate perceptions, voter turnout, and vote choice (e.g. Gerber and Green 2000; Holbrook 1996; Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Shaw 2006; Hilllygus and Jackman 2003). In other words, presidential campaigns are mostly studied in terms of the effects that occur between the national party conventions and Election Day. Moreover, when studying these effect, political scientists – with a few notable exceptions – tend to treat

[18] Hillygus and Jackman (2003) offer a good summary of this debate.

the American public as a whole, failing to recognize that presidential candidates and their staff do the exact opposite: they divide the American electorate based on their geographic location into safe, marginally safe, and battleground categories.

With a renewed interest in campaign influences in American politics has come an increase in investigations of battleground effects on the American electorate (e.g. Hill and McKee 2005; Shaw 2006; Wolak 2006; Lipsitz forthcoming). Thus far, the results of these studies are inconclusive. Like much political science research, they reveal a more complicated world than the question motivating the research initially suggested. For instance, battleground effects seem to vary by attitude and behavior, with small but significant effects on turnout (Bergan et al. 2005; Hill and McKee 2005; Wolak 2006) and political knowledge but no effects on political interest (Lipsitz 2004; Wolak 2006). However, not all citizens are as likely to be influenced by candidates' disproportionate campaign attention; traditionally marginalized groups such as low-income voters might benefit mostly from living in a battleground as it increases their interest in politics (Gimpel et al. 2007). In this dissertation, I improve on these findings and examine in more depth the individual and state-level differences that interact with battleground status.[19]

The recognition that electoral institutions set important parameters within which citizens experience politics is not new. Nevertheless, much of political psychology research on political behavior and public opinion focuses on the role of individual

[19] In chapters 3 and 4, I discuss the literature on Electoral College strategies and their effects on voters in more detail.

characteristics, often ignoring or only paying lip service to the role of institutions (but Anderson et al. 2005; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Karp and Banducci 2007). Of course, this is not unfounded because enduring factors such as education, party identification, and ideology powerfully shape political attitudes and behavior. But, as Conway (1989) notes, "all too often we fail to take into account the effects of the legal and political environments in which individual political behavior occurs" (3).

The strongest evidence for the proposition that electoral institutions matter comes from the field of comparative politics. For instance, studies show that countries' institutional structures shape reactions to election outcomes (Anderson et al. 2005), the type of candidates who run for office (Rose 1987), and political attitude constraint and stability (Granberg and Holmberg 1988). Anderson et al. (2005) conclude, "[political] institutions are not simply disembodied objects external to voters but, rather, are factors that help shape and give meaning to political attitudes. In a way, then, institutions are both endogenous and exogenous to political behavior" (192).

Despite the research on the importance of legal institutions, there is little empirical work that examines how the Electoral College shapes how citizens or senators act politically. Taking a theoretical approach, though, political scientists James Ceaser (1979) provides one approach to conceptualizing Electoral College effects. He argued that the formal rules of the selection system influence the political landscape in two distinct ways. First, in an immediate sense, the selection system structures the process leading up to the actual election of the executive, by "determining the groups and

constituencies to which the candidate (…) must appeal" (16). While not a direct reference to battleground strategies, this logic applies perfectly to the fact that the Electoral College places states rather than individual voters center-stage and thus leads to geographic targeting (Shaw 1999, 2006). Second, the formal rules of the selection system have far-reaching consequences for executive power and leadership, legitimacy, and policy. Ceaser contends that the manner in which presidents are elected and conduct their campaigns affects how people perceive the executive office. He also points out that groups or individuals to whom candidates appeal during the campaign determine candidates' sources of authority once in office. By studying citizens' legitimacy attitudes and senators' support for the presidents, this dissertation is an empirical test of these propositions.

Paradoxically, electoral institutions can also undermine a political system's legitimacy. For instance, citizens who voted for losing presidential candidate are more likely to support Electoral College reform (Bowler and Donovan 2007). In this dissertation, I investigate why this might be the case and what role the Electoral College itself plays in creating these sentiments among losers. Moreover, Gimpel et al. (2007) suggest that campaigns can be "tools of democracy," but this is only true in the battleground states where presidential elections are primarily fought. Although the absence of presidential campaign activity in safe states has thus far not led to major electoral reform, there are plenty of signs of frustration among citizens and political elites. For instance, in summer 2007 the Republican Party in California initiated a

proposal to amend the state constitution and change the way California awards its electoral votes, thereby giving Republican presidential candidates a chance to win some electoral votes in a fairly consistently Democratic state.[20] As calls for change like these become more common, it is both important to understand what motivates them and how exactly institutional arrangements play a role in this.

In sum, all these studies indicate a recognition of the role of political institutions is crucial to our studies of people's political opinions and actions. This dissertation does exactly that by incorporation the Electoral College into models of post-election political behavior and attitudes.

Linking Campaigning and Governance

While not directly engaging with this literature, my study is in line with scholarship that treats campaigns and governance as interwoven rather than discrete activities. Many scholars of American politics either focus on candidates' efforts to get elected into office – the strategies they use, how do these strategies affect voters, etc. – (e.g. Holbrook 1996; Patterson 2002; Shaw 2006) or they ask questions about presidential success once in office (e.g. Bond and Fleiser 1990). Fortunately, an increasing number of scholars recognize that campaigning (and campaign effects) does not stop on Election Day nor can governance be disaggregated from campaigning (Doherty 2007; Edwards 2007; Taylor 2007).

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[20] This initiative never made it onto the ballot.

For instance, modern presidents increasingly run permanent campaigns, particularly during their first term in office (Edwards 2007; Tenpas 1997, 2003). The moment the victorious candidate enters the White House, he starts his reelection campaign using presidential policies to court potential voters and contributors for the next election (Johnson 2005; Taylor 2007). This notion of the permanent campaign paints a picture of presidents and presidential candidates as having the freedom to pursue (re)election goals – or as President George H.W. Bush put it ,"I will do what I have to do to be reelected"[21] – without constraining themselves. Political pundits and scholars alike bemoan the rise of the permanent campaign because it is detrimental to governance: it leads presidents to focus on short-term rather than long-term objectives and can undermine presidents' policy-making powers (Ornstein and Mann 2000; Tenpas 1997). Little research, however, has systematically examined how campaign decisions and tactics affect the citizenry and non-presidential candidates, e.g. senators, and can thus constrain rather than further presidents' goals.

Electoral College Critiques

Finally, my project engages with a more popular debate over Electoral College reform.[22] While my dissertation makes an important contribution to this debate by

[21] Quoted in Tenpas (1997): xiii.
[22] It would be incorrect to say that political scientists have not engaged in this debate over the Electoral College. Judith Best (1996), Shumaker and Loomis (2001) Edwards (2004), and Dahl (2001) are excellent examples of political scientists with strong opinions on the quality of the presidential selection system. But in his book-length analysis of the Electoral College, Shaw (2006) not once makes an argument for or against it. This is typical of some other scholars as well, who are more concerned with how the Electoral College systematically affect politics rather than make a normative judgment about its character.

investigating a common allegation against the Electoral College – that it treats citizens unequally and therefore leads to a politically disinterested citizenry and even withdrawal from politics in the safe state – I believe a reframing of this debate might be helpful. Instead of investigating how the Electoral College measures up to alternative presidential selection systems, e.g. a direct popular vote, we should focus our attention on how we can make the electoral process more democratic, *given the Electoral College*? But first, let me briefly address some of the concerns of Electoral College opponents.

The Electoral College has received a barrage of critique over the course of its existence. Dahl (2000) referred to it as "that anomalous vestige of the Framers' work, the electoral college" (72), while political satirist P.J. O'Rourke described the institution as follows:

> The idea seems to be to make the election of the president so complicated and annoying that no one with an important job or a serious avocation – that is, no one presently making any substantial contribution to society – would be tempted to run for the office. So far, it's worked.[23]

Most current criticism falls into one of three categories. First, because of small states' overrepresentation in the Senate, small states are also overrepresented under the Electoral College. This violates the 'one person, one vote' rule: since more populous states have more residents per elector compared to the national average, votes do not have equal weight.[24] For instance, a vote in California weighs much less than a vote in

[23] Quoted in Judith Best (1996: 4).
[24] Recall that each state receives a number of Electoral College votes equal to its number of representatives and senators in the U.S. Congress. While the number of Representatives is dependent on population size,

Alaska. A second common argument against the Electoral College is that it can pronounce a winner even if this candidate received fewer popular votes than his or her opponent. This has happened four times, the most recent example being the 2000 election (1824, 1876, and 1888 were the others). More recently, critics have turned to candidates' battleground strategies as an indication of the profound undemocratic nature of the Electoral College (e.g. Loomis 2006; Richie 2007). The goal of most of these critics is to get rid of the Electoral College in its present form and replace it with some form of a popular vote.

While I do not contest the validity of these arguments, my aim is to reframe this debate somewhat. I argue for shifting away from a focus on alternatives that do away with the College completely to an increased focus on how the Electoral College actually structures politics. Despite widespread disdain for the Electoral College and concerted efforts to reform it,[25] I believe it is here to stay. Even after the controversial election outcome in 2000, no reform has taken place. Opponents of the Electoral College face a prime instance of the collective action problem: a critical number of states have to agree to change their laws on how to award their electoral votes and thus far a majority have not shown a willingness to do so.

Therefore, it is important that we understand the nature and quality of the link between the Electoral College, campaign strategies, and post-election politics, both at the

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each state has two senators, regardless of size. This leads to overrepresentation in the Senate of the small states and, in turn, overrepresentation in the Electoral College.

[25] The National Popular Vote is one of the most recent examples of efforts among state legislators to change the way electoral votes are awarded.

mass and elite levels. If we find that the Electoral College leads to unacceptable inequalities, we can think about how to correct for these negative consequences within the current framework. For instance, are there ways to make more states electorally competitive? Can we make state-level changes in registration laws or party organization such that more states become attractive to candidates and more citizens experience the benefits of living in a battleground state? In short, instead of reforming the rules, are there actions we can take to make presidential campaigns both more equitable and accessible to more people?

Plan of the Dissertation

The following chapters attempt to uncover if and how the Electoral College – through presidential candidates' campaign behavior – shapes post-election politics at the mass and elite level. In developing theoretical expectations, I draw on literatures in political science and political psychology. Ultimately, this dissertation furthers our understanding of the power and limitations of campaign effects on citizens and political elites, taking into account that the institutional rules play an important role in channeling these effects.

In Chapter 2, I take up the question "What is a battleground state?" I provide an in-depth analysis of the battleground phenomenon, including three different perspectives: those of candidates, the local media, and citizens. To set up my argument, I use Minnesota during the 2008 election as a case study and present findings from original survey data to highlight Minnesotans' perceptions of their state's role in that election.

Another important, second goal of this chapter is to offer and provide a justification for my operationalization of battleground status. Thus, I review studies of Electoral College strategies, discuss previous scholars' measures of battleground status, and introduce the measure I use in the empirical analyses presented in chapters 3, 4, and 5. While this is not a new measure and has been successfully used in earlier studies of battleground effects on citizen attitudes and behavior, I compare it to self-collected data on local news coverage and a national survey to further validate it.

Chapter 3 is the first of two chapters that investigate Electoral College effects on individual-level attitudes toward government. I develop a model of battleground effects and examine the moderating role of individual differences, such as partisanship, political knowledge, and income. Second, since states differ on another important political indicator – political culture – state electorates might react differently to living in a battleground states depending on the dominant political norms and values in their state. Thus, I also examine how political culture conditions the relationship between living in a battleground state and political attitudes. I combine National Election Studies data with self-collected state-level data for the presidential election years during the period 1992-2004 to test my hypotheses.

Having analyzed what it means for citizens to live in a battleground state more generally, Chapter 4 examines how the Electoral College shapes voters' interpretations of the election outcome. Previous work has shown that losers feel more cynical about the political process and I argue that the Electoral College can exacerbate or attenuate this

occurrence because: 1) presidential elections produce outcomes at the state and national levels, and 2) living in a battleground state could make a win or lose more acute. This study helps us understand why some citizens might call for Electoral College reform.

In Chapter 5, I turn to battleground effects on elite-level behavior. Besides affecting the mass public, presidential campaigns also shape the actions of political elites. I argue that Senators who are from battleground states and of the president's party are more likely to support the presidential policy proposals because their states (and they) received much attention from the presidential candidate during the campaign. I use data from 1992-2004 to test this proposition and find evidence that senatorial voting behavior depends on the importance of a senator's home state in the previous elections.

In the final chapter, I provide a summary of my findings and discuss how they answered the questions posed in this introductory chapter. I also theorize how things might look different in the absence of the Electoral College and offer my analysis of the ways in which the 2008 election both supports and suggests some modifications to my conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

THE BATTLEGROUND

Introduction

In fall 2008, a handful of states dominated the news: Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, and Indiana, among others. The New York Times even ran a series that documented the lives of ordinary citizens in these states. What these states had in common is that they were battleground states in the 2008 presidential election – some veterans, others newcomers to the field. But what makes a state a battleground state? Who determines which states are battlegrounds? Is battleground status the same as electoral competitiveness? And what do battleground states get, besides extensive media coverage?

In this chapter, I address these questions by assessing the battleground phenomenon from three perspectives: those of candidates, citizens, and the media. While it is common knowledge that presidential candidates strategically attend to some while ignoring other states, political scientists only began to systematically study candidates' Electoral College strategies in the late 1990s. However, between then and now, scholars have made enormous advances in uncovering the motivations behind these strategies as well as documenting with great detail candidates' travel patterns and media buys across the states. Our understanding of the especially local media coverage and citizens' perceptions of their states is much more limited. In this chapter, I present data from two

original studies that begin to fill in these gaps: a content analysis of state newspapers' coverage of the 2004 campaign and a public opinion survey conducted in Minnesota during the 2008 election. Based on the findings, I conclude battleground status is as much about perceptions – which states do candidates perceive to be most important, how does subsequent candidate behavior shape citizens' perceptions of their state, etc. – as it is about reality – the actual closeness of a state race according to the polls.

A second purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify my operationalization of battleground status in the following chapters. Unfortunately, no national dataset includes a measure that captures citizens' perceptions of their state under the Electoral College – a measure that is theoretically most appealing when studying battleground effects on citizens' attitudes toward government. This leaves us with a choice among imperfect measures. Using a state's margin of victory in the last election or latest poll numbers is a flawed approach, I argue, as this assumes battleground status is an objective state that candidates agree upon. Instead, candidates' lists of battleground states do not always overlap nor are they perfectly correlated to states' electoral closeness. And because I am interested in studying the total effects of living in a battleground state rather than one particular aspect, using the number of visits or advertisements spending per state also has its drawbacks. I thus opt for a measure derived from Shaw's work (1999; 2006), which is based on candidates' perceptions of the states but is related to the (limited) information we have on media coverage and citizens' perceptions. Moreover, he has information for all years of interest allowing for measurement consistency.

This chapter is organized as follows. I start with a case study of Minnesota during the 2008 election. Studying campaign activity and citizens' reactions to this activity in one state rather than across all 50 states is helpful in conceptualizing battleground status. It allows us to attend to the particulars of a state, which would be complicated in a 50-state approach. The main reason for choosing Minnesota is that I have original survey data that can shed light on how citizens interpreted Obama and McCain's attention to the state. Next, I review scholarship on Electoral College strategies and discuss how scholars have operationalized battleground status in the past. This leads to the measurement I believe most appropriate for my research: a 5-point scale derived from Shaw (1999, 2006), also used by Gimpel and colleagues (2007) and Lipsitz (forthcoming). To further test the validity of this measurement, I compare it to self-collected data on local media coverage and a question from the National Election Studies (NES) on the electoral closeness of a respondent's state.

Minnesota 2008: A Case Study

During the 2008 presidential election campaign, Minnesota Public Radio in collaboration with the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs surveyed Minnesota voters on multiple occasions. I was offered the opportunity to add questions to the survey conducted between September 29 and October 5, about one month into the general campaign. These questions included ones that probed Minnesotans' thoughts on the role of their state in the general election as well as whether they believed the major party candidates' cared about Minnesota voters.

Minnesota was an important state in elections 2000 and 2004: although the Gore and Kerry campaigns considered it leaning Democrat, the Bush campaigns considered it a full-fledged battleground state on both occasions (Shaw 2006). Apparently, the Republican Party believed Minnesota to be in play again in 2008, given its choice to host the Republican National Convention (RNC) in St. Paul. Moreover, the McCain campaign greatly outspent the Obama campaign in the first month of the general election campaign. In the week after the RNC, McCain spent $472,000 on television advertising in Minnesota, while Obama only spent $18,000. Late September/early October, the week when the survey was conducted, McCain still outspent Obama by a ratio of 5 to 1 – $608,000 versus $121,000. Toward the end of the campaign, this pattern reversed with Obama spending close to $500,000 in the week of October 21-28, while McCain's numbers had dropped to $176,000.[26] McCain also paid Minnesota more visits than Obama: one in mid-September – before the survey – and one on October 10, when he visited Lakeville, MN. Obama, on the other hand, did not return to Minnesota after he announced his primary victory in St. Paul on June 3.

This information paints a picture of a state that the McCain campaign considered to be competitive, while the Obama campaign considered it leaning Democrat, and thus not deserving of campaign appearances or much advertising expenditure. By contrast, most Minnesota polls conducted early to mid September showed the two candidates

[26] Spending information comes from the Wisconsin Ad Project: http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/.

within the margin of error. If presidential candidates base their strategies solely on these numbers, Obama should have given Minnesota as much attention as McCain.

However, polls alone paint an incomplete picture. Shaw (2006) reveals poll numbers received highest priority during Bush's 2000 and 2004 campaigns but that a number of other factors also played a role in determining a state's battleground status, among them a state's past voting history, the presence of popular statewide Republican leaders, a strong party organization, and the existence of other close statewide races (55-56). In fact, Minnesota has consistently voted for the Democratic nominee since 1976, even in 1984 when all other states voted for Ronald Reagan. This strong Democratic tendency could have led to Obama to feel confident in Minnesota's outcome in 2008, which explains his lack of attention to the state. However, as much as there were positive indicators for the Democrats, Minnesota's political environment could have also stemmed the Republicans optimistic. At the state level, Minnesotans have been much more willing to vote for Republican candidates, making it a more ideologically diverse state than an examination of presidential elections alone would suggest. The current governor, Tim Pawlenty, is a Republican serving a second term. Additionally, one of Minnesota U.S. Senators, Norm Coleman, was a Republican, as were a number of representatives in the House. The partisan make-up of Minnesota's body of representatives signals that Minnesota's electorate might be favorable to a Republican presidential candidate, which could have led the McCain campaign to conclude it was within reach. Moreover, these Republican representatives could offer him valuable

campaign support. In sum, Minnesota is a complex state, although this is not unique compared to most other states, which are also less red or blue than presidential election maps suggest. Most importantly, these indicators probably led to different assessments by the two candidates, with Obama placing greater weight on Minnesota's voting history and McCain placing greater weight on the latest poll numbers as well as the partisan make-up of Minnesota's statewide representatives. This indicates battleground status has a strong subjective component.

With this information in mind, let us look at Minnesotans' perceptions of their state about a month before Election Day. The NPR/Hubert Humphrey survey included two questions that probed respondents' beliefs about the electoral competitiveness and significance of Minnesota: 1) "How likely is it that the outcome of the presidential election will be determined by who wins the state of Minnesota?" and 2) "In this election, do you think Minnesota will vote Republican, Democrat, or is it currently a toss-up between the two candidates?" The first question should tap into the role of Minnesota in the broader election context – whether it could be the state that changes the election outcome, a key feature of a battleground state –[27] while the second should tap into beliefs about Minnesota's competitiveness, regardless of other states.

[27] An alternative possibility is that respondents interpreted this question to ask about the chances that *any* state could determine the election outcome. If respondents were certain that Obama would win the election, of course no state's outcome, including Minnesota's, would make a difference. However, Democrats, who had more reason to be optimistic at this point in the election, were *more* likely to think that Minnesota could determine the election. This finding does not align with the alternative interpretation of the question.

To start with the first question, only 8% of the sample thought it very likely that Minnesota would determine the outcome of the presidential election. Nearly half of the sample (47%) believed it somewhat likely but another 40% thought this scenario not too likely or not likely at all. In other words, Minnesotans perceived their state as not tremendously but still somewhat important in the broader context of the presidential election. In comparison, a Rasmussen Reports poll asked Ohioans an identical question mid-August, 2008. 38% of the sample believed it very likely that Ohio could determine the general election outcome and another 47% believed this somewhat likely. Only 7% believed it not very likely or not likely at all. Ohio played a crucial role in the 2004 election and Ohio voters seemed to remember this given their perceptions of their state at the start of the 2008 campaign.[28]

In answering the second question, 58% of respondents believed Minnesota was a safe (or perhaps leaning) state, with 53% stating Minnesota would go Democrat and 5% believing it would go Republican. The remaining two-fifths thought Minnesota was a toss-up state. I expect that Republican identifiers were much more likely to believe Minnesota was a toss-up given that McCain and the Republican Party spent more time and money in Minnesota. In fact, when dividing the sample by party identification (Republicans, Democrats, and Independents),[29] I find that almost half of Republican

[28] This was before Ohio received 34 candidate visits and millions of dollars in television advertisements (numbers based on the *New York Times*' 2008 election coverage and press releases from the Wisconsin Ad Project).
[29] Included in the Independent category are respondents who describe themselves as independent but, when pressed by the interviewer, admit that they lean toward one of the major parties.

respondents (49%) answered that Minnesota was a toss-up state versus 30% of Democratic respondents. Independents were by far the most likely to say Minnesota was a toss-up: 60% agreed with this statement. However, once respondents indicated that Minnesota was *not* a toss-up state, all groups overwhelmingly gave the edge to Obama. In fact, very few respondents gave McCain the benefit of the doubt (only 5% of the total sample), even Republican identifiers.

These are interesting findings given the fact that many state-level polls had Obama and McCain within the margin of error. This suggests that many people do not take their cues solely or directly from the polls. Other influences could include the above-mentioned factors that also influence candidates' perceptions, e.g. Minnesota' voting history. But, I contend, it is also likely the media and the candidates played a big role in shaping these perceptions.[30] Given that most people are politically uninformed (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Campbell 1964), they take their cues from political elites and the media (Dalton, Beck, and Huckfeldt 1998; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991). First, the fact that the RNC was held in St. Paul sent the message to Minnesota voters that the McCain campaign considered it a swing state. Moreover, although McCain only paid one visit to Minnesota in the period between the convention and the date of the survey, he bought a considerable amount of television advertisement in the Minnesota media markets. It is thus not surprising that Republicans in particular believed Minnesota

[30] The Star Tribune, one of Minnesota's main newspapers, conducted a statewide poll during the period September 30-October 2, which showed Obama ahead by 18 percentage points. It is unclear how many respondents in the sample were aware of these numbers when interviewed. www.fivethirtyeight.com has pre-election polls for all states.

to be a toss-up state since this is what their candidate signaled to them. Since Independents are among the most targeted voters (Panagopoulos and Wielhouwer 2008), it seems fitting that they have the highest sense of competitiveness. Second, McCain might have been perceived as the underdog. This could have led Republicans to hold onto the belief that there was still a possibility for McCain to win Minnesota, whereas Democrats had already congratulated themselves on another Democratic victory in their state (Fleitas 1971). Perhaps as instructive is the fact that very few respondents answered 'don't know' to this question (less than 3%). In other words, most respondents felt capable of making a judgment about their state.[31]

How are perceptions of battleground status related to candidate perceptions? To test this, I included the following question about the major party nominees in the NPR/Hubert Humphrey survey: "How much do you think [MCCAIN/OBAMA] cares about the voters in Minnesota?" Possible answers were: "a great deal," "a fair amount," "only a little" and "not at all." I rescaled these answers to range from 0 to 100 with higher scores indicating more care.

[31] Party effects were reversed for the question about Minnesota's potential to decide the general election outcome. Whereas I expected Republicans, who were more likely to think Minnesota was a toss-up state, were most likely to believe Minnesota could decide the general election, this was not the case. Among Republicans, 49% agreed that this was somewhat or very likely versus 64% of Democrats. This suggests that Democrats were more confident about Minnesota's importance vis-à-vis the other states, even though they were much less likely to think Minnesota was a toss-up state. This is a little puzzling. One explanation is that presumed front-runners have an inflated sense of the importance of their state. Unfortunately, the Rasmussen poll conducted in Ohio, which includes the same question, does not separate its sample by partisanship. It is thus impossible to know whether this is a Minnesota specific finding or whether similar party differences exist in other states.

Among all respondents, Obama scored a mean of 64 and McCain scored a mean of 56, a statistically significant difference of 12 points ($p<.00$). In other words, respondents were much more likely to believe that Obama cared for voters in Minnesota. Considering that McCain spent more time and money in Minnesota this is a counterintuitive finding. However, this difference is likely a result of the differences in personality between the two candidates. Overall, the American electorate evaluated Obama more favorably than McCain. But unsurprisingly, partisan identifiers were most positive about their own candidates: Republicans were much more likely to say that McCain cared about Minnesota voters than Democrats – the means were 70, 47, and 59 for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents respectively – and a reversed pattern was found for evaluations of Obama with means of 52, 73, and 59 for the same groups.

To examine whether candidate evaluations were related to respondents' beliefs about their state, I constructed two multivariate models with candidate evaluations as the dependent variables, the toss-up question (dummy for belief that Minnesota is a toss-up state) as the independent variable of interest, and party identification (dummy for Republican identifiers) as a control variable.

TABLE 2.1 HERE

Model 1 in Table 2.1 shows that believing Minnesota is a toss-up state is correlated with a more positive evaluation of McCain. This relationship is non-existent for Obama (results not shown here): Even when respondents thought Minnesota was a toss-up, this did not make them more likely to think Obama cared about them. What

explains this difference? Since McCain spent a lot of time and money in Minnesota, in particular in the month leading up to the survey, he signaled to voters that Minnesota was a competitive state and that he cared about its voters. Obama, who did not visit Minnesota after June 3, conveyed the opposite message.

Next, I wondered whether this positive relationship between toss-up beliefs and evaluations of McCain existed among all voters. Perhaps Republican identifiers were positive about their candidate regardless of their beliefs that Minnesota was a swing state. To test this, I included an interaction term *toss-up*Republican* in a second model (see Table 2.1). In fact, the coefficient for the interaction is significant and in the predicted direction, which reveals that Democrats and Independents more positively evaluated McCain when they believed they lived in a toss-up state, although the reverse was not true for Obama (results not shown here).

FIGURE 2.2 HERE

The interaction effect is plotted in Figure 2.2. Unsurprisingly, Republican identifiers strongly believed McCain cared about Minnesota voters. However, this is true regardless of whether they believed Minnesota was a toss-up state. Non-Republicans, including both Democrats and Independents, were much more skeptical about McCain's sympathy for Minnesotan voters if they indicated Minnesota was a safe state.[32] But, interestingly, a sense of competitiveness goes hand in hand with a stronger belief McCain cared about Minnesota voters. In other words, battleground perceptions appear to be

[32] These result hold if I exclude Independents.

related to citizens' candidate evaluations, but not uniformly so. Partisans in Minnesota expressed more positive attitudes toward the opponent party's nominee (as did Independents), but only Democrats. Unfortunately, this study cannot establish causation. In fact, the causal arrow between toss-up beliefs and candidate evaluations could point into either direction. A belief that Minnesota was a toss-up could have led to a heightened sense that McCain cared about a state. Alternatively, citizens' beliefs that McCain cared about Minnesota voter could have led to a belief that the state was a toss-up.

While hesitant to generalize these findings to other states, I believe this study allows us to discern at least four aspects of the nature of presidential campaign attention to individual states and its effect on citizens' attitudes: 1) presidential candidates pay attention to states they perceive important to winning executive office, but not necessarily to the same degree; 2) poll numbers are not the sole indicator of battleground status, or we would have seen equal campaign attention to Minnesota from McCain and Obama as well as more similar perceptions among Minnesotans with different party identifications. Rather, candidates are likely to also take cues from other state-specific factors, e.g. voting history, but they do not necessarily interpret these in a similar fashion nor do they give them equal weight; 3) citizens' perceptions of their state make sense in light of candidates' attention; and 4) for some citizens, battleground perceptions are positively related to candidate evaluations. I am not the first to make these observations, in particular the first two, but this case study provides evidence for the notion that candidate strategies are meaningful to citizens. In the next sections, I examine how these insights

relate to previous scholarship in Electoral College strategies and measures of battleground status.

Candidate Strategies

As should be clear by now, presidential hopefuls are not blind to states' crucial role in deciding the next chief executive. Moreover, the classification of states by candidates into battleground and safe categories is not a recent phenomenon.[33] But over the past few decades, political marketing has become increasingly sophisticated, thereby facilitating the classification process. Refined polling techniques and comprehensive voter databases allow political parties to identify groups of people who, through mobilization or persuasion, can help secure electoral victory. These sophisticated campaign strategies are especially prevalent in presidential election campaigns: the stakes in the election outcome are high – creating an incentive – and the candidates usually have large amounts of money to spend – providing the means. This trend opens the door for candidates to focus their campaigns almost exclusively on those states that can swing the election. Moreover, new developments in means of transportation and communication technologies have enabled candidates to actually carry out these strategies (see Althaus et al. 2002 for a discussion of the rising trend in geographic targeting). This might also be a reason why only recently political scientists have begun to systematically study

[33] In a 2006 APSA conference paper on the history of the term 'battleground,' Goux (2006a) finds that only recently are the media using the term extensively. She also finds that presidential campaigns have resorted to (similar) state classifications at least since 1960. Undoubtedly, presidents in earlier eras also targeted specific (state) audiences. However, I would maintain that the rise of polling and the arrival of professional political marketers and consultants in election campaigns have amplified this conduct.

candidates' Electoral College strategies, although a few isolated studies in the 1970s and 1980s addressed this topic as well (Brams and Davis 1974; Bartels 1985; Colantoni et al. 1975).

Althaus, Nardulli, and Shaw (2002) examine candidate appearances at the county, media market, and state level during the period 1972-2000 and find that competitive states indeed receive disproportionate campaign attention compared to electorally secure states. They find that "in 2000, competitive states receive, on average, as many as four times the number of appearances that electorally secure states receive" (66).[34] While an intuitive finding, no other study had empirically tested this proposition over a longer time period. They also find that coverage of these appearances is diffused through media markets, which cross state lines, resulting in a large number of eligible voters being exposed to them. This could mean there are fewer differences between battleground and safe state residents than I am anticipating. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that people identify more closely with their home state than their media market. Thus, when watching local news coverage of a presidential candidate's visit to their neighboring state, safe state residents feel less 'targeted' than they would if the visit was to their own state. I return to this point in the measurement section.

Most recently, Shaw (1999, 2006) has extensively documented Electoral College strategies for each party's presidential nominee during the period 1988-2004. Combining

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[34] The authors go on to state that when taking into consideration media markets many more people – in competitive *and* non-competitive states – are potentially exposed to these visits. I will come back to this point later.

interviews with campaign consultants, his own experience of working for the Republican campaigns of 2000 and 2004, and more systematic empirical analyses, he uncovers how candidates develop battleground strategies and subsequently allocate resources to the states. Shaw emphasizes four points: 1) candidates are strategic, 2) candidates categorize states early in the campaign season, 3) these categorizations are fairly static and do not dramatically change over the course of the campaign, although the amount of attention can vary by week, and 4) actual resource allocation follow these strategies closely (television ads more so than candidate visits).

It should come as no surprise that the central premise of Shaw's study is that candidates behave strategically and that, faced with the Electoral College, they devise plans to optimize their time and money. Moreover, Shaw finds that candidates do not drastically change these strategies over the course of the campaign but rather stick with the plans they devised early in the campaign.[35] This could be partly pragmatic (it is difficult to set up shop in a state half way through the campaign), partly because candidates are determined to win states they have targeted from the beginning of the campaign. They might not want to appear overconfident or signal that they have given up on a state because this could de-motivate voters in that state. This again suggests battleground status is as much about perception as it is about the actual electoral closeness of a state according to the latest poll numbers.

[35] Michigan in 2008 is a notable exception, which McCain initially designated a battleground but then pulled out of.

Most importantly, candidates follow these strategies closely. Designated battleground states indeed receive the bulk of campaign attention in the form of visits, campaign ads, and grassroots efforts. States that are in the safe column are virtually ignored. And while Shaw (1999) notes that "[c]oncerns about governing also influenced electoral college strategies," this appears to be a fairly rare occurrence, although a more common strategy in less close elections, e.g. the 1988 and 1996 elections, during which "[f]ront-running campaigns were interested in creating the perception that they had an electoral mandate to implement their programs." (911).[36]

In short, we have a fairly good understanding of candidates' reasoning behind Electoral College strategies as well as where they allocate their resources based on these strategies. Now let us see how scholars have used this information in their examinations of battleground effects.

Previous Measurements

Battleground measurements range from a state's margin of victory in the previous election (e.g. Doherty 2007; Taylor 2007), the number of visits and campaign ads in a state (Hill and McKee 2005; Shaw 2006; Wolak 2006), to media rankings (Johnson 2005). This is not necessarily problematic if we keep in mind that a measure's appropriateness depends on the research question. For instance, when Taylor (2007) examined whether first-term presidents disproportionately allocate federal funds to battleground states in anticipation of the next election, a state's margin of victory is

[36] Perhaps this is what Obama tried to accomplish when buying advertisements in Minnesota during the last few weeks of the campaign.

probably the most appropriate measure. Namely, presidents try to gauge which states will be battleground states during the next election and last election's margins of victory are good indicators of that. But when examining battleground effects on voter turnout, a measure that takes into account the number of visits or television ads is a better choice (Hill and McKee 2005). Finally, when tracing candidate preferences over the course of the campaign, an even more nuanced measure is needed, for instance the weekly number of visits and television ads broadcast in a state prior to the interview (Shaw 2006).

What measurement should one use if one is interested in examining battleground effects on citizens' attitudes toward government? While actual competitiveness of the state might matter (i.e. marginal difference between the candidates in the latest polls), I believe that perceptions of competitiveness are more important. While citizens might seek out polling data and use this as an indication of their state's role in the election, most research in political psychology suggests few citizens engage in this type of behavior (e.g. Redlawsk 2004). Rather, the media and candidates give meaning to poll numbers by visiting states or labeling as states battleground states. Therefore, I believe it is not so much the actual electoral competitiveness of a state that matters but a state's prominence in candidates' strategies, which in turn should create the public perception that it is a battleground state.[37] I map this path in Figure 2.1. Ideally, I would use a measure that captures citizens' perceptions similar to the questions included in the Minnesota survey,

[37] I do not presume that every citizen knows which states are important to the candidates. Most citizens are likely to name Florida, Ohio, or Pennsylvania, because these states have now been battleground states in consecutive elections and have received much national media coverage. Many fewer people are likely to name New Mexico or Nevada. However, I expect residents *of those states* to realize that their state matters.

but in the absence of such a measure for all years and states under study in the following chapters, I seek an alternative.

An inclusion of measures of both competitiveness and candidate behavior is incorrect, as the first drives the second. Lipsitz (forthcoming) points out, “to assess the total effect of living in a battleground state on voter participation, one must use a measure of competitiveness that does not involve campaign practices, but rather captures the candidates’ perceptions of which states are battleground states and which ones are not.” Another reason for this is that candidates also visit states to fundraise or support same-party congressional candidates (Shaw 1999). The main goal of these events is not to target the voters in the particular states; thus, to count them as part of a candidate’s Electoral College strategy would be inaccurate.

Lipsitz (forthcoming) settles on a measure derived from Shaw (1999, 2006), which I also use in most of my analyses: a 5-point ordinal scale that ranges from safe to battleground, based on the candidates’ perspectives. The logic behind it is as follows: based on interviews with campaign advisors and first-hand experiences with the Republican campaigns of 2000 and 2004, Shaw places states into one of five categories for each party – base Republican, lean Republican, battleground, lean Democrat, base Democrat. In other words, he presents Electoral College strategies from the Republican and the Democratic perspectives. As the Minnesota study suggested is appropriate, Shaw’s categorization allows one candidate to consider a state safe Democrat while the opposition considers it lean Democrat (e.g. Delaware in 2004, which the Kerry campaign

labeled lean Democratic but the Bush campaign safe Democratic). Figure 2.1 shows what influences candidates' decisions to label a state a battleground with competitiveness being the most important indicator followed by the cost of advertising and the number of Electoral College votes.

If we assign values to each category, we can transform this qualitative categorization into an ordinal scale of battleground-ness. First, for each party separately, a value of 0, 1, or 2 is assigned to the states. If a state falls into the safe category, it receives a zero; if it falls into the leaning category, it receives a one, and if it falls into the battleground category, it receives a two.[38] Next, these values are summed across both parties, which leads to a 5-point scale. For instance, if a state falls in the safe category for both campaigns, the total value it receives is zero; if one party considers a state leaning and the other party considers it safe, it receives a total value of 1, etc. When both parties consider a state a battleground it receives a 4. Gimpel and colleagues (2007) use the same ordinal scale when examining battleground effects on political interest and engagement and, when substituting this measure with the number of visits and campaign, advertising spending, or party contact, their findings are substantially weaker. This leads them to

[38] In the years 1992-2004, it has never happened that a state was considered safe or leaning Democrat by one campaign but safe or leaning Republican by the other campaign. Disagreement between the campaigns extends to whether a state is leaning or safe Democrat/Republican and whether a state is leaning Democrat/Republican or a battleground.

conclude that “the participatory benefits of living in contested terrain equal more than a sum of its parts” (789).[39]

TABLE 2.2 HERE

Table 2.2 shows the battleground values for all states over the period 1988-2004. This shows that a large number of states have never been in play. In fact, 22 states not once made it into the battleground category on one of the major party candidates’ lists from 1988 to 2004, which is almost half of all states. A much smaller number of states have been considered crucial to winning the election in consecutive elections: Nine states were battlegrounds in at least three out of four elections.

TABLE 2.3 HERE

As I mentioned above, presidential candidates follow these strategies closely: they visit and spend most money in the states they label battlegrounds. Table 2.3 shows the average number of candidate visits to the different types of states in 1992-2004. The general trend is clear: safe states receive few visits on average, whereas the average battleground state receives more than 10 visits, except in 1996. Election years 1992 and

[39] Some (parts of) safe states receive campaign messages by virtue of sharing a media market with a more competitive state. Voters in these safe states are exposed to campaign messages – intended to mobilize or persuade voters across the state border – but do not receive any other campaign-related attention such as candidate visits or grassroots efforts. Huber and Arceneaux (2007) take an innovative approach by using this as a natural experiment to investigate the power of ads in the absence of other campaign activity, such as candidate visits and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. They find that voters in ‘spectator states,’ who are ‘accidentally’ exposed to campaign ads, are persuaded but not mobilized by campaign ads.

Perhaps this study can teach us something about the difference between safe and battleground states and how citizens interpret campaign information. We know from other studies that turnout is higher in the battleground states (Hill and McKee 2005, Wolak 2006). Thus, something about living in a battleground state encourages citizens to go to the polls. GOTV efforts alone might account for this mobilization effect but an alternative interpretation is that campaign ads take on a different meaning for voters when combined with other campaign activity. Conversely, in the absence of other campaign activity, campaign ads merely persuade voters but do not mobilize, as Huber and Arceneaux found.

2004 follow the most predictable pattern. Going from safe all the way to battleground means a steady increase in the average number of visits. In 2004, the most recent election included in this study, the difference between battleground states and the other categories is largest with the average battleground state receiving five times as many visits as leaning/battleground states.

Having established that this measure makes sense from the candidates' perspective, how valid is it from the perspective of other actors involved in campaigns, such as the local media and ordinary citizens? If candidates target states but we find little evidence that the media or citizens recognize this, it would be rather futile to test battleground effects.

The Media

First, how do local media report about their own state? If they use candidate behavior as an indicator of whether their state is considered important, their coverage should reflect this. If, on the other hand, the media considers other factors, such as political commentators' opinions where candidates *should* campaign or their own polls, which might vary from candidates' polls, we might find significant differences between media coverage and candidate perceptions.

To investigate how the local media report about their respective states, I conducted a content analysis of local newspapers for all fifty states for the period

September 1-November 4, 2004.[40] I used Lexis-Nexis and searched for mentions of the state's name in combination with the words *battleground* or *swing* and *Kerry* or *Bush*. This generated a list of newspaper articles, about two-thirds of which were related to the election campaign. A research assistant read these and coded them for the following: 1) whether the article mentioned the newspaper's home state as a battleground or safe state, 2) whether the article stated that the state was downgraded or upgraded from a battle to safe state or vice versa, and 3) whether the article was an editorial. She also recorded the total number of hits each search generated.

TABLE 2.4 HERE

Table 2.4 shows the average number of hits by the battleground measure. States that score a 4 on this measure have the highest average number of hits and states that score a 0 on this measure have the lowest number of hits. This initial finding indicates that the local media report more frequently about their own states in the context of candidates' battleground strategies when they are high on candidates' battleground lists.

A look at individual states reveals that the five states with the highest number of hits were battleground states according to both parties: New Mexico (178 hits), Ohio (286), Florida (290), Wisconsin (315), and Pennsylvania (369). Two other states assigned highest importance, Iowa and New Hampshire, had only 69 and 55 hits, respectively, but this could be due to the fact that these are smaller states with fewer local newspapers. New York and California, both safe states according to Bush and Kerry, had the 6th and

[40] In the future, this will include more election years, barring the availability of local newspaper articles in search engines, such as Lexis-Nexis.

7th largest number of hits. This is likely an effect of the number and size of state-level print news outlets – New York includes the New York Times, for instance, whereas California includes the LA Times. However, since the search term included the state name, these articles do not discuss exclusively other (battleground) states. In fact, of the 160 hits for California, 113 articles noted that California was *not* a battleground state.[41]

An interesting example I mentioned in the introductory chapter is Illinois. Both parties considered it a leaning Democratic state in 2000 but safely Democratic in 2004 (Shaw 2006). They adjusted their visits accordingly: neither Bush nor Kerry made appearances in Illinois in 2004. The local media recognized this change in candidate strategy: of the 49 articles that were generated by the search, 39 noted that Illinois was not a battleground the 2004 campaign season.[42]

In sum, these results indicate that the local media follow candidate strategies fairly closely, at least during the 2004 election. And since citizens receive most of their political news from the local media (Graber 1997; Just et al. 1996), this should influence their battleground perceptions (see Figure 2.1).

Citizens

Overall, little is known about citizens' perceptions of battleground states and campaign attention. To my knowledge, no national survey has asked citizens whether they believe they live in a battleground or safe state and what that means to them. In the absence of that, I present data from the NES, which for the years 1992, 1996, and 2004

[41] These numbers are not yet available for New York.
[42] Only two articles appeared twice in different newspapers.

asked the following question: "Do you think the Presidential race will be close here in (STATE) or will [CANDIDATE NAMED/one candidate] win by quite a bit?" As other scholars have observed, respondents' answers to this question correlate only weakly to candidates' categorization of battleground states (e.g. Lipsitz forthcoming). Overall, the correlation between the 5-point ordinal scale derived from Shaw (1999, 2006) and perceptions of closeness is .1. One has to take into account, however, that some respondents are interviewed early September when the general campaign has barely begun. Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect these Americans to have a correct perception of their states' competitiveness, unless they are very attentive to the latest state-level polls. In fact, correlations between battleground status and perceptions of closeness are higher for respondents who are interviewed later in the campaign season.

TABLE 2.5 HERE

There is additional rhyme and reason to these responses. Table 2.5 shows respondents' answers in percentages by the battleground measurement. Citizens at either end of the spectrum (in the ultimate safe states and the ultimate battleground states) differ most in their assessments of their state's presidential race. In the middle, there is less differentiation: respondents in safe to leaning states are equally likely to say the state-level race is close as are respondents in leaning to battleground states.

Moreover, citizens with higher levels of political interest have 'more accurate' perceptions of the closeness of the race in their state. Since they follow politics more closely and are more likely to learn about a candidate visit, they are likely better aware of

the level of party competition in their state. For instance, in 2004, among those who said they were very much interested in political campaigns, the correlation between perceptions of closeness and the 5-point battleground measure was .41 ($p<.01$, N=474), whereas this correlation was .02 (n.s., N=156) for those who stated that they were not much interested in political campaigns.[43]

For the entire period 1992-2004 (except 2000 when the question was not asked), a similar pattern emerged: for those most interested in political campaigns, the correlation between battleground status and answering that the presidential election in one's state will be close is .21 ($p<.01$, 2-tailed, N=2437); for those least interested, the correlation is .1 ($p<.01$, 2-tailed, N=1401). Admittedly, these correlations are still small but politically interested citizens unquestionably have more accurate perceptions.[44]

Finally, in 2004, the states with the highest percentages of respondents who believed the race in their state was close were Iowa (80%, N=20), Minnesota (78%, N=46), New Hampshire (77%, N=13), Oregon (72%, N=25), Pennsylvania (75%, N=16), and Wisconsin (83%, N=46); battleground states indeed, according to the Kerry and Bush campaigns.[45]

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[43] There was no direct correlation between interest in political campaigns and perceptions of closeness. In other words, those interested in political campaigns are not more likely to perceive their state's race as close. Alternatively, those who perceive the race as close are not more interested in politics.

[44] The same is true in 1996 but the correlations are even smaller. But again, among those lowest in political interest the correlation is small and not significant. Among the more interested, the correlation is .13 (combines those very much interested and somewhat interested). Again, there is no significant correlation between interest and perceptions of closeness.

[45] The odd ones are Connecticut (70%, N=27) and New Jersey (70%, N=70), both definitely not battleground states according to the candidates. On the other hand, respondents in Alabama, Massachusetts,

This brief analysis of citizens' perceptions shows that beliefs about closeness is not ideal when trying to gauge whether citizens believe they live in a battleground state. Again, a more appropriate question would ask them about the role of their state under the Electoral College but such a measure is unavailable. However, the NES findings presented here are suggestive of an underlying logic to citizens' beliefs about their state that is loosely related to candidate strategies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss in more depth what battleground status means to candidates, the local media, and citizens. This furthers our understanding of the battleground phenomenon and is instructive in theorizing how living in a battleground state might impact one's relationship with government. Foremost, this discussion revealed that battleground status is a subjective state that not all actors involved in campaigns and elections agree upon. For instance, one presidential nominee can regard a state a true battleground and thus shower it with attention whereas his opponent considers it relatively safe. This disagreement is reflected in citizens' perceptions of their state: the Minnesota study revealed important party differences in beliefs that Minnesota is a toss-up state and whether the candidates cared about Minnesota voters. But whereas there is substantial variation in battleground perceptions, I also found important commonalities. The local media fairly closely follows candidate strategies in their assessments of whether their home state is a battleground or safe state. Moreover, citizens in what

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Texas, and Utah, with only 37%, 30%, 36%, and 19%, respectively, seem to agree that the race in their states is not very close.

candidates have deemed battleground states are more likely to believe the presidential race in their state is close. In sum, the discussions presented in this chapter also allow us to get some leverage on the meaning of “battleground state” and “safe state” through a comparison of candidates, the media, and ordinary citizen.

A second, equally important purpose was to investigate how to best measure a state’s battleground status. Ideally, in the following two chapters that examine battleground effects on citizens’ attitudes toward government, I use a measure capturing citizens’ perceptions of their states. However, in the absence of such a measure, the evidence presented here underscores the usefulness of the measure derived from Shaw’s work (1999, 2006). This measure is theoretically preferable to other measures, e.g. polling data or advertisement expenditures, because it allows for differences between the two major party candidates and is a strong predictor of a host of campaign events that make a state a battleground state.

Table 2.1. Relationship Between Perceptions of Competitiveness and Evaluations of McCain Among Minnesotans, September 2008.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	**S.E.**	**B**	**S.E.**
Dummy for those who believe election is a tossup	12.7*	1.8	18.7*	2.3
Dummy for Republican Identifiers	16.7*	1.9	23.8*	2.5
*Tossup*Republican*			-15.1*	3.7
Constant	45.4	1.4	43	1.5
Adj. R-squared	.11		.13	
N	1076		1076	

* p<.000
DV= How much do you think presidential candidate McCain cares about the voters in Minnesota (rescaled to range from 0-100).

Table 2.2. States' Battleground Statuses, 1988-2004.

STATE	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
AL	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**
AK	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
AZ	0	1	3	2	2
AR	1	0	0	4	2
CA	4	0	3	1	0
CO	1	3	3	0	2
CT	**2**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**
DE	**2**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**1**
FL	*0*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*4*
GA	0	4	3	0	0
HI	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
ID	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
IL	3	1	2	2	0
IN	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**
IA	0	1	0	4	4
KS	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
KY	0	3	3	2	0
LA	1	3	4	2	1
ME	*2*	*3*	*1*	*4*	*3*
MD	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
MA	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
MI	*3*	*4*	*2*	*4*	*3*
MN	0	0	0	3	3
MS	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
MO	*4*	*3*	*2*	*4*	*3*
MT	0	3	2	0	0
NE	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
NV	0	1	4	2	3
NH	*0*	*1*	*3*	*4*	*4*
NJ	3	4	3	0	1
NM	*0*	*3*	*4*	*4*	*4*
NY	3	0	0	0	0
NC	0	3	2	0	1
ND	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
OH	*4*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*4*
OK	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**
OR	3	2	0	4	3
PA	*3*	*3*	*2*	*4*	*4*
RI	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
SC	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**
SD	**0**	**2**	**2**	**0**	**0**
TN	0	2	3	4	0
TX	**4**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**
UT	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
VT	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
VA	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**
WA	3	2	0	4	3
WV	0	0	0	3	3
WI	*2*	*3*	*1*	*4*	*4*
WY	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Note: Adapted from Shaw (1999, 2006). Bolded states have been safe states every election from 1988 until 2004. Italicized states are battleground states at least three out of the five elections.

Table 2.3. Average number of visits to different categories of states.

	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
Safe state		1.4	1.7	.2	.75
Safe to leaning		1.8	2.1	20[1]	1
Leaning		3.8	6.1	6.5	3
Leaning to battleground		5.8	12.2	2[2]	4.4
Battleground state		12	6[3]	12.5	22

Averages calculated using data from Shaw (1999, 2006).
[1] Only includes California.
[2] Includes Minnesota and West Virginia.
[3] Includes Louisiana, Nevada, and New Mexico.

Table 2.4. Newspaper articles by type of state, September-Election Day 2004.

	Average number of articles
Safe state	21
Safe to leaning	55
Leaning	72
Leaning to battleground	87
Battleground state	223

Table 2.5. Citizen Perceptions of Closeness of the Presidential Race in their State, 1992-2004.

How close is the election in your state?	Not close	Close
Safe state	49%	51%
Safe to leaning	36	64
Leaning	34	67*
Leaning to battleground	34	66
Battleground state	29	72*

* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Source: NES 1992, 1996, and 2004 (question was not asked in 2000), N=4108

Figure 2.1. Model of Battleground Effects on Citizens' Attitudes toward Government

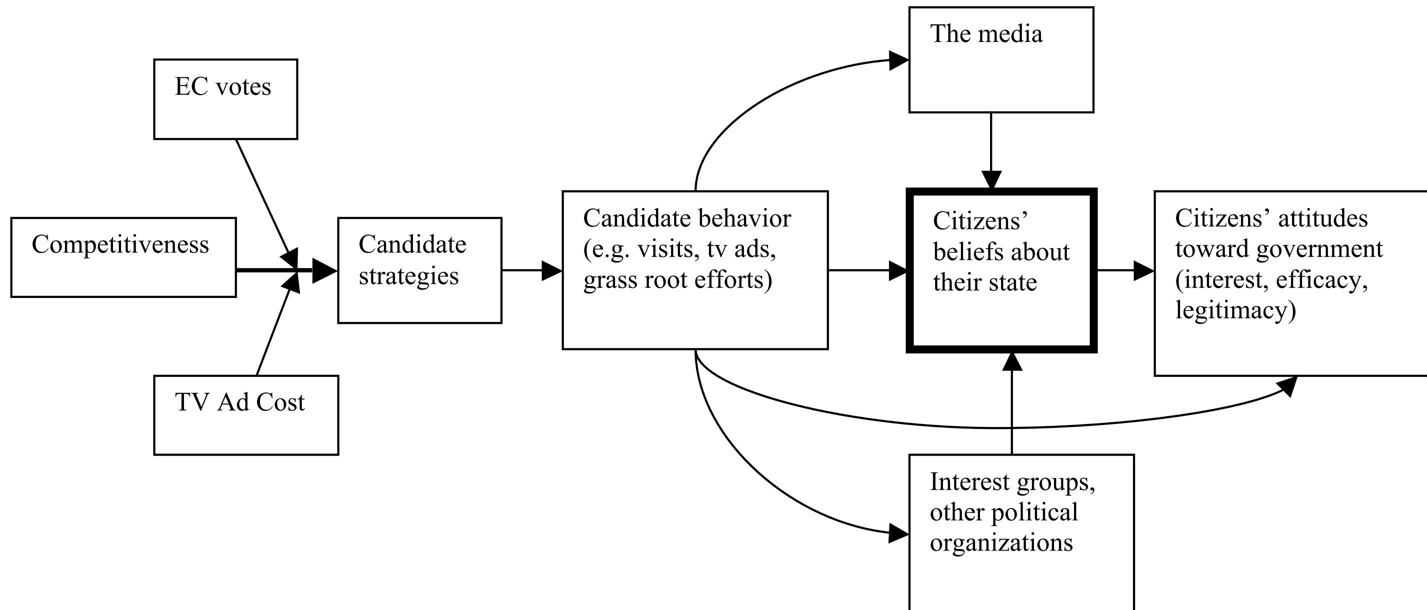
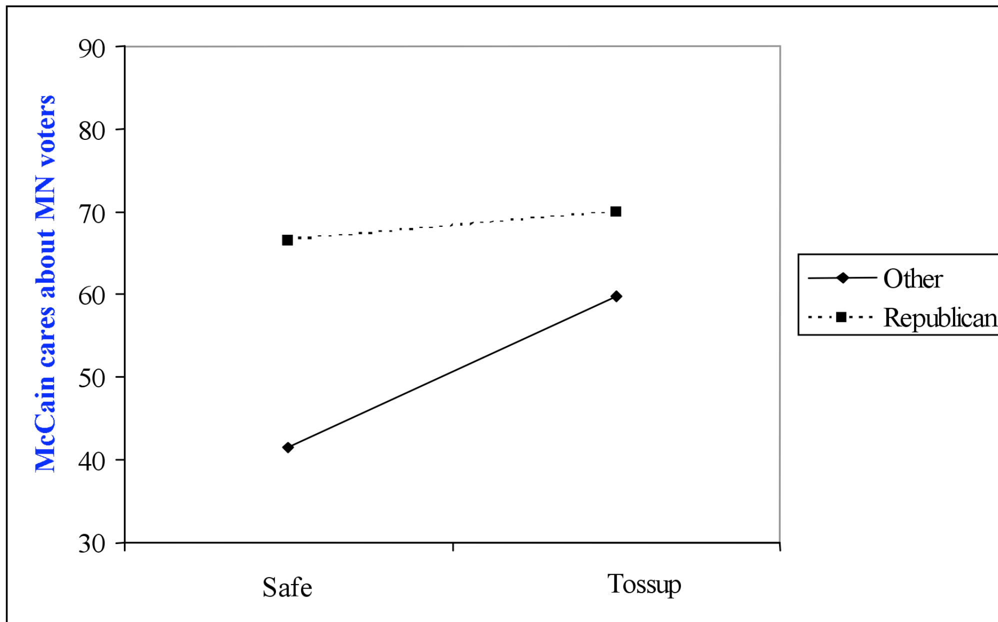


Figure 2.2. Party Effect on the Relationship between Perceptions of Competitiveness and Evaluations of McCain.



CHAPTER 3

BATTLEGROUND EFFECTS ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES: THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND POLITICAL CULTURE

Introduction

In this and the next chapter, I take up the question "What are the implications of living in a presidential battleground state for citizens' relationship with their government?" Constituting one of the most important links between citizens and their representatives, elections, and thus electoral institutions, play a large role in legitimizing government (Weatherford 1992; Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978). However, despite democratic ideals, the American presidential selection system treats voters unequally, which could lead to systematic differences in legitimacy attitudes among the American electorate.

Recall the quote at the beginning of Chapter 1 in which a voter discussed what moving from Hawaii to Pennsylvania meant for her role in presidential elections. The quote suggested living in a battleground state matters for how citizens think and feel about politics. When stating that her move led to a literal increase in her voting power, she probably referred to the fact that her vote might actually make a difference in Pennsylvania, because its presidential elections have generally been much closer than Hawaii's.[46] But what did she mean when she said that her voting power increased

[46] In the 2008 election, Pennsylvania was also considered a battleground state although the outcome suggests that it might be considered leaning Democrat in the next election. Nonetheless, the general point of the voter's statement is well-taken.

"psychologically?" Does she feel part of the political process more so than when she lived in Hawaii? Or perhaps she believes presidential candidates finally hear her voice?

Whatever her exact sentiment, it is not surprising that she feels this way. As she notes, presidential candidates would be fools to spend time in Hawaii, or any other electorally safe states for that matter. Competitive states like Pennsylvania, on the other hand, receive large amounts of campaign attention. If the above voter's sentiment is indicative of how citizens respond to presidential candidates' asymmetric campaign attention to the states, we should find significant differences between citizens' political attitudes, such as perceptions of electoral fairness and governmental responsiveness, and perhaps even how much they trust government, as a function of their geographic location.

An important and growing body of research has started to examine battleground effects on voters' candidate preferences and turnout (e.g. Hill and McKee 2005; Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Shaw 2007) as well as on more general political orientations, such as political interest and efficacy (e.g. Lipsitz 2004, forthcoming; Gimpel et al. 2007; Goux and Hopkins 2008). The results of these studies are mixed: some find small but significant effects, while others find no effects.

The study presented in this chapter adds to this research by examining how candidates' Electoral College strategies shape several legitimacy attitudes among citizens in safe and battleground states – perceptions of the electoral process, political efficacy, political interest, and political trust – using data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) and the 1992-2004 American National Election Studies (NES).

Based on earlier research, we should expect that living in a battleground does not affect all citizens similarly but that individual differences play an important conditioning role in citizens' experiences of and reactions to disproportionate campaign attention (Gimpel et al. 2007). Scholars have thus far not considered that certain state characteristics, such as political culture, might also condition battleground effects. Therefore, in this chapter I focus on individual and state-level characteristics that I expect to condition battleground effects.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature on battleground effects, identify its shortcomings, and discuss how my study attempts to address some of these shortcomings. Second, I develop a theoretical framework that explains why battleground status should matter differently for groups within the electorate. Three factors in particular inform this framework: 1) Within battleground states, candidates target certain subgroups of the electorate who are thus more likely to receive campaign attention; 2) not all citizens are equally likely to be exposed to campaign information. Instead, media use and being a member of a target group play a role in this; and 3) some citizens are more disengaged with the political process because they have higher hurdles to overcome in order to participate and might thus benefit mostly from living in a battleground state. These propositions suggest that voters with certain characteristics, such as party independence, media use, and low income, are more seriously affected by living in a battleground state. Having developed my hypotheses, I present my data and

methods. Next is a discussion of the results and their substantive import. I conclude by offering directions for future research.

Existing Literature and its Shortcomings

Only recently have political scientists begun to systematically examine battleground effects on citizens' political attitudes and behavior. This research includes studies on election-specific factors and outcomes, such as party contact, rally attendance, and vote choice, as well as studies with more general political orientations as outcome variables, such as political interest and efficacy. Thus far, the results are inconclusive, which might in part be due to different measurements of a state's battleground status, as well as a focus on different election years.

Among the studies that find effects, Hill and McKee (2005) report that, after controlling for a number of state-level factors, voter turnout in 2000 was higher in the battleground states than in the safe states, albeit marginally. They argue candidates' media expenditures in and visits to the states mediate the relationship between battleground status and turnout, suggesting that what candidates do and say in the battlegrounds has a significant impact on voter behavior. In other words, not merely the closeness of the election, or the "literal" increase of one's voting power, led people to the voting booth in 2000; their perceptions of whether their vote mattered, as shaped by candidate discourse and behavior, also played an important role in voter mobilization.

Other studies have also found that the lopsided nature of presidential campaigns has important political consequences. In his extensive study of presidential candidates'

"race to 270," Shaw (2006) finds that campaign visits and a concentration of television ads can lead to changes in voters' candidate preferences. However, he cautions that these changes are small and difficult for candidates to sustain.

In an attempt to address Electoral College critiques that citizens in safe states withdraw from the political process, Lipsitz (forthcoming) examines whether battleground citizens are more politically active: are they more likely to make a political donation, attend a meeting, discuss politics, and, finally, are they more likely to vote? Her analysis of 1988-2004 shows that battleground residents are indeed slightly more active and that these effects are most pronounced during more competitive elections – 1988 and 2004 – and for certain activities – meeting attendance and voting. However, this is not the result of citizen withdrawal in the safe states; rather, she argues, battleground citizens become *more* active, thereby negating concerns about the Electoral College's harm to American politics.

Other studies point into a different direction and find Electoral College effects are limited at best. For instance, Holbrook and McClurg (2005) find no battleground effects on turnout for the years 1992, 1996, and 2000. However, Lipsitz (forthcoming) argues that their model is an inappropriate test of their hypotheses because it includes measures of both competitiveness and candidate behavior such as visits and television advertisement. She reasons that candidate behavior is the mechanism by which competitiveness affects voters and should be treated as such in the models. Had the

authors not included the cause and the mechanism in the same model, they might have obtained different result (4-5).

Even so, an analysis of the 2004 election reveals that, while grassroots efforts in the battleground states partly accounted for the increase in voter turnout, people's perceptions of the importance of the election, independent of what the candidates and parties told them, played an even more important role in their decisions to turn out to vote (Bergan et al. 2005). Furthermore, the fact that 2004 voter turnout increased in safe states as well undermines the suggested power of parties' mobilization efforts in battleground states, these authors contend.

A second examination of the 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections by Wolak (2006) shows that increased concentration of campaign ads, ad expenditure, and candidate visits in a state slightly heightens citizens' chances of being exposed to campaign material. However, this in turn has no discernable effects on campaign interest or people's intentions to vote. She also finds no support for the theory that citizens learn about the candidates when living in an intense campaign environment nor do these citizens seem to discuss the campaign more frequently.

Finally, Goux and Hopkins (2008) present a simple safe state/battleground state comparison of absolute numbers of voter turnout, which shows larger turnout in the 2000 and 2004 battleground states. But, they argue, much of this difference is likely due to factors other than competitiveness or candidate behavior in these states. Instead, many of the 2004 battleground states traditionally have high turnout rates as a result of more

lenient registration laws (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). While this is a very plausible explanation, this does not discount a battleground effect on turnout. On the contrary, battleground status might have an even larger impact on these states, exactly because the political culture and registration laws facilitate candidates' get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts.

Goux and Hopkins (2008) also compare average levels of political efficacy – citizens' beliefs that they can influence government and that government is responsive to their preferences – in battleground and safe states but find no significant differences. Based on these findings, they conclude, "the concentration of campaign efforts within a subset of the nation does not lead to different levels of efficacy in the two groups of states, either by raising interest and engagement within electoral battlegrounds or by depressing investment in the political system elsewhere in the nation" (868). While they might ultimately prove to be right, I believe we need more theorizing and empirical research of the implications of Electoral College strategies for American citizens before we can draw such a sweeping conclusion.[47]

A good example of this, Gimpel and colleagues (2007) propose not everyone is equally affected by living in a battleground state. They hypothesize that traditionally disengaged citizens, such as those with lower incomes or non-ideologues, benefit mostly from living in battleground state because campaigns actively reach out to these groups in an effort to expand their vote share. In addition, the abundance of campaign information

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[47] See Lipsitz (forthcoming) for a similar conclusion.

in the battlegrounds reduces the costs of information gathering for resource-poor voters. In fact, their analyses of survey data from the 2000 and 2004 elections reveal low-income citizens are more likely to be contacted by the campaigns and have higher levels of political interest than their counterparts in safe states. Thus, instead of treating state electorates as a cohesive group of citizens, who are equally affected by presidential campaign contexts, a more fruitful approach to uncovering battleground effects might be to examine subgroups within the electorate.

Overall, the research to date tilts toward a conclusion of small, selected or no battleground effects on mass behavior and attitudes. More specifically, the research reviewed above suggests that battleground effects are limited and, if present, confined to certain years and certain political outcomes. However, the conditionality of battleground effects should not lead us to discount them altogether. First, there might be something about these particular years, behaviors, and attitudes that helps us better understand campaign dynamics in American politics. For instance, when the general election is more competitive (e.g. 1992, 2000, and 2004), battleground effects tend to be more pronounced. Moreover, behaviors and attitudes more directly related to the election, such as turnout and political interest, seem to also be more affected by Electoral College strategies, whereas more diffuse attitudes, such as political efficacy, are less affected.

Gimpel et al. (2008) have pointed scholars in the right direction by showing that the significance of living in a battleground state depends on individual-level characteristics. Other scholars within the campaign literature are moving into a similar

direction of recognizing individual-level differences in campaign experiences (e.g. Stevens et al. 2008; Hillygus and Jackman 2003) and a similar approach could be valuable when studying battleground effects.

A final shortcoming of past research is that it treats all states the same, categorizing them solely by their battleground state/safe state designation, whereas it might be the case that state electorates react differently to battleground status, depending on pre-existing state-level characteristics. For instance, are states with traditionally high participation rates similarly impacted by excessive candidate attention as states with traditionally low levels of political participation? Are states with moralistic political cultures – where political participation is valued and encouraged – more amenable, for lack of a better word, to being a battleground state than tradionalistic states – where participation and competition is less valued (Elazar 1966)?

These shortcomings suggest that a next step in this area of research should be a closer examination of possible interaction effects, both at the individual and state levels. Besides indications from the literature, there are also theoretical reasons to believe living in a battleground matters more to some citizens, for instance those who are more exposed to campaign information or have a better understanding of the Electoral College. In the next section I develop a theoretical framework for the individual and state-level characteristics that could function as moderators of battleground effects.

Battleground Effects: Theory and Hypotheses

Battleground states receive more candidate visits and campaign ads (Hill and McKee 2005; Shaw 1999, 2006) and living in one thus heightens one's chances of being exposed to campaign information. It also increases the chances of being contacted by a party, if only slightly or among certain groups (Bergan et al. 2005; Wolak 2006; Gimpel et al. 2007).[48] While there is a growing belief among the American public that government is not responsive to ordinary citizens' needs (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), seeing candidates spend large amounts of time and money in your state to win your vote could counter this trend. Being the target of presidential candidate attention has the potential to impress on citizens the notion that they matter politically, thereby increasing their belief that government is responsive to them. In fact, states vie to receive campaign attention, as evidenced by the action of many statewide political leaders to move their states' primaries and caucuses up last year's calendar. This could be indicative of a trend among citizens of increasing frustration with the electoral process. As such, they are willing to change the system to guarantee that presidential candidates fight for their states' votes.[49]

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[48] An analysis of 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey data reveals a similar pattern: Living in a battleground state increases your chances of being contacted by a party to remind you to vote (odds ratio is 1.26). I attained these results with multi-level logistic regression where the DV is 0 if not contacted, 1 if contacted. Control variables include median income, Electoral College votes, competitive senate race, and a state's registration laws.

[49] Some states are also considering changes pertaining to the general election such as proportional allocation of their Electoral College votes, California being one of them. However, California's is a Republican initiative and has more to do with securing partisan gains than with turning California into a battleground state.

In addition, Weatherford (1992) argues that for citizens to view the governmental system as legitimate, they need to believe that the institutional mechanisms (e.g. elections or parties) provide accountability and responsiveness from government officials. When presidential candidates, and maybe even more importantly incumbent presidents, only visit a handful of states, safe state residents might begin to question the system's effectiveness. In sum, living in a battleground state has the potential to positively affect citizens' attitudes about their own role in politics as well as their orientation toward political institutions whereas living in a safe state could have the opposite effects.

Individual-Level Moderators

While it would be difficult to altogether escape campaign information in the battleground states – Shaw finds that during the 2000 campaign, Michigan voters saw an average of 6.4 presidential campaign ads per day (82) – some citizens are more likely to be affected by the high concentration of candidate attention devoted to their state. There are at least three reasons for this. First, candidates do not target all battleground residents equally. Whereas they might have little control over who watches their ads or coverage of their campaign visits, candidates focus their GOTV efforts on groups that are expected to give them the most bang for their buck, e.g. Independents. Second, as a result of individual behavior not all citizens are equally likely to be exposed to campaign attention. In particular, citizens who watch television and read newspapers on a regular basis should be more likely to come across campaign information. Finally, living in a battleground state significantly reduces participation costs. Information about the candidates is more

abundant as is information about polling locations and voter registration requirements, which vary by state. Already politically active citizens might not benefit from this abundance of political information, as they are already registered or have the essential information needed to participate, but for citizens who have been on the political sidelines and for whom participation involves overcoming significant financial or cognitive hurdles, becoming politically engaged should be easier in the battleground states. The next question is how does these factors translate into changes in attitudes toward government.

Targeted group include Independents – those citizens perceived by many campaigns and candidates as "swing voters" (Shaw 2006) – but also citizens who are less likely to have been part of the political process in the past such as those with low-incomes (Gimpel et al. 2007) and young adults. The strategy to focus on swing voters is a familiar one and while 2004 was marked by a change in the Republican Party's strategy with a shift away from exclusively trying to persuade swing voters to an increased focus on mobilization the base – i.e. strong partisans – a large portion of campaign expenditures was still devoted to grassroots efforts that reached out to members of the electorate who had traditionally not been part of the parties' bases; a strategy that resulted in higher levels of political engagement among low-income voters (Gimpel et al. 2007).

A long line in political science literature has found that low income, less educated citizens, and racial minorities participate in politics at lower levels than their richer, more educated, and whiter fellow citizens (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1993;

Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). An important reason offered for this finding is that the first lack the necessary cognitive and financial resources to participate. However, the mobilization efforts in battleground states include the spread of information about polling locations and sometimes even rides to the polls. The relatively lower costs of acquiring political information and gaining access to the political process in the battleground, compared to the safe states, could thus have positive effects on these traditionally resource poor citizens. In particular, levels of internal efficacy – whether one believes one has the skills and resources to participate in politics – might be higher among low income, low income, and African-American voters in the battleground states compared to the safe states.

Campaign outreach to these groups of voters could affect their attitudes toward government in two ways. First, political participation breeds familiarity with and trust in the system (Green and Shachar 2000), which could lead targeted groups of battleground voters to have noticeably more generous perceptions of the electoral process and politics in general than their counterparts in safe states. Second, rather than solely serving as a mechanism to hold elected officials accountable, elections and campaigns also play a socializing role. Scholars have found that citizens who participate are more likely to view the political system as legitimate (Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978; Freie 1997). In other words, elections can coopt voters into supporting the existing system. If politically alienated groups are mobilized in the battleground states, e.g. low income and young voters or Independents and racial minorities, they could thus be co-opted by the system

and become more positive about the process, showing higher levels of satisfaction with democracy, for instance. Moreover, Independents are significantly more likely to be swayed by campaign information than are partisans (Hillygus and Jackman 2003).

Regardless of whether they are targeted or not, citizens high in media use are much more likely to be exposed to candidate rhetoric and campaign advertisements. Candidate rhetoric often emphasizes the significance of battleground residents' votes. As a consequence, citizens high in media use may attach greater value to their vote and exhibit more positive perceptions of the electoral process. Studies suggest that even negative advertising can "help raise the perceived stakes in a campaign" and send a message "that its outcome matters, and that this is a choice voters should care about" (Freedman and Goldstein 1999: 1190). Furthermore, since the media tend to focus on "horserace" coverage of who is ahead and who is behind in the polls, citizens high in media use should also be more aware of the closeness of elections than citizens low in media use, again leading to more positive evaluations of one's role in the political process and politics more generally.[50]

Finally, political knowledge and education might also condition battleground effects. Battleground residents' should be more optimistic about their role as political actors simply because their vote is more likely to make a difference. Their state's election

[50] Most research on close elections examines the relationship between competitiveness and voter turnout (e.g. Cox and Munger 1989; Matsusaka 1993; Endersby et al. 2002). This research points to a modest positive relationship. If participation coopts citizens in becoming more supportive in the political system (Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978), the average battleground resident should thus be more trusting, feel more efficacious, etc.

outcome is not a foregone conclusion and their vote could actually make a difference. If voters' care about this literal interpretation of one's voting power, it could lead one to evaluate politics more positively, translating into more positive evaluations of the electoral process. But for citizens to know whether their vote can make a difference, they need to have at least a basic understanding of the Electoral College (Lipsitz 2006). According to this logic, citizens with higher levels of political knowledge and education should be more confident in their voting power when living in a battleground state and more skeptical when living in a state with a clear frontrunner, whereas citizens with a more rudimentary knowledge of politics should be less affected.

In short, this discussion suggests presidential candidates' battleground strategies have positive effects on how citizens think and feel about politics: how efficacious they feel, how trusting and interested they are, and whether they view the electoral process as a mechanism of accountability and responsiveness. But importantly, these effects are expected to be moderated by individual differences, with Independents, high media users, more politically knowledgeable and educated citizens, non-whites, and those with low incomes being the ones most positively affected.

An alternative explanation presents itself with those who regularly watch the news or read newspapers being more exposed to the procedural aspects of presidential campaigns, which tend to be negative, as well as negative campaign advertising. This in turn could lead to more negative evaluations of the political process, in particular lower levels of political efficacy (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; but see Finkel and Geer

1998; Freedman and Goldstein 1999). Hetherington (1998) speculates that political information affects levels of political trust. He finds some evidence that people who watch more television are indeed less trusting of government (the coefficient is negative but fails to reach levels of significance). This could imply that battleground residents who regularly watch television are less trusting of the government, although the relationship between negative advertisement and trust in government is undertheorized.

Another possibility is that knowing more about the process of how America elects its president has the opposite effect: it may make citizens more cynical and much less trusting in the electoral process and politics overall (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). In this case, the more knowledgeable people are about the electoral system, the more negative their evaluations of it. Too much political information, especially about the process, can induce political cynicism (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). Moreover, battleground states usually attract much more discussion about votes being counted correctly, problems with voting machines, and long lines at polling places (Highton 2006). Some evidence suggests that some minority groups are already more skeptical about the electoral process: A NYT/CBS News poll conducted October 28-30, 2004 found that "an overwhelming number of African-Americans were concerned that their own votes would not be counted properly." In addition, 79% of blacks thought that in some states there is a deliberate attempt to prevent African-Americans and other minorities from voting or having their votes counted, compared to 28% of whites. Living in a battleground state can make salient such concerns, which, in turn, might make

citizens, especially minority voters, even more mistrusting of the system when living in a battleground state.

Political Culture as a State-Level Moderator

State characteristics, such as political culture, might also prove helpful in understanding Electoral College effects. However, theories of campaign effects usually draw heavily on theories from psychology, leaving little room for contextual forces. In addition, there is the difficulty of defining and measuring a state's political culture, which often leads researchers to exclude it as a possible explanatory variable (Conway 1989: 5). Nonetheless, several studies have successfully included it in analyses of, for example, patterns of party identification (Lieske 1987), cross-state differences in party activism (Paddock 1997), and political change (Shaffer 1987). An inclusion of a dummy variable for the South is common in public opinion research, including some battleground studies (e.g. Hill and McKee 2005; Lipsitz 2006), but these are often included as controls, without much theorizing about their potential relevance. Lipsitz, for instance, includes such a dummy but no interaction term between battleground status and region.

The most well-known exposition of political culture within political science is Elazar's *American Federalism: A View from the States* (1966), which defines political culture as "the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is imbedded" (79). To paraphrase his more recent work, political culture sets "a framework (…) for individual and group behavior" that places limits on behavior, while its actual influence is subtle and perhaps even subliminal (Elazar 1994: 3). According to

Elazar, this subtlety and enduring character makes political culture all the more powerful. Moreover, political culture speaks to a host of questions such as the extent and value of citizen involvement in politics, citizens' relation to authority, and how to deal with political conflict, all of which have an obvious connection to presidential candidates' Electoral College strategies.

Elazar (1966) identifies three distinct political cultures that can be found in the American states: the traditionalist, individualistic, and moralistic cultures. The traditionalist culture has an elitist view of government. While it serves a positive function – the maintenance of the status quo – participation is limited to a select few.[51] The individualistic culture views government as a professional or "business-like" organization that serves private interests. It does not make normative judgments about participation per se, but views it as unnecessary unless it serves a practical purpose.[52] Lastly, in the moralistic culture the common good is central and government plays a pro-active role in achieving it. Political participation by all is encouraged (Conway 1989: 5; see also Elazar 1994).[53]

Elazar's theory enjoyed relative popularity among political scientists in the 1970s and 1980s, but is now rarely used (but see Bowler and Donovan 2002). Still, these earlier studies validate the usefulness of political culture as an explanatory variable of inter-state

[51] Examples include many of the Southern states such as Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Texas, and the Carolinas (some of these states have more mixed cultures).
[52] Examples include Wyoming, Nevada, Oklahoma, Indiana, and Ohio.
[53] Minnesota has the most dominant moralistic culture, followed by states such as North Dakota, Wisconsin, Washington, Oregon, but also New England states like Maine and New Hampshire.

differences. For instance, Hanson (1980) finds higher levels of political efficacy among residents of states with a moralistic political culture compared to residents of states with a traditionalistic culture. In addition to efficacy, the presence of a moralistic political culture also increases interparty competition and both of these factors positively affect levels of voter turnout. This indicates, according to Hanson, that political culture is partly a psychological construct – it prescribes norms and values that citizens internalize and use as guides to their political behavior – and partly a political construct that sets limitations on political possibilities by shaping institutional arrangements. In other words, political culture reflects "both objective and subjective aspects of politics" (36).

Political culture and battleground status

Relevant to the current study, Elazar (1994) discusses the role of political (party) competition in each political culture. At one end of the spectrum, the traditionalistic political culture views party politics as counterproductive exactly because parties encourage openness and competition. If there is to be competition, it should be limited and only within the dominant political party (239). At the other end, the moralistic political culture has a much more positive view of political competition: participation by all, and thus competition, is encouraged to reach the larger goal of government: serving the common good. This environment is also more hospitable to third parties. In between these two is the individualistic culture, which "encourages the maintenance of a party system that is competitive, but not overtly so" (231). Political competition is seen as productive only when it achieves the goals of government: to distribute favors or rewards.

Thus, competition is limited although not necessarily viewed as counterproductive. As I discussed above, this theory carries empirical weight (Hanson 1980).

Since Electoral College strategies focus on the most competitive states, we can wonder whether these strategies have different effects depending on the dominant political culture in these states.[54] In moralistic states, fierce competition between presidential candidates fits hand-in-glove with the tenets of the political culture, whereas too much competition might work adversely in traditionalistic states.

Moreover, since political participation is not equally valued and encouraged across these cultures, presidential candidates might have a much harder time mobilizing voters in traditionalistic states than in moralistic states. Alternative to the psychological impact of socio-political norms, political culture can be an indicator of institutional arrangements in the state, such as the strictness of registration laws, which also affect participation in politics (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978; King 1994). For instance, King (1994) shows that Elazar's political culture explains a significant amount of variation in registration laws across the American states, with more moralistic states having more lenient registration laws. These two roles of culture, norm-setting and institution-prescribing, are not mutually exclusive and could work in tandem to condition battleground effects.

[54] This begs the question of course, why traditionalistic states become battleground states in the first place. Partly, this might be a consequence of national forces more so than local ones, e.g. the number of Electoral College votes a state has and how that factors into campaigns' overall calculations. In addition, southern candidates Bill Clinton and Al Gore put some states with traditionalistic cultures into play in the 1990s and 2000, such as Tennessee and Arkansas.

One caveat is that, although gradually, political culture changes. We can wonder how applicable Elazar's framework is forty years after he first developed it. Elazar himself acknowledges political cultures are not static, but also argues they are enduring and able to absorb changes in the political environment. While it is very tempting to think of the United States as one nation, with one people and one unifying culture, I believe it is more appropriate to think of the United States as a collection of sub-national entities with distinct cultures and political arrangements. It is then not a far stretch to think that state electorates have different reactions to being a battleground state depending on their political culture. Moreover, I view political culture not as the dominant force but rather as a background operator that structures how Americans react to being inundated with campaign attention. It potentially also helps us understand why we do not see a larger surge in turnout in the battleground states. By expecting similar effects on state-level turnout regardless of state-specific characteristics, we might obscure that battleground status does not lead to equally large increases in turnout in all states.

In short, states vary widely in the political practices and values they promote. If the underlying socio-political norms are hostile to politics, such as in traditionalistic states, battleground effects might be subdued. The moralistic culture, on the other hand, encourages political participation, which, in combination with battleground status, might lead to even greater participation. In other words, I expect not all states to react to being a battleground state in a similar fashion. Instead, political culture is expected to moderate this relationship.

Data and Method

To test my hypotheses, I turn to the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES) and the American National Election Studies (NES), 1992-2004. Compared to the NES, the most widely used data source in studies on American public opinion, the NAES has the advantage of a much larger sample size. Over the course of 2004, Annenberg researchers interviewed more than 80,000 individuals and their post-election survey includes more than 8,000 respondents. Important to this study, the number of respondents per state in the post-election sample ranges from 21 to over 800, whereas the NES often does not have respondents from a number of the smaller states. On the downside, the NAES has only been conducted since 2000. Moreover, many attitudes of interest to this study are measured months prior to the campaign period or only among a very small number of respondents.

Dependent variables

I test battleground effects on citizens' evaluations of the electoral process, political interest, political efficacy (internal and external), and political trust. Here I briefly describe each and discuss the questions that I use to measure them. I rescaled the answers to all questions to range from 0 (least positive evaluations) to 100 (most positive evaluations).

Evaluations of the Electoral Process

I use the following questions to test battleground effects on citizens' satisfaction with the performance of the electoral process: "Do you agree or disagree that this year's

presidential election shows that every vote can make a difference?" (NAES), "Do you think the last election was fair?" and "Elections make government pay attention" (NES). A more general evaluation of the American political system is also included: "Are you satisfied with U.S. democracy?"

I do not assume all these questions to tap exactly the same feelings. Instead, different considerations might factor into respondents' answers to these questions. For instance, when answering the first question, respondents might make a rational calculation about America's presidential selection system and conclude that, in fact, not every vote can make a difference. If they take a general, more national approach to this question, we should find few or no battleground effects. However, if responses are influenced by their own campaign experiences, battleground citizens should be much more likely to agree with this statement. The second question is broader and can thus elicit an even wider range of considerations. Respondents might base their answers on their status as a winner or loser – with losers believing the election was less fair – on their campaign experiences, or it might be a long-standing belief that is independent of the last election.

Political Interest

Political interest is measured with the question: "Would you say that you have been VERY MUCH interested, SOMEWHAT interested or NOT MUCH interested in the political campaigns so far this year?" (NES).

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy was originally defined as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process” (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954, 187). This has also been described as internal efficacy, or one’s belief that one is competent to understand and participate in politics. Later, scholars conceptualized a second dimension: external efficacy, which refers to how responsive citizens believe government and institutions to be (Converse 1972; Balch 1974).

In the NES, external efficacy is measured using respondents’ level of agreement with the following two statements: “Public official don’t care much what people like me think” and “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” I assigned values to each option which ranges from strongly agree (0) to strongly disagree (100), then added the answers to these two questions, and divided the sum by two. For the years 1992-2000, the NES also asked whether respondents agreed with the statement “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on,” measuring internal political efficacy.

Political Trust

Political trust has been defined as “a basic evaluative or affective orientation toward government” (Miller 1974) or “a general orientation toward the government predicated on people’s normative expectations of government operations” (Hetherington and Globetti 2002). Levels of political trust, or cynicism, might be least affected, if, as Weatherford (1992) contends, it is a reaction to policy process and outcomes rather than

representational mechanisms. However, theories of political trust give a central role to presidential approval and presidential character (Citrin 1974; Citrin and Green 1986). The argument here is that the president is the central political figure and his approval ratings affect approval of and trust in the government more generally (Hetherington 1999). This suggests that presidential candidates (who could be future presidents) also have the potential to impact people's trust in government. Hetherington (1998) shows that the reverse is also true: Trust affects levels of diffuse and specific support for the political system. For instance, less trusting citizens are less satisfied with the incumbent president leading Hetherington to conclude that "[l]ow trust helps create a political environment in which it is more difficult for leaders to succeed" (791).

I use respondents' answer to the following question as a indication of their levels of political trust: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?"

Individual-Level Independent Variables

All models include the variables expected to moderate the relationship between battleground status and political attitudes. Race is a dummy for black[55]; income is a dummy for a reported family income of less than $30,000 (1992 and 1996) or less than $35,000 (2000 and 2004); education is a standard 1-9 scale, with lower values indicating

[55] This does not include Hispanics or members of other ethnic or racial minorities. Since Hispanics have come to play an important role in battleground states such as New Mexico and have thus been extensively targeted in recent campaigns, future studies should include a dummy for Hispanic.

less formal education. Respondents' political knowledge scores are based on a standard set of political knowledge questions (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), and are operationalized as percentage of correct answers to four or five factual political knowledge questions. I categorized respondents as Independents if they answered the following pre-election question with Independent: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?" This includes respondents who, when pressed, admitted that they thought of themselves closer to one of the main parties.[56] Media use is a composite score of respondents' answers to questions about their use of network news, newspapers, and local news rescaled to 1-100 (NAES) or 0-7 (NES). I also included the number of days a respondent watched local news in the past 7 days. This last question was not asked on the 1992 NES, which is why I calculated the alternative media exposure index for all years. However, local media exposure should be most influential since this where citizens get most of their news (Graber 1997; Just et al. 1996), e.g. about the battleground status of their state and candidate visits. This theory is borne out by the results, which is why I use the local media measure in the NES models, although this does mean I have to exclude 1992 from the analyses presented below. Finally, I also included whether the respondent voted for the winning candidate.[57]

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[56] Excluding leaners does not substantively or significantly change the results.
[57] In the following chapter, I examine in detail how voting for the winning or losing candidate at the state and national level affects citizens' legitimacy attitudes.

State-Level Independent Variables

Battleground status is an ordinal scale ranging from 0 to 4 (see chapter 2). After Elazar's introduced his theory of political culture in the United States, Sharkansky (1969) developed a political culture scale ranging from 1 to 9 which allowed for a more nuanced categorization of the states than Elazar's original three categories did. To facilitate interpretation, I rescaled this measure to range from 0 to 8 with pure moralistic states receiving a 0 (MN) and pure traditionalistic states receiving an 8. Control variables at the state level include a state's median income, number of Electoral College votes, poverty levels (NES only), and the presence of a competitive Senate race.[58]

Methods

In addition to individual characteristics provided by the NAES and NES, I have relevant state-level data and thus have multi-level data sets. Put differently, in the data sets – and in reality – respondents are nested within states and I expect both individual characteristics and state characteristics to influence how they think and feel about politics. The large sample size of the NAES allows me to use multilevel modeling, an analytic tool especially appropriate when estimating individual- and state-level effects and interactions between the two levels (Raudenbush and Bryk 1986, 2002; Steenbergen and Jones 2002). I also developed multi-level models for the NES data, but since the substantive results do not change using regular OLS with clustered standard errors, the findings reported below are generated using this estimation technique.

[58] I have tested other indicators of battleground, such as candidate visits, but they consistently underperform compared to the 5-category battleground measure.

Results and discussion: Individual-Level Moderators

TABLES 3.1 AND 3.2 HERE

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the results of the NES models that test individual-level moderator effects. Overall, this set of results indicates that battleground status has little effect on citizens' political attitudes, even when taking into account that it might not affect everyone in a similar fashion. Starting with the attitudes most closely related to the electoral process (Table 3.1), the model for satisfaction with democracy reveals not a single battleground effect.

Exposure to local news, however, moderates the relationship between battleground status and perceptions of electoral fairness and respondents' beliefs that elections make government pay attention. The negative coefficients for this interaction term, combined with the positive coefficients for battleground status and local news, indicate that attitudes toward the electoral process are more positive in the battleground states for those low in local media use. For those who watched local news zero of out seven days the interaction term disappears and living in a battleground state has a slight positive effect on perceptions of electoral fairness and elections' effectiveness. Those high in media use show a much weaker or even no relationship between living in a battleground state and electoral evaluations. In other words, living in a battleground state can be a positive political experience but heavy local media use seems to negate some of these benefits. Local media in the battlegrounds might focus more on the conflictual nature of presidential campaign, which leads to less positive evaluations than had one not

been exposed to this. Moreover, these viewers are also more likely to view negative ads (Freedman and Goldstein 1999). This conclusion only holds for local media use; substituting the media exposure index for the local news measure produces insignificant results. This suggests that citizens indeed get most of their information on presidential electoral politics, especially the role of their state in the election, from the local media.

Another interaction term that is significant is *Battleground*Independent*, which helps predict perceptions of electoral fairness. This indicates that partisans, who are coded with a zero on the dummy variable, exhibit slightly more positive attitudes when living in a battleground state compared to their counterparts in the safe states. Effects for Independents, however, are negligible with battleground status having very little effect on whether they believed the last election was fair or not. Finally, battleground residents with low incomes are slightly more confident in the fairness of the election than those in safe states, although this coefficient fails to reach traditional levels of statistical significance ($p<.15$, two-tailed). Moreover, this positive effect of living in a battleground state is much smaller than this same effect on higher income citizens.

In sum, I found no evidence that targeted voters and traditionally more alienated citizens are coopted by the system because of greater mobilization efforts of these groups in the battleground states. Low income, low educated, and independent voters are not more likely to believe in electoral fairness and efficacy when living in a battleground states. The findings do indicate that media exposure, to local media in particular, might

play an important role in citizens' interpretations of excessive campaign attention to their state.

Also included in Table 3.1 is the political interest model. The only significant interaction term is *Battleground*Independent*. Initially, the direction of the coefficient is counterintuitive: it suggests that the relationship between battleground status and political interest is negative both for partisans and Independents, while being strongest among the latter group. However, excluding the local news measure, which allows me to include 1992, reveals a different, and more predictable, pattern: partisans are much more interested in campaigns in the battleground states. Independents are somewhat more interested but not by the amount that we might have expected.

Moving on to more general attitudes toward politics, Table 3.2 shows results for political efficacy and trust in government. While this reveals no battleground effects on internal efficacy, battleground residents appear to feel more externally efficacious than safe state residents. Income matters but, again, not as I had expected. Among low-income respondents, the slope predicting battleground effects on efficacy is much more gradual than among higher-income respondents. In other words, low-income respondents were slightly more efficacious in battleground states but higher-income respondents were even more so. In other words, these analyses provide no support for the notion that low resource voters in particular benefit from living in a battleground state compared to other voters.

Finally, levels of political trust depend on battleground status and media use. Living in a battleground state makes all citizens more trusting but, counter to earlier findings, those high in media even more so. Earlier I discussed how local media use in the battleground states depressed trust in the electoral process, but here I find the opposite effect which is contrary to Hetherington's (1998) speculation that high media use fosters political distrust.

The results also show that young adults have less trust in government when their state is a battleground state while the opposite is true for everyone over 25. Moreover, living in a battleground state fosters trust but not so for those with low incomes. These findings are contrary to my expectations that typically disengaged citizens, such as the young and those with low incomes, benefit from living in a battleground state, become more engaged and thus more supportive of the system. I am not quite sure what explains these effects but one possibility is that living in a battleground state makes one's disadvantaged position in society more salient. For the three months of the campaign, battleground states are overwhelmed with (positive and negative) information about candidates' policy proposals, which often make salient the unequal status of particular groups. For instance, in 2000 both candidates' campaign promises focused on social welfare, in particular social security (Hendriks, De Vries, and DeLandtsheer 2007). This highlights the inequalities present in American society but particularly so in the battleground states. Possibly, this leads to citizens of these minority groups to be less trustful of the federal government.

NAES Findings

Before moving onto the results for political culture, I present the findings from the multilevel model in more detail. Recall that the question used as the dependent variable is "Do you agree or disagree that this year's presidential election shows that every vote can make a difference?" and that it was only asked in 2004. Therefore, the findings presented in this section are not suitable for direct comparison with the results provided above. Nonetheless, they can give us greater insight in the relative power of battleground effects during a highly competitive election.

Testing battleground effects using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) includes a number of steps. First, HLM allows the researcher to test for the presence of between-state differences in citizen attitudes without including any independent variables. The results of this null-model, similar to a one-way ANOVA, show that mean levels of trust in the electoral process vary significantly between states (results not presented here).[59] To examine whether battleground status explains (part of) this variance in mean levels, I introduce state-level variables into the model. This so-called means-as-outcome model indicates that battleground status significantly predicts differences in state averages of trust ($p<.05$), even after controlling for states' number of Electoral College votes, median income, presence of a competitive Senate race, and political culture (results not presented

[59] I am a little ambivalent as to what exact attitude the survey question measures. Ideally, I examine whether it is related to trust or efficacy constructs but the absence of such questions in the NAES 2004 precludes this possibility. I refer to it as trust in the electoral process for brevity purposes but also because the results suggest it is a subjective evaluation of the electoral process rather than based on a rational calculation.

here).[60] The average level of trust in the electoral process is four points higher in the battleground states versus the safe states.

FIGURE 3.1 HERE

Figure 3.1 plots the regression line between battleground status and mean levels of electoral trust. Substituting margin of victory for battleground status also produces a positive, significant regression coefficient, but this measure of competitiveness explains notably less of the between-state variance than battleground status. The same holds for the number of candidate visits.

In sum, this first set of results corroborates Gimpel et al. (2007), who also found that battleground status is a more powerful predictor of attitude variation than the mere closeness of the election. Although not a direct test of this, the findings are also in line with Hill and McKee's (2005) argument that candidate behavior mediates the effect between competitiveness and mass-level behavior.

Next, I test whether the individual differences discussed above interact with the campaign environment. This complete model thus includes variables at the state and individual-level as well as cross-level interactions, if there are grounds to include these. In fact, HLM provides chi-square statistics, which indicate whether the strength of the relationship between an individual-level variable, e.g. media exposure, and the dependent

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[60] The intraclass correlation, which represents the proportion of variance in the outcome that exists at the state level, is .02. In other words, 2% of the total variance exists at the state level, whereas 98% exists at the individual level. This is an admittedly small variance component at level two although not uncommon in political science research. For instance, in their multilevel model of correct voting in U.S. presidential elections, Lau and Redlawsk (2008) find only .3% of variance exists at the state level. In the full model presented here, battleground status explains about 75% of the between-state variance.

variable varies significantly across states. I do not present the results for individual differences that do not mediate battleground effects. For instance, while the coefficient for media exposure is positive (i.e. those who watch television and read newspapers more regularly express more confidence in the vote), the HLM results indicate that the slope does not vary significantly between states.

Low-income citizens have traditionally been less engaged in the political process but living in a battleground makes them more politically interested and active (Gimpel et al. 2007). Does this translate into a stronger belief that every vote can make a difference? Having a low income has a negative impact but, similar to the findings for media use, this relationship does not vary depending on the respondent's geographic location. The same is true for political knowledge and education. Both coefficients are positive and significant but the relationship between these variables and trust in the process is not stronger in battleground states. In other words, highly knowledgeable and highly educated battleground residents are not more likely to believe that every vote can make a difference.

What about Independents? I argued that these members of the electorate are exposed to large amounts of campaign information because they are among the main target groups during campaign season. Moreover, they are among the most likely to be influenced by campaign events (Hillygus and Jackman 2003).

Unsurprisingly, the coefficient for Independents indicates that not identifying with one of the two major parties is associated with lower levels of trust in the electoral

process (results not shown here). Of importance to this study, the chi-square statistic for the slope also indicates that this relationship differs significantly between the states. As such, I inserted a cross-level interaction between the Independent dummy and battleground status, as well as cross-level interactions between the dummy and the state-level control variables. Results of this model are presented in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 AND FIGURE 3.2 HERE

As predicted, independence of party moderates the effects of battleground status on trust in the electoral process. The large, negative coefficient for Independents indicates that Independents in safe states are still much more cynical about the electoral process than partisans. But, their counterparts in battleground states are as optimistic as partisans. In fact, the negative effect of independence is completely negated by battleground status: the difference in electoral trust between Independents in battleground states and Independent in safe states is over 7 percentage points (see Figure 3.2).[61]

What accounts for this difference? I offer an explanation that combines the role of partisanship with the role of information. Included in the Independent category are leaners; respondents who, after being pressed by the interviewer, indicated that they feel closer to one of the major parties. All the other respondents thus fairly strongly identify with their party of choice. Strong partisanship goes hand in hand with higher interest in politics, a stronger sense of civic duty, etc. (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960). This suggests that the finding might be partly a socialization effect: those more invested in politics (i.e.

[61] I obtained this number by adding the coefficients for battleground and the interaction term, which I then multiplied by 4 (the highest value of battleground). Thus, (.51+1.33)*4=7.36.

partisans) are socialized into thinking that votes matter regardless of political context. In the absence of partisan ties, Independents depend on cues from the campaign environment. As a result, attitudes among this group are more malleable by the campaign intensity that we find in the battleground states. Higher information flow and more signals that one's vote matters leads Independents to internalize this whereas partisans' attitudes are more stable and predetermined and thus less likely to be shaped by the campaign environment. Perhaps they are also are more realistic and realize that votes are less likely to make a difference in safe states compared to battleground states.

To test this theory, I ask whether actual levels of electoral closeness underlie the pattern shown in Figure 3.2. But again, when comparing margin of victory and battleground status, the latter does a much better job of explaining variance in the slope than the first. This lends credence to the idea that Independents are not more rational, although this finding does not preclude this per se, but that the campaign environment (e.g. visits, campaign advertisements, or GOTV efforts) shapes their responses.[62] [63]

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[62] An alternative explanation for why partisans' responses appear not to take into account the local campaign context is that, when answering the survey question, partisans thought about the election and the vote more generally, whereas Independents specifically considered their own vote. Independents in the battleground states are constantly reminded by candidates and the media that *their* vote can make a difference. I tested this by examining whether media use and/or political interest moderates the relationship between partisanship and trust in the electoral process but find no evidence for this.

[63] Substituting margin of victory for battleground status makes the coefficient for the interaction term *political knowledge*margin of victory* positive (.33) and statistically significant at $p<.1$. While more research is needed to test the robustness of this finding, it suggests that politically knowledgeable citizens do take into account the actual closeness of the race in their state in forming attitudes towards the electoral process.

Conclusions: Individual-Level Moderators

As I suggested above, whether we find battleground effects might in part depend on the attitudes (and behavior) we study. The results presented here suggest that battleground effects might be most pronounced among attitudes that are directly related to the election and campaign, such as perceptions of electoral fairness and the belief that every vote can make a difference, although political trust is also not immune to differences in the campaign environment. The results also indicate which individual-level differences are most likely to condition battleground effects: media exposure, income, and partisanship. However, all effects sizes are small and further research is needed to substantiate these findings. In other words, if battleground effects are present, they are subtle.

Still, many of the expected relationships were not found. This might be due to imprecise measures and the inability to compare citizens' pre-election levels of trust and efficacy. On the other hand, it is possible that citizens truly do not care about the disproportionate attention candidates pay to the states or, at the least, are quite forgiving of this behavior and think no less positive or negative about politics after the election.

Results: Political Culture as a Moderator

Whereas the analyses thus far provided limited evidence that battleground strategies change citizens' outlook on government, the results for the political culture are more impressive. To test political culture's moderating effects, I regressed six political orientations on battleground status, political culture, and an interaction term between the

two, as well as a number of individual-level (race, income, education, and gender) and state-level control variables (EC votes, median income, and the presence of a competitive Senate race).[64]

TABLE 3.4 HERE

Table 3.4 presents the OLS regression coefficients for these models. The interaction term is significant in five of the six models, indicating that battleground effects vary by political culture. This is true for internal and external political efficacy, political trust, political interest, and perceptions of electoral fairness. Each negative interaction coefficient signifies that respondents who score high on both the battleground and the political culture measure (i.e. live in traditionalistic battleground states) are significantly more cynical about politics than residents of both moralistic battleground states and safe traditionalistic states. Put differently, battleground status has a positive effect on political attitudes in the more moralistic states (at one end of the spectrum), whereas there is negative association between battleground status and political attitudes in the traditionalistic states (at the other end of the spectrum). I then calculated fitted values for those living in the most moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic states and plotted these lines to illustrate the conditional relationship between battleground status and external efficacy.

[64] Inserting additional control variables such as party ID, ideology, or poverty levels changes the results substantively nor significantly. I hesitate to include a measure of registration laws since political culture has been shown to predict cross-state variation in these laws (King 1994). In other words, political culture is a precursor of many other interstate differences. Here I attempt to capture the full effect of political culture on the relationship between battleground and political attitudes. Including both measures would thus be an incorrect specification of my hypotheses.

FIGURE 3.3 HERE

This graph shows that living in a battleground state has a positive effect on citizens' levels of efficacy if this state has a predominantly moralistic culture, whereas living in a battleground state has a negative effect on citizens' levels of efficacy if this state has a predominantly traditionalistic culture. Citizens in individualistic states are little affected by battleground status. Plotting the other interaction effects results in very similar figures.

In short, political culture functions as an important conditioner of battleground effects. I hypothesized this relationship is based on the role of competition in each culture and if there is anything that candidates introduce into the battleground states it is competition. Moralistic states have a much more positive conception of political competition whereas it flies in the face of traditionalistic political values. While this could mean that citizens who live under the latter merely ignore or avoid being exposed to campaign information, I find that it actually makes them more pessimistic about politics. They feel less confident, regarding both their own skills and resources (internal efficacy) and government's responsiveness to their needs (external efficacy), less trusting and interested, and are more suspicious of the election's fairness.

In contrast, citizens living under moralistic political norms and values appear to revel in candidate attention and show higher levels of trust, efficacy, interest, and fairness than any other group of citizens, even when these levels were already fairly high. It is as

if these citizens are much more open to receiving the potential benefits of living in a battleground state.

In some respect, the strength and robustness of this relationship is surprising. States with moralistic cultures already have a highly politically active and efficacious citizenry compared to other states (Hanson 1980). One could thus imagine that being a battleground state has little additional effect, whereas the states with traditionally low levels of turnout and more cynical views of government should have the most room to 'improve.' However, the results presented here tell a very different story.

If state culture conditions the impact of battleground status on attitudes that are known antecedents and/or products of political behavior, it might also explain why we only see fairly small increases in voter turnout in the battleground states (Hill and McKee 2005; Hopkins and Goux 2008). Namely, if we group all battleground states together ignoring pre-existing cultural norms in those states, we might obscure large differences in turnout effects, leading to an overall small net effect. To test this, I constructed a basic model predicting aggregate levels of voter turnout among the Voting Eligible Population (VEP) during the period 1992-2004. The variables of interest are battleground status, political culture, and an interaction between the two. Controls include turnout rate in the previous presidential election, the presence of a competitive Senate race, and dummy variables for the years 1996, 2000, and 2004 (see Appendix A for model results). I then calculated fitted values for states at either extreme of the political culture spectrum (states with a value smaller or equal to one and states with a value larger or equal to seven,

respectively) and ones that fall in the middle of the scale (with values between three and five).

FIGURE 3.4 HERE

Figure 3.4 plots lines for these three sets of fitted values. Unsurprisingly, states with traditionalistic or individualistic cultures have much lower overall levels of turnout; but, their turnout levels are not much higher when they are battlegrounds. States with a predominantly moralistic culture, on the other hand, have high overall levels of turnout and even higher ones when they are presidential battlegrounds.

How might these effects of political culture on political attitudes and turnout be related? One possibility is that mobilization efforts are most effective in the moralistic states, in particular face-to-face canvassing, which relies on the conveyance of "social norms about participation in the upcoming election as modeled by the behavior of a local volunteer" (Middleton and Green 2008: 79). Citizens in these states are likely to be most acceptant of this type of GOTV effort. The emphasis on social norms that are already present in the state then causes more voters to go to the polls, which in turn causes them to exhibit more positive attitudes toward politics for reasons I have discussed above. An alternative possibility is that citizens in moralistic states value the competition that battleground status generates, which leads to more positive evaluations of politics. This then causes more citizens to go to the polls. While it is beyond the scope of this project to test these hypotheses – it would require pre-election measures of the political attitudes in question – future research should investigate this further.

While it is true that a number of moralistic battleground states also have more lenient registration laws, e.g. Minnesota and New Hampshire, which is related to higher turnout (Goux and Hopkins 2008), this does not undermine my claim that political culture matters, as these laws are partly a product of political culture (King 1994). Moreover, it only reinforces my argument that, to fully understand battleground effects, we should take into account other cross-state differences that might condition these effects.

Moreover, moralistic states, such as Minnesota and Wisconsin, also have higher levels of social capital (Putnam 1995): in these states, there are larger and stronger networks of volunteers and groups that can be easily mobilized to reinforce candidates' campaign efforts. In traditionalistic and individualistic cultures, networking systems and skilled volunteers should be scarcer. This can significantly impact citizens' campaign experiences. For instance, Middleton and Green (2008) find that MoveOn.org – a progressive organization that mounted a large get-out-the-vote effort on behalf of the Kerry campaign in 2004 – passed over precincts in battleground states if they could not find volunteers to lead their GOTV effort.

Finally, it is possible that political cultures change and that Elazar's classification ceases to be meaningful, especially when between-state migration is high and new groups with distinctly different values enter the electorate. However, the results presented here suggest that state cultures are fairly resistant to change. Battleground status only creates more active and politically engaged electorates in the moralistic states and has little or

even negative effects on the political attitudes and behavior of electorates in the traditionalistic states.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to examine whether presidential candidates' battleground strategies have significant effects on citizens' relationship to government. I argued that these effects might be conditioned by both individual differences and contextual factors, in particular states' political cultures. The evidence for the first proved to be thin with only media exposure conditioning battleground effects on three out of the seven attitudes under study. Of the other individual difference, partisan independence seems to play a role but not consistently so. Then again, the fact that I find battleground effects among certain parts of the electorate is meaningful. The measures and samples used in these analyses are far from perfect, e.g. the fact that the NES does not randomly sample respondents from each state but rather is a national random sample. One can wonder what a survey specifically designed to detect battleground effects would produce. Studies that include only a select number of states suggest we might find even more pronounced effects (e.g. Middleton and Green 2008).

The results for political culture as a moderator are more impressive. I used Elazar's conceptualization (1966), which distinguishes between three cultures: moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic. Each of these cultures assigns a different value to political participation and competition. I argued that this might mean that not every state 'responds' to being a battleground state in the same way. In fact, battleground status has a

much more positive effect on a range of political attitudes in states with predominantly moralistic cultures, whereas the reverse is true in the traditionalistic cultures. These findings are further substantiated by a significant interaction effect of political culture on the relationship between battleground status and voter turnout in the American states. Previous studies already related political culture to other political developments in those states, such as registration laws and party organization. This study suggests that political culture also provides a framework for how states respond to intense campaign attention.

The last few presidential elections have witnessed extremely strategic candidates, who spent most of their resources in a very limited number of states. And although candidates like to promise that they will visit every state in the Union, so far they have not lived up to this promise. If past candidate behavior is even a weak predictor of future candidate behavior, we ought to be very skeptical of similar future promises. In other words, it is highly likely that during the next election only a handful of states will receive candidate visits, television ads, and other campaign events while the rest of the country is virtually ignored. My research predicts that candidates will not have equal success in the battleground states, and that this in part depends on the existing political norms of a state. Where participation and competition is valued, candidates will find a more hospitable electorate. State electorates that place less value on participation and party competition, on the other hand, will show more reluctance when candidates inundate them with campaign visits and television advertisements.

Finally, the 2008 election provides an interesting case study. Certain states that had not previously been battleground states were put on the electoral map, e.g. North Carolina and Virginia. According to Elazar (1964), these states have a predominantly traditionalistic culture, although there are parts that are a mix with the moralistic culture. Moreover, the Obama campaign launched a much more aggressive campaign in these states than the McCain campaign. In this sense, competition between the candidates was less fierce than in Ohio or Pennsylvania. Contrary to my expectations, we saw big changes in these states. For instance, North Carolina's turnout jumped from 58% in 2004 to 66% in 2008. Future studies that include 2008 can uncover whether 2008 was a unique election, which deviated from rules that governed previous elections, or whether it still fits into the story told in this chapter.

Table 3.1. Individual Differences and Battleground Effects, 1996-2004.

	Fairness of election	Elections	Satisfaction w/democracy	Political Interest
Voted for winning candidate	16.17**	6.57**	3.85**	0.65
	(1.24)	(1.18)	(0.91)	(1.09)
Age (<25 years old)	0.01	-3.63	-1.96	-3.75
	(2.39)	(3.05)	(2.43)	(2.91)
Low income	-1.15	-0.56	-0.41	-2.86
	(1.38)	(1.78)	(1.49)	(2.18)
Independent	-0.71	-4.43*	-4.55**	-5.06**
	(1.39)	(2.02)	(1.52)	(1.70)
Education	1.64**	1.92**	0.15	1.29*
	(0.53)	(0.56)	(0.57)	(0.58)
Political knowledge	0.12**	0.13**	0.13**	0.27**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Local news	0.45	0.88**	0.69**	1.55**
	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.26)	(0.34)
Race	-7.69**	3.41	-3.45	8.27**
	(2.46)	(2.58)	(2.51)	(2.48)
Battleground status	1.54	2.71+	1.70	-0.74
	(1.36)	(1.62)	(1.37)	(1.51)
*Battleground*Local news*	-0.23+	-0.22+	-0.09	0.13
	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)
*Battleground*Age*	1.58	1.28	-0.94	-0.09
	(1.11)	(1.43)	(1.18)	(1.32)
*Battleground*Independent*	-1.79**	-0.46	-0.17	-1.45+
	(0.63)	(0.78)	(0.64)	(0.75)
*Battleground*Pol. knowledge*	0.00	-0.02	-0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
*Battleground*Education*	0.03	-0.29	-0.15	0.24
	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.24)
*Battleground*Low income*	-1.19	-0.373	-0.68	0.72
	(0.76)	(0.917)	(0.69)	(0.92)
*Battleground*Race*	1.29	-0.941	-0.51	-1.01

	(1.32)	(1.294)	(1.05)	(1.13)
Political culture	0.67**	-0.04	0.17	-0.07
	(0.24)	(0.29)	(0.20)	(0.28)
Competitive Senate race	-0.12	2.71+	1.94+	-1.10
	(1.57)	(1.49)	(1.01)	(1.16)
EC votes	-0.04	0.05	0.02	0.05
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Median income	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
1996	0.18	-12.76**	13.14**	-17.92**
	(1.38)	(1.53)	(1.19)	(1.70)
2000	-16.20**	-4.30**	19.20**	-1.65
	(1.79)	(1.47)	(1.20)	(1.67)
Constant	48.55**	58.18**	47.75**	50.72**
	(5.98)	(7.09)	(5.37)	(6.95)
Adjusted R-squared	0.21	0.05	0.10	0.15
N	3360	3485	3353	3497

OLS regression coefficients with clustered standard errors.
+p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 3.2. Individual Differences and Battleground Effects, 1996-2004.

	External efficacy	Internal efficacy	Trust in government
Voted for winning candidate	4.90**	1.14	4.38**
	(0.91)	(1.10)	(0.89)
Age (<25 years old)	0.95	0.529	2.99
	(2.47)	(3.37)	(2.32)
Independent	-3.68*	-1.44	-3.16**
	(1.43)	(1.70)	(1.00)
Political knowledge	0.14**	0.27**	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Local news	0.029	-0.62+	0.21
	(0.25)	(0.36)	(0.17)
Education	3.92**	3.98**	0.32
	(0.47)	(0.78)	(0.36)
Low income	0.06	-4.85*	2.97**
	(1.36)	(2.02)	(1.09)
Race	0.64	4.39+	-4.02**
	(2.38)	(2.60)	(1.48)
Battleground status	2.60*	-1.49	1.12
	(1.04)	(1.66)	(0.90)
*Battleground*Age*	0.88	0.20	-1.71+
	(1.05)	(1.34)	(0.92)
*Battleground*Independent*	-0.33	-0.22	0.28
	(0.62)	(0.73)	(0.415)
*Battleground*Pol. knowledge*	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
*Battleground*Local news*	-0.03	0.18	0.14+
	(0.10)	(0.15)	(0.07)
*Battleground*Education*	-0.30	0.29	-0.19
	(0.24)	(0.33)	(0.16)
*Battleground*Low income*	-1.68*	0.79	-1.08*
	(0.70)	(0.86)	(0.48)
*Battleground*Race*	-0.14	-0.45	0.34

	(0.99)	(1.09)	(0.83)
Political culture	-0.317+	0.25	-0.08
	(0.18)	(0.28)	(0.18)
Competitive Senate race	0.59	1.19	2.14*
	(1.027)	(1.32)	(0.86)
EC votes	-0.048	0.05	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Median income	-0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
1996	-4.45**	0.000	-6.08**
	(1.06)	(.)	(0.95)
2000	3.89**	10.11**	-2.14*
	(1.23)	(1.27)	(1.04)
Constant	25.33**	4.23	47.42**
	(4.67)	(6.93)	(4.48)
Adjusted R-squared	0.11	0.146	0.045
N	3484	2591	3487

OLS regression coefficients with clustered standard errors.
+p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01, two-tailed.

Table 3.3. Multilevel Model Estimating Battleground Effects on Perception of the Electoral Process (with cross-level interaction)

Variable	B	SE B	df
Level 1 (N=8,332)			
Voted for losing candidate	-12.47**	.82	47
Race	-11.85**	1.82	47
Low income	-4.28**	.88	47
Education	.38*	.15	47
Media use	.05**	.01	47
Independent	-6.58**	.91	47
Political knowledge	.56**	.16	47
Level 2 (N=48)			
Political culture	-.78	.39	42
Battleground status	.51**	.22	42
Presence of competitive senate race	.92	.78	42
Electoral College votes	0	.02	42
Interaction term			
*Battleground * Independent*	1.33**	.44	43
Constant	81.6	.4	42

Notes: Errors reported are robust standard errors, as recommended by Raudenbush, Bryk, and Congdon (2001). *=p<.05, **=p<.01.

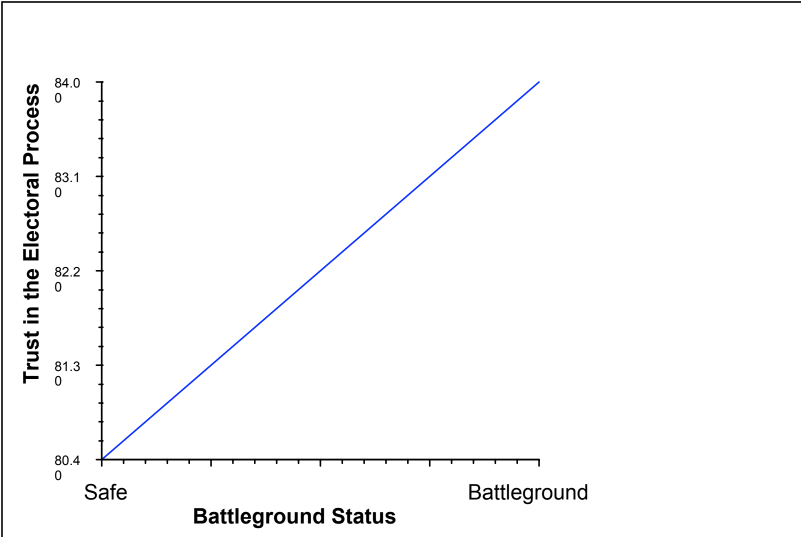
Not reported here are interactions between Independent (level 1) and median income, competitive senate race, median income, and Electoral College votes (level 2). None of these interaction terms reached statistical significance.

Table 3.4. Political Culture and Battleground Effects, 1992-2004.

	External efficacy	Internal efficacy	Political Trust	Satisf. w/dem.	Fairness election	Political interest
Income	0.34**	0.11	-0.11+	0.23*	0.33**	0.34**
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.08)
Race	-0.64	0.98	-2.90**	-5.30**	-10.02**	2.78+
	(1.15)	(1.42)	(0.90)	(1.68)	(2.21)	(1.56)
Education	3.89**	6.07**	-0.39*	0.53	2.15**	3.93**
	(0.27)	(0.33)	(0.19)	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.30)
Gender	-0.25	8.70**	-0.21	3.43**	4.48**	4.25**
	(0.71)	(0.84)	(0.46)	(0.86)	(1.29)	(0.84)
Battleground status	1.19*	1.63**	0.56+	-0.49	1.54+	2.06**
	(0.51)	(0.55)	(0.31)	(0.49)	(0.82)	(0.52)
Political Culture	0.30	0.64*	0.41+	0.05	1.59**	0.54+
	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.22)	(0.31)	(0.41)	(0.31)
*Battleground*Culture*	-0.34**	-0.41**	-0.15*	0.04	-0.36*	-0.38**
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.07)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.14)
Median income	-0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.00+	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
EC votes	-0.00	0.04	-0.01	0.04	-0.02	0.07**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Competitive Sen. race	0.82	1.09	1.02	2.07+	0.28	0.21
	(0.92)	(0.86)	(0.67)	(1.09)	(1.47)	(1.00)
1996	-9.92**	-1.54	1.26	-2.60*	19.71**	-13.17**
	(1.44)	(1.52)	(1.06)	(1.24)	(1.97)	(1.59)
2000	-4.22*	0.44	4.42**			-6.69**
	(1.65)	(1.96)	(1.17)			(1.91)
2004	-6.44**		6.11**	-17.07**	18.14**	-1.11
	(1.74)		(1.39)	(1.44)	(1.93)	(1.99)
Constant	31.64**	-1.53[a]	44.71**	69.43**	32.05**	40.28**
	(3.64)	(4.40)	(2.79)	(4.24)	(5.86)	(4.41)
Adjusted R-squared	0.09	0.14	0.02	0.08	0.14	0.08
N	5608	4665	5613	3478	3493	5639

OLS regression coefficients with clustered standard errors.
+p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01, two-tailed.
[a] This negative intercept disappears when excluding state median income from the model but does not change the other coefficients significantly.

Figure 3.1. Battleground Effect on State-Level Trust in the Electoral Process



Note: DV is scale from 0-100 with higher values indicating higher trust in the electoral process.

Figure 3.2. Interactive Battleground Effect on the Relationship between Partisanship and Perception of the Electoral Process, 2004

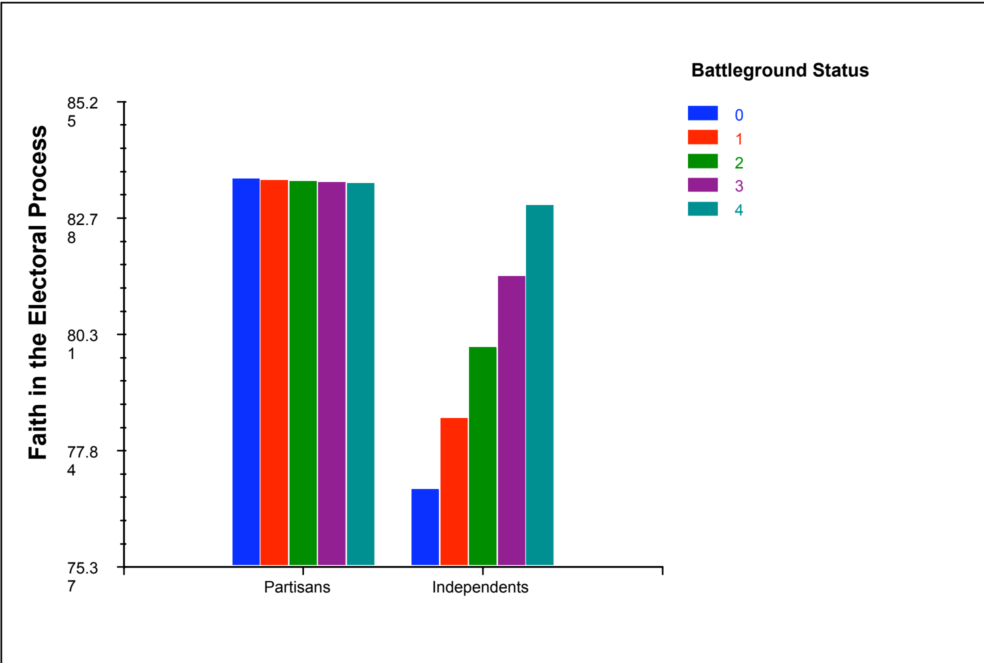


Figure 3.3. Interactive Effects of Political Culture on the Relationship between Battleground Status and External Efficacy

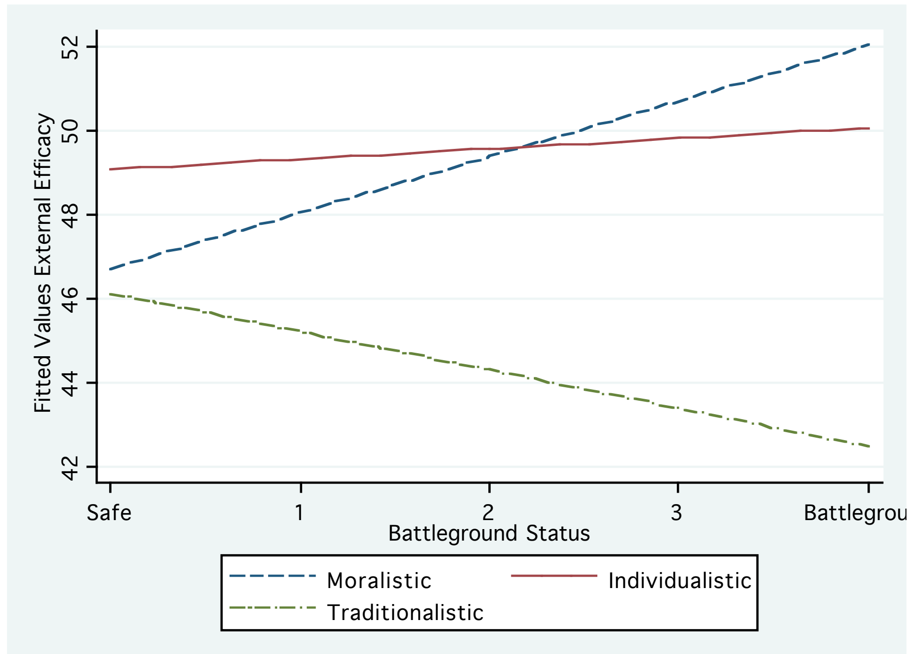
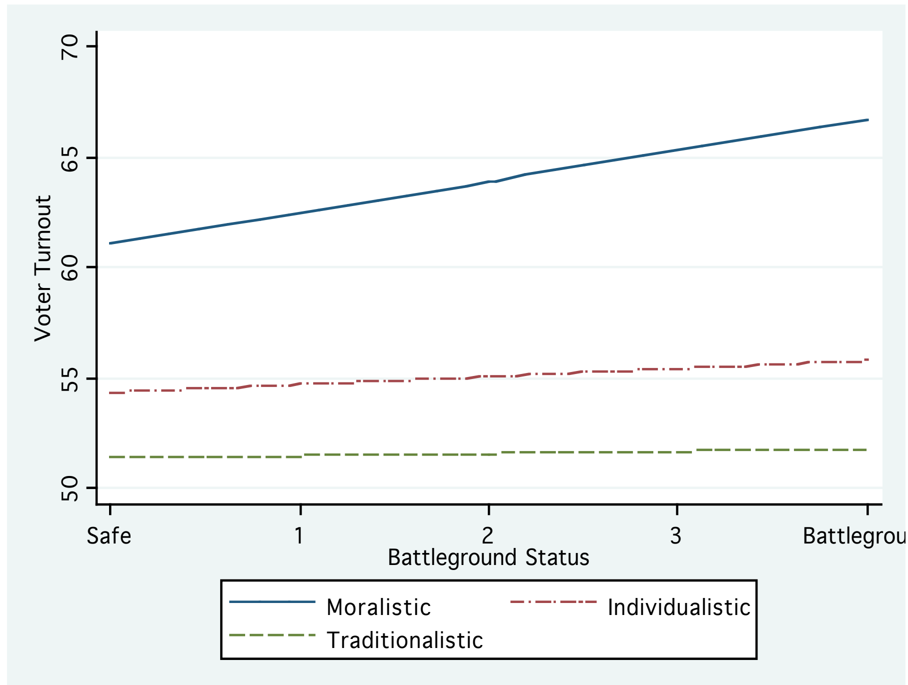


Figure 3.4. Interactive Effects of Political Culture on the Relationship between Battleground Status and Voter Turnout.



CHAPTER 4

WINNING AND LOSING UNDER THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined battleground effects on a number of citizens' attitudes toward government, while taking into account that individual and state-level characteristics might be important moderators of these effects. In this chapter, I investigate how the Electoral College shapes voters' interpretations of the presidential election outcome, both directly through its two-level structure, which creates election outcomes at the state and national levels, and indirectly through battleground strategies.

The Electoral College determines who ends up in the White House and is therefore an important determinant of presidential candidates' campaign tactics. In other words, the rules of the game matter for political outcomes and how actors pursue these but, as this chapter will show, they also matter for citizens' interpretations of these outcomes. In addition, the study presented here once again underscores that citizens' campaign experiences at the state level guide their more general attitudes toward government.

Elections are at the core of American democracy. And while participation in elections has positive effects on citizens' political attitudes, such as trust and efficacy (Finkel 1985, 1987; Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978; Nadeau and Blais 1993), citizens who voted for winning candidates tend to exhibit more positive attitudes than those who voted

for losing candidates (e.g. Anderson et al. 2005; Clarke and Acock 1989; Craig et al. 2006). In other words, the outcome of the vote – not just the act of voting – has important repercussions for the relationship between citizens and government in ways that extend beyond which party will be in power.

But voters do not experience wins and losses in a vacuum. Instead, electoral institutions– e.g. whether the electoral rules are proportional or majoritarian – and the electoral context – e.g. how much is at stake in the election – contextualize these. For instance, Anderson et al. (2005) find that the negative relationship between losing and trust in state governments is much stronger in states where governors are relatively powerful.

The Electoral College creates a unique context in which voters experience winning and losing. First, it produces winners and losers at two levels: the state and the national level. In other words, citizens can vote for a presidential candidate who wins their state but loses the national election. Such voters may feel more positively toward politics than voters whose preferred candidates lost at both levels. Second, most states award their electoral votes to the winner of the statewide vote and, in effect, candidates focus on securing votes in ideologically divided states – the so-called battleground states – rather than ideologically homogeneous, or safe, states.[65] This is true especially during

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[65] The winner-take-all procedure that most states use is not an inherent feature of the Electoral College. The Constitution leaves it up to the states to decide how to award their electoral votes. However, all states, except Maine and Nebraska, have opted for a winner-take-all system, which, in combination with the required 270 electoral votes to win the presidency, has led to the battleground strategies we now experience in every election.

close elections: in 2000 and 2004, the parties' nominees fought the battle over the White House in only a handful of battleground states, which received countless candidate visits and campaign ads, all in an effort to win those states' Electoral College votes. In fact, due to the structure of the presidential selection system, the outcome of one state can decide the overall election outcome, as the case of Florida in 2000 illustrated. With so much at stake in these states, this type of campaign environment has the potential to produce extremely happy winners and equally sore losers.

These two conclusions identify two particular questions of interest that I will address in this chapter: 1) In addition to the outcome of the presidential election at the national level, does the outcome at the state level matter for citizens' attitudes toward government? 2) How might the political context, in this case the level of campaign intensity, modify the relationship between the election outcome and these attitudes? More definitively, do presidential election outcomes affect citizens' attitudes toward government differently in battleground states than in safe states?

Guided by previous research, I hypothesize that state-level outcomes are most important for national losers and that state-level wins attenuate the negative effects of national-level losses on a variety of attitudes of political legitimacy, such as political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and electoral fairness.[66] Furthermore, I expect

[66] In this chapter, I refer to voters whose preferred candidate won the general election as 'national winners,' voters whose preferred candidate lost the general election as 'national losers,' voters whose preferred candidate won the vote in their state as 'state winners,' and voters whose preferred candidate lost the vote in their state as 'state losers.' Occasionally, I will also mention double winners (voters whose preferred candidate won at both levels) and double losers (voters whose preferred candidate lost at both levels).

battleground voters who lose the national election but win their home state to exhibit more positive attitudes than their safe-state counterparts as a function of the special meaning campaigns attach to votes in the battleground states. Finally, I investigate whether political interest and concern over the election outcome mediate these effects.

Using data from the 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies (NES), I find that voters whose preferred candidate lost the general election exhibit less positive attitudes toward government but that, among this group, double losers feel even less efficacious and are least satisfied with democracy. Thus, appreciating winners and losers in American presidential elections on two dimensions – state and national – is a valuable addition to theories of winning and losing. The results also indicate that for state winners/national losers states' battleground status contextualizes the election outcome and positively affects levels of efficacy and confidence in electoral fairness. In sum, including the particulars of the campaign environment into theoretical models furthers our understanding of how election outcomes shape citizens' attitudes towards government (Anderson et al. 2005).

This chapter is organized as follows. Extending theories on winning and losing in the American political context, I develop a theoretical framework that introduces the Electoral College as a contextualizing force. I then discuss which political attitudes are most likely to be affected, advance my hypotheses, and propose the data and methods I use to test these. I conclude with a discussion of the findings and directions for future research.

Winners and Losers in American Presidential Elections

Elections play a central role in representative democracies (Katz 1997): They ensure public office holders are beholden to their constituents and thus make them more responsive to public preferences – thus influencing elite behavior (e.g. Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2000; but see Jacobs and Shapiro 2003). But they also impress upon people the notion that their opinions are important for the political system to function – thus affecting citizens' views of their roles in the political process (Weissberg and Ginsberg 1978). Voting in democratic elections is the most obvious and common form of political participation and democratic theorists generally agree this form of participation is a positive one (Pateman 1970; Thompson 1970).

A growing body of literature, however, suggests participation in elections is not an equally positive experience for everyone (Anderson and Tverdova 2001; Anderson and LoTempio 2002; Anderson et al. 2005; Blais and Gélineau 2007; Clarke and Acock 1989; Craig et al. 2006; Freie 1997; Nadeau and Blais 1993). Voters whose candidates lost are more cynical on a number of legitimacy orientations, which indicate whether citizens believe government is accountable and attentive – it represents its citizens well – and efficient and fair – it provides for its citizens well (Weatherford 1992). For instance, these voters are significantly more distrustful of government (Anderson et al. 2005; Anderson and LoTempio 2002; Craig et al. 2006), feel less efficacious (Clarke and Acock 1989), believe the system is less responsive to their preferences, and are less satisfied with democracy (Anderson et al. 2005; Craig et al. 2006). However, of the

aforementioned studies that focus on the American context, none considers what happens in the individual states, thereby ignoring who won in the states as well as how candidates' battleground strategies might contextualize wins and losses.[67]

How the Electoral College Shapes Winning and Losing

The Electoral College makes salient voters' status of winners or losers probably more so than other electoral systems do, due to its two-level design (candidates have to win states to win the general election) and the fact that most states employ a winner-take-all system of awarding their EC votes. This has a number of consequences for voters. First, since Americans do not vote for their presidents directly, there are two election outcomes: 1) an outcome at the state level, which decides who wins a state's slate of electors and 2) an outcome at the national level, which decides who wins the general election.

In theory, this system is quite responsive to even minor ideological changes within state electorate. Namely, a state can award all its electoral votes to one party's candidate one election and the other party's candidate the next, thereby potentially contributing to a shift in executive power. For voters this implies that, if one is on the losing side in one election, there is a distinct possibility that one will be a winner in the next. However, this only applies to states that have ideologically split electorates. If an overwhelming majority of voters in a safe state tends to vote Republican or Democrat, it

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[67] A few studies have looked at the effects of congressional election outcomes during presidential election years but find no additive effect from supporting a winning or losing congressional candidate (Clarke and Acock 1989; Anderson and LoTempio 2002).

is unlikely that enough voters will change their political views between elections to swing the state to the other party.[68]

Related to this point, states with ideologically homogenous electorates produce permanent state-level winners and losers in presidential elections. For instance, Democrats in predominantly Republican voting states, such as Texas or Idaho, are unlikely to ever see their preferred candidates win their home states. While this might not matter for voters whose candidates win the general election, it is possible that national losers become even more aware of their status if their candidates not only lose their state but also the national election. In other words, a national loss makes salient one's minority status at the state level.

In addition, scholars have found that losers are more willing to accept the outcome and support the democratic process if they perceive the election process as fair (Craig et al. 2006). Arguably, elections are fairer when there is a possibility that the other party wins the next election or, in other words, when the system allows for taking-turns (Guinier 1994). Clearly this is not the case in safe states, at least not in the state-level presidential election.

Election Outcomes and Battleground Strategies

Besides creating four types of winners and losers, the EC also has important consequences for candidate behavior. Candidates' battleground strategies send the

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[68] Even if candidates decide to persuade or mobilize voters in safe states, they are unlikely able to substantially change the composition of the electorate. Thus candidates almost entirely refrain from voter outreach in safe states.

unambiguous message to the American public that candidates care more about certain citizens' votes and, consequently, will do much more to win these votes. If battleground voters internalize this message – that their vote and the overall outcome of their state matters (more) – this might lead to a greater psychological or emotional attachment to the outcome of the vote. This begs the question: How does geographic targeting affect voters' interpretations of the election outcome?[69]

To address this question, I turn to research in psychology on the effects of winning and losing. Whether in sports, family games, or politics, competition inevitably leads to winners and losers. But, people do not like to lose. Research in sports, social, and political psychology finds losers, broadly defined, to be angrier (Wilson and Kerr 1999), more depressed (McAuley, Russell, and Gross 1983), and more anxious (MacKuen, Neuman, and Marcus 2000). Anderson et al. (2005) propose three distinct theoretical explanations for how this negative experience in democratic elections can translate into more negative evaluations of the legitimacy of the political process: utility maximization, emotional responses, and cognitive consistency (23).

The utilitarian perspective holds that people prefer winning to losing because with winning come tangible benefits (i.e. policies that advance winners' preferences). As a result, winners have more positive attitudes toward government (Anderson et al. 2005; Kahneman 1994). Losers, on the other hand, "have nothing and gain nothing unless they

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[69] This also suggests that in the battleground states the relationship between winning/losing and attitudes toward government is mediated by political interest or a concern for the outcome. I will come back to this later.

continue to try to bring about new political situations" (Riker 1983: 62, quoted in Anderson et al. 2005: 24). Of particular importance here, losers' views of government are more cynical because of a lower expected utility. While Anderson and his colleagues do not provide a direct test of this theoretical model, the current study can shed light on its validity. Namely, if voters' expected utility is the main mechanism behind the positive (negative) effects of a win (loss), a symbolic win at the state level should not have any additive effect, since this win does not bring with it any of the tangible benefits discussed above.

The second theoretical model points to emotions as the underlying mechanism: Losers experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and anger, which leads them to more negatively evaluate the political process, e.g. how responsive it is to their needs. In building this model, Anderson et al. (2005) rely heavily on research from other areas in psychology, since political psychologists have not yet systematically tested the role of emotions in shaping legitimacy orientations or citizens' reactions to election outcomes. However, I believe this model to be particularly helpful when theorizing about the moderating effects of living in a battleground state on the relationship between winning/losing and attitudes toward government. As previous studies show, (some) battleground voters are more interested in the election as a result of the disproportionate amount of campaign attention they receive (Gimpel et al. 2007; also see chapter 3). Much of this campaign material is unequivocally meant to arouse people's emotions, e.g. negative advertising or candidate rhetoric during public rallies. Thus, living in a

battleground state could potentially make people more emotionally invested in the election outcome, leading to stronger reactions to a win or a loss.

The final model draws on theories of cognitive consistency and cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), which suggest that losers update their attitudes toward government to match it with the undesired outcome. Voters participate in elections in part out of a belief that government is responsive to their needs and that the act of voting can result in the election of one's preferred candidate (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Campbell 1964; Rosenstone and Hansen 1992; Schaffer 1981). However, post-election, losers are in the undesirable position of having fewer reasons to expect government to be responsive to their preferences, which leads to a state of cognitive dissonance. To remedy this, they align their attitudes toward government with these new expectations, resulting in lower levels of system support (Anderson and LoTempio 2002).

While these lower expectations are understandable, according to this model, losers update their attitudes *before* elected officials have done anything on which they can be judged. In fact, there is evidence of a similar, perhaps somewhat irrational attitude change among losers: post-election, losers evaluate the winning candidate more positively and their own losing candidate more negatively compared to pre-election (Beasley and Joslyn 2001). Applying this logic to the current study, if one's candidate wins the state, cognitive dissonance might not be as acute as when one's candidate loses at both levels. In other words, a state-level win can help resolve (some of) the potentially uncomfortable feelings resulting from a national loss.

An adequate test of this last model requires information on pre-election attitudes, because these are indicators of whether voters might experience cognitive dissonance. If most voters possess relatively high levels of efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, and political trust pre-election, there is reason to believe that losers do indeed experience dissonance after the election. If, on the other hand, they are already relatively skeptical of the political process, being on the losing side might not be as uncomfortable as I have suggested and might merely reinforce some of these previously held attitudes. Unfortunately, the NES surveys lack pre-election measures of most if not all legitimacy attitudes under study here.

Legitimacy Orientations

To test attitude disparities between winners and losers, I focus on four legitimacy orientations: perceptions of electoral fairness, satisfaction with democracy, political efficacy, and political trust (Weatherford 1992). Since I expect the direction of Electoral College effects to be the same for all attitudes, I develop one set of general hypotheses that applies to all four attitudes. Running the risk of being repetitive since there is considerable overlap with Chapter 3, I will briefly define these four attitudes.

Electoral Fairness: Perceptions of electoral fairness can be described as citizens' views that democratic procedures, of which elections are arguably the most important, are fair in the sense that everyone has an equal say in the process (Weatherford 1992). These are related to perceptions of procedural fairness.

Satisfaction with Democracy: Satisfaction with democracy has been studied as a second indicator of voters' confidence in the legitimacy of their government (e.g. Anderson et al. 2005). To measure this attitude respondents are asked how well democracy works in the United States, thus not capturing support for the general theory of democracy, but rather the performance of the American system of government (Anderson et al.: 41).

Political Efficacy: Defined as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process" (Campell, Gurin, and Miller 1954), political efficacy has traditionally been considered a precursor to political action (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Schaffer 1981). In other words, higher levels of political efficacy translate into higher levels of political participation. However, the alternative causal direction is now also well established in that political participation can affect levels of political efficacy (Clarke and Acock 1989; Finkel 1985; but see Finkel 1987).

In this study, I focus on external efficacy, which is defined as "the perception that government institutions and elites are responsive to one's attempts to exert political influence" (Clarke and Acock 1989: 552). Political efficacy is generally considered important to the stability of a political system. High levels of political efficacy indicate citizens' satisfaction with the system and less willingness to advocate for (radical) changes in the political system. As Finkel (1985) states, "The specific effect of participation on 'external' efficacy (…) has important system-level consequences, as

electoral and campaign acts influence the distribution of support for the regime or regime norms" (891).

Political Trust: Finally, political trust has been defined as "a basic evaluative or affective orientation toward government" (Miller 1974) or, a bit more specifically, "a general orientation toward the government predicated on people's normative expectations of government operations" (Hetherington and Globetti 2002). Political trust has been on the decline since the mid-1960s – a worrisome trend, according to many political scientists (e.g. Hetherington 1998, 1999; Alford 2001; but Citrin and Green 1986). While no direct link has been established between the decline of trust and lower levels of voter turnout in the sense that distrust depresses political participation, Hetherington (1999) shows that trust does affect vote choice: less trusting citizens are more likely to support nonincumbent candidates as well as third party candidates. This suggests that distrust can lead citizens to advocate for a break with the status quo rather than withdrawal from politics altogether, as we might intuitively expect. If we find lower levels of trust among losers, this could suggest why they are more likely to support institutional reform (Bowler and Donovan 2007).

Hypotheses

How should we expect winning and losing at both levels as well as a state's campaign context to affect levels of efficacy, trust, electoral fairness, and satisfaction with democracy? Studies of electoral participation and citizens' levels of external

efficacy find the former has positive effects on levels of external efficacy (Bowler and Donovan 2002; Clarke and Acock 1989; Finkel 1985, 1987).

However, few studies have examined how multiple election outcomes concurrently affect citizens' attitudes toward politics. Clarke and Acock (1989) find that a stated pre-election preference for the winning candidate positively affects post-election levels of efficacy, but this is true for presidential elections only, not for congressional elections (but see Bowler and Donovan 2002). They explain this phenomenon by arguing that virtually all people learn the presidential outcome whereas a considerable number of people remain unknowing of congressional outcomes. Anderson and LoTempio (2002) find a similar pattern for political trust, where presidential election outcomes but not congressional outcomes shape citizens' trust in government – at least, during a presidential election year. Blais and Gélineau (2007), on the other hand, show that in a parliamentary system winning or losing at the local level does matter for citizens' satisfaction with democracy, although only under certain conditions: Only "full losers" (losers at the federal and the local level) are significantly less satisfied with democracy after the election. All other voters, who won on at least one level, are equally satisfied.

It is unclear whether Blais and Gélineau's findings, which are particular to the Canadian parliamentary system, extend to the American context. To invoke the utilitarian model, winning at the local level in Canada has real representational consequences, while a victory at the state level but not the national level in America's presidential elections is largely symbolic and does not result in any real political power. On the other hand,

anecdotal evidence suggests that seeing one's preferred candidate win one's state does matter. For instance, it was not uncommon in 2004 to hear Kerry voters in Minnesota say: "At least he won Minnesota." It is plausible that losers take comfort in the fact that their state's outcome is consistent with their preferences and that they are surrounded by people who made the same choice. If such comments are indicative of a more widespread feeling among voters, winning or losing at the state level should make a difference.

Thus, I expect both state and national outcomes of presidential elections to matter for citizens' legitimacy orientations. In general, winners should be more positive since voting for the winning candidate can be interpreted as a sign that the political system is responsive to one's preferences, that the process is fair and works well, and that one can trust (newly elected) public officials (Anderson and Tverdova 2001; Clarke and Acock 1989). (*H1: National winners exhibit more positive attitudes toward government than national losers.)*

Next, I expect voting for the winner of the national election negates any potentially negative effects of a loss in one's home state. Whereas a victory at the state level might be of symbolic import to national losers, national winners, whose candidate will be in the White House for the next four years, should care considerably less about this outcome. In other words, national winners should exhibit high levels of efficacy, trust, satisfaction, and electoral fairness regardless of whether their preferred candidate won their state. Similarly, I expect national winners to score high on all these indicators

regardless of their geographic location. (*H2: National winners exhibit equally positive attitudes toward government regardless of state outcome and campaign context.)*

Conversely, I expect the state outcome to matter for national losers. I expect cynicism to be highest among citizens who are 'double losers,' i.e. citizens who voted for the candidate who lost both the national and their state's election. On the other hand, the negative effects of voting for the losing candidate of the national election should be more modest if one's candidate at least won the state. (*H3: State winners/national losers exhibit more positive attitudes toward government than state losers/national losers.)*

Living in a battleground state adds extra meaning to one's vote. Unlike voters in safe states, voters in battleground states often do not know until election night whether their states' electoral votes will go to the Republican or Democratic candidate. And, as I discussed above, candidates from both parties have vied over their votes for months. If one's candidate then wins the statewide election this could make someone particularly efficacious and positive toward politics. Conceivably, voters will believe they have the ability to influence politics more so than their counterparts in safe states and, similarly, that the system is more responsive to their attempts to influence politics. (*H4: State winners/national losers in battleground states exhibit more positive attitudes toward government than state winners/national losers in safe state.)*

I am more ambiguous as to how we should expect geographic location to matter for double losers. On the one hand, these voters might exhibit the lowest levels of efficacy, trust, etc., when living in a battleground state. With excessive campaign and

media attention focused on their state, voters who learn their preferred candidate lost both the national election *and* their state could be disappointed in the political process and evaluate their role as political agents more negatively, hence exhibit more cynical attitudes. In this case, the election outcome causes lower levels of system support.

On the other hand, living in a battleground state implies there is a real chance that one day one will win, thereby creating a fairer electoral environment (Guinier 1994). And, in view of the positive effects of exposure to direct democracy on external efficacy (Bowler and Donovan 2002)[70] and Gimpel et al.'s (2007) logic that campaigns are "tools of democracy," living in a battleground state might be a relatively positive experience for all voters, regardless of the election outcome. This leads to two additional hypotheses. The first focuses on the election outcome as the causal mechanism; the second assigns more importance to battleground status. (*H5a: Double losers in battleground states exhibit more negative attitudes toward government than double losers in safe state. H5b: Double losers in battleground states exhibit more positive attitudes toward government than double losers in safe states.*).

Data and Method

To test my hypotheses I turn to NES data from the period 1992-2004. Using survey data from four consecutive election years allows me to test my hypotheses in years in which a Republican candidate was victorious (2000 and 2004) as well as years in which a Democratic candidate won executive office (1992 and 1996). Nonetheless, these

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[70] See Nadeau et al. (2000) for a similar argument.

elections were very different from one another in other respects as well. For instance, in 1996 President Clinton was the presumptive winner before the campaign had begun. Election years 1992, 2000, and 2004, on the other hand, were close elections, each with a popular vote margin of less than 6%. This difference is important for this study in a couple of ways. First, in close elections, emotions run high as we witnessed in 2004. Arguably, this could lead to stronger reactions to the election outcome, among both winners and losers. Second, close elections lead to more intense targeting of voters in efforts to mobilize and persuade key geographic constituencies. More visits and more campaign ads place even greater emphasis on voters' role in the electoral process.

As I noted above, the 2000 election highlighted the crucial role states play in the election outcome and that winning a couple of thousand votes, as long as these voters live in the right location, can tip the election outcome in one's favor. As a consequence, 2004 saw even more intense battleground strategies, most notably in the state of Ohio, which received 12 presidential candidate visits in 2000 and 34 visits in 2004. As such, I expect the hypothesized relationships between the election outcome and legitimacy attitudes to be strongest in 1992, 2000, and particularly 2004.[71]

I construct a multivariate model, which controls for a number of demographic and socio-economic variables as well as state-level variables. Included in the sample are

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[71] 2000 provides another unique situation, since the outcome of the national election was not decided until the Supreme Court decision of December 12 and some NES respondents were interviewed before this date. Still, Bush was expected to win and all state outcomes except for Florida were known immediately after the election.

respondents who indicated that they voted in the presidential election.[72] These respondents where categorized according to national and state outcome. First, respondents were divided into two groups – national winners and national losers – which were then further separated according to the outcome at the state level. This resulted in four categories: state winners/national winners (WW), state losers/national winners (LW), state winners/national losers (WL), and state losers/national losers (LL). In figures and tables, I sometimes use the abbreviations, where the first letter refers to the status of a voter at the state level and the second letter to the national level.

The dependent variables are perceptions of electoral fairness, satisfaction with democracy, political efficacy, and political trust. Electoral fairness is measured with the question "In some countries, people believe their elections are conducted fairly. In other countries, people believe that their elections are conducted unfairly. Thinking of the presidential election we've just had, do you believe it was very fair, somewhat fair, neither fair nor unfair, somewhat unfair, or very unfair? Satisfaction with democracy was measured with "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States?" While these two questions were not asked in 1992, all four surveys ask a series of questions that tap into political efficacy and trust. Respondents' political trust is gauged with the following question: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time, or only some of the

[72] There is the generally recognized problem over people overreporting voting. This results in a sample of voters which is unrealistically large compared to the non-voter sample.

time?" I recoded these variables to range from 0 to 100 with higher values indication more positive attitudes.

I constructed an external efficacy scale based on two questions: "People like me have no say over what government does" and "Public officials care what people like me think." I added respondents' scores on these measures and then dividing the sum (r=.51, the highest among any combination of efficacy questions). Like the other dependent variables, this composite measure ranges from 0 (low external efficacy) to 100 (high external efficacy) and has been used in a variety of scholarly work on political efficacy (e.g. Bowler and Donovan 2002; Soss 1999).

I use the 5-point battleground measure I proposed in Chapter 2 to analyze the effect of the campaign context (see Appendix F for a list of all states for all years).

Individual level controls in the multivariate models include income and education and dummy variables for gender, race (non-white), gender (male), age (younger than 25), and partisanship (Republican).[73] I also included a dummy variable to capture whether a respondent was a Perot supporter in 1992 or 1996. These voters were arguably more disillusioned with the political process than major-party supporters, hence their choice for the third-party candidate.

State-level controls include the number of electoral votes to account for a state's size, a state's median income, and political culture. The latter is an ordinal measure ranging from 0 to 8 that distinguishes between moralistic (at the lower end) and

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[73] Not all control variables could be included in the final model due to the low number of cases in some groups. However, including or excluding controls these controls never changed the overall results.

traditionalist state cultures (at the higher end) with individualistic state culture in the center (Elazar 1966, 1994; Sharkansky 1969; see Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of this measure).

I use ordinary least squares regression to obtain estimates. Since voters are nested within states and thus experience the same campaign information, this could lead to a violation of the regression assumption of independence of errors, which in turn could lead to an underestimation of standard errors. To correct for this I cluster the errors by state and year.[74]

Results: State and National Outcome Effects on Attitudes toward Government

First, a bivariate analysis of winners and losers shows that, on most measures, national losers express (significantly) less positive attitudes than winners (see Appendix B). This finding is not surprising and consistent with earlier findings (e.g. Clarke and Acock 1989; Anderson et al. 2005; Craig et al. 2006). Figures 1 through 6 in Appendix C present mean levels of electoral fairness, satisfaction with democracy, efficacy, and political trust. Leaving a more detailed discussion for the results from the multivariate model, I briefly discuss the three most important conclusions we can draw from this visual inspection of the data.

First, winning the state matters for national losers. Whereas earlier research found that congressional outcomes have no effect on voters' attitudes in addition to the effects

[74] A multilevel model would be an even more appropriate estimation technique since voters are nested in states. I estimated such a model as well and the results as presented here hold. Hence, I only present OLS regression results.

of the presidential election outcome (Anderson and LaTempio 2002; Clarke and Acock 1989), for most orientations toward government it seems to matter whether one's preferred presidential candidate won the state. These voters exhibit higher levels of political efficacy and are more satisfied with democracy in all election years included in the study. A similar pattern holds for voters' perceptions of electoral fairness, with the exception of 2000. The results are more ambiguous for political trust.

Second, national winners' attitudes do not show a clear pattern with regard to winning or losing at the state level. On most measures in most years, the differences between the two groups are small and none reach statistical significance. In short, if one's candidate is elected to the White House, little else matters.

Third, the hypothesized patterns are most pronounced in 2004, when national losers as a whole expressed much more negative attitudes toward government than national winners. This is not terribly surprising given the previous election, which turned into a bitter fight between the two major party candidates and left many Gore voters disillusioned. The fact that many of these voters lost again in 2004 probably reinforced these feelings.

A more rigorous test of my hypotheses, I ran the multivariate model discussed above. To test the relative impact of winning or losing at the national and state level, I created three dummy variables with double winners as the reference category. A first dummy variable (LW) separates state losers/national winners (coded 1) from everyone else (coded 0). A second dummy variable (WL) identifies state winners/national losers

(1) and all others (0). And a third dummy variable (LL) distinguishes double losers (1) from all other voters (0). For my hypotheses to be confirmed the coefficient for the first dummy variable (LW) should be indistinguishable from zero. The coefficients of the second and third dummy variables (WL and LL) should be negative and significant with the third being larger than the second.

TABLES 4.1 AND 4.2 HERE

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the multivariate results, with Table 1 showing the full model whereas Table 4.2 only shows the coefficients for the variables of interest. These tables also include the results obtained after inclusion of the interaction terms, which I discuss below. Models without interaction terms are shaded gray.

Results for political efficacy are most in line with my expectations. The winner/loser coefficients indicate that the election outcome at the state level matters for voters' levels of efficacy. Compared to national winners, state winners/national losers and double losers feel significantly less efficacious: the coefficients are in the expected direction and statistically significant. Double winners being the reference group, the coefficient for double losers is over twice as large as the coefficient for state winners/national losers, indicating that losing at both levels indeed depresses one's external efficacy more so than when one only loses at the national level.

Holding all other variables constant at zero, double losers' levels of external efficacy are over five points lower than those of double winners. By comparison, efficacy levels of national losers but state winners are two points lower. This difference of three

percentage points is also statistically different at $p<.05$. As I expected, state losers/national winners are no different from double winners. Among these voters, the fact that their preferred candidate lost their state does not significantly suppress levels of political efficacy. In sum, while previous research had already established that voters who lost the general election expressed more cynical attitudes, I find that state-level outcomes in presidential elections also play a role in the relationship between winning/losing and political efficacy.[75]

The findings for the other three orientations are less straightforward (Models 3, 5, and 7 in Table 4.2). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the gap between winners and losers is largest in regard to their perceptions of electoral fairness but contrary to expectations, state losers/national losers are no more likely than state winners/national losers to say that the election was unfair.[76] In other words, seeing one's preferred candidate lose at the national level leads voters to be much more skeptical of the electoral process but this belief is not reinforced by an additional state-level loss. This model also explains most variance in the dependent variable (19%). Excluding the winner/loser dummies leads to a drop of 6% of explained variance which suggests 1) the outcome significantly shapes this attitude and 2) this pattern was not already present pre-election.

[75] Among the control variables, race, partisanship, and education predict levels of external efficacy. All coefficients are in the expected direction: lower educated and lower income voters are all less likely to believe that government is responsive to their needs. Republican identifiers are on average more efficacious, as the analysis of mean levels of efficacy suggested.

[76] Overall, voters have highly positive opinions of the election that was just held and overall believe the election was at least somewhat fair.

The coefficient for the WL dummy in model 5 (Satisfaction with Democracy) is in the expected direction and smaller than the LL dummy coefficient, although this difference is not statistically significant. Nonetheless, of all voters, double losers are least satisfied with democracy immediately after the election. Finally, national losers are less trusting but I do not find the expected difference between state winners and state losers. Instead, the results indicate that state losers/national winners are even more trusting than double winners after the election. These voters might be particularly happy with the fact that their preferred presidential candidate won since their state went to the opposing candidate and this might lead them to put more trust in the federal government. However, not knowing pre-election levels of political trust, it is difficult to gauge the precise reason behind this finding.

In sum, the hypotheses hold up most consistently for external efficacy and are only partially supported for the other attitudes. How can we explain this? Recall that a combination of two questions measures external efficacy: “People like me have no say over what government does” and “Public officials care what people like me think.” When I ran separate models on these questions, they produced similar patterns: Double losers are most pessimistic about their role in government *and* about government’s responsiveness to their needs. Intriguingly, they appear to negatively reevaluate their own role in government but are not more likely to blame the system for being untrustworthy or unfair. Since external efficacy is an important precursor to political behavior, this is a

worrisome finding that is suggestive of political withdrawal by these voters. Future research employing panel data should test this proposition.

Results: Battleground Effects on Attitudes toward Government

I argued that living in a battleground state, which is characterized by a competitive election and, as a result, intense campaigning on the part of major-party candidates, has the potential to produce extremely sore losers and equally happy winners. I hypothesized that citizens in battleground states who lost at the national level but won the state are more positive about politics than their counterparts in safe states. Models 2 (Table 4.1), 4, 6, and 8 (Table 4.2) test the hypotheses regarding the role of one's state's battleground status in the interpretation of the election outcome. As such, they include interaction terms between the battleground measure and the winner/loser dummies. The coefficients for *WL*battleground* are statistically significant for political efficacy, electoral fairness, and political trust.[77]

FIGURES 4.1 AND 4.2 HERE

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show battleground status' conditioning effect on political efficacy and electoral fairness. Keep in mind that these figures include only national losers to better illustrate the interaction effect. Looking at the left side of the figures first, we see that double losers feel similarly inefficacious and unconfident in the election's fairness, regardless of the type of state they live in. This is not the case for state winners, on the right side of the figure. Living in a battleground state conditions their

[77] I also ran analyses without the interaction term *WW*battleground* and analyses that only included the *WL*battleground* interaction term. The findings do not change significantly or substantively.

interpretation of the election outcome and gives these voters a positive boost that is non-existent for double losers. Apparently, a state-level victory by one's preferred candidate takes on extra meaning in a battleground state. For example, everything else equal, Kerry voters in Pennsylvania, a battleground state in 2004, had higher levels of efficacy and viewed the election as fairer after the election than their counterparts in North or South Dakota.

While the first set of results already showed that a state-level win in presidential elections matters, these findings refine this picture by adding that state-level wins in battleground states are received differently than a similar outcome in safe states.

It is possible that battleground status does not cause these effects but that other lower-level election outcomes make these voters more optimistic. State winners might have voted for candidates for Congress or state government who did win and this is causing them to be more optimistic about the election and government's responsiveness. While this is a real possibility, previous work found no additional effects of congressional outcomes on citizens' attitudes toward government (Anderson and LoTempio 2002), although these authors only analyzed trust in government. And, if this is the reason why we see more positive attitudes among this group of voters, we should also see those among the double losers whose preferred lower-level candidates won but we do not. Regardless, this discussion suggests that conceptualizing winning and losing in the American political system is not as straightforward as it seems and is in need of further theorizing.

The finding that state-level victories matter for national losers, particularly in battleground states, undermines the utilitarian model, discussed earlier in this chapter. Recall that this model posits that attitude change is a result of expected utility. Since losers' expected utility from government is lower than winners', their attitudes toward government are more negative. However, the crucial point is that state-level wins should have no effect on voters' expected utility since these wins are merely symbolic and do not lead to any real representation (or utility). More likely is that a state-level win in battleground states is meaningful because of voters' emotional attachment to in the outcome. Battleground state citizens have been reminded over and over again that their vote matters and campaign material appeals to the emotions of voters. I tested this proposition by constructing a model to test whether political interest mediates the relationship between winning/losing and attitudes toward government, moderated by a state's battleground status.[78]

Discussion

The pooled data potentially cover up election-specific patterns. The table that depicts the mean levels of efficacy for the separate election years showed that the differences between winners and losers were largest in 2004. The explanation I gave for this was the following: Voters went into the 2004 election with experiences from 2000 on their minds – an election that left many people, losers in particularly, frustrated with the democratic process. Being on the losing side again, in another very competitive election,

[78] See Appendix E for a detailed discussion of this test.

further depressed losers' faith in government. In other words, the Electoral College's role in shaping interpretations of the election outcome might not matter to the same degree in every election, but particularly in close elections, or elections with high stakes.

To test this proposition, I ran separate models for each election year between 1992 and 2004. The results are presented in Appendix D. Although not uniformly, they confirm that there are expected differences between the four election years. Whereas the finding for external efficacy hold up for all years, the difference between state winners/national losers and double losers is largest in 2004, which almost reaches conventional levels of significance (p=.1, two-tailed). In other words, double losers are most pessimistic about government's responsiveness after a closely contested campaign that followed one of the most controversial presidential elections in history. In fact, many of the same voters were on the losing side (assuming that most Gore voters also voted for Kerry) and this fact is likely to have only reinforced feelings of inefficacy. This is also the year that battleground status has the largest moderating effect on those voters whose candidate lost the general election but won their state. This makes sense in light of the fact that both candidates' strategies were even geographically narrower than they had been in previous years (Shaw 2006).

A similar pattern is revealed for political trust in 2004 with double losers being the least trustful group of voters. All losers in 2004 are significantly less satisfied with democracy than winners but there is no difference between the two types of losers. The other years show a less consistent pattern. Finally, compared to other voters, double

losers are most distrustful of the fairness of the electoral process in 1996 and 2004. Interestingly, the interaction between battleground status and state winner/national losers is largest in 2000. When living in a safe state, voters in this position score about 23 percentage points lower on the electoral fairness scale than double winners. But this negative effect is negated almost completely when these voters live in a battleground state. Election 2000 was a very contentious election and living in a battleground state that was won by one's candidate apparently redeemed some of the negative effects this election had on losers. In short, these year-by-year findings suggest that the hypothesized relationships between winning and losing and legitimacy attitudes vary somewhat predictably by year. Most importantly, many effects are most pronounced in 2004.

These findings take on extra importance in light of a growing concern for the decreasing support for democracy in industrialized countries (Dalton 2004). Low levels of support undermine the system and can lead to calls for institutional reform. The worry is that at some time we will reach the tipping point that will lead to a serious call for reform, which could lead to political instability (however, this reasoning assumes that stability is better but maybe at some point the situation becomes untenable for a sizeable minority and reform is better). Knowing trends and their causes and consequences can help us understand when such calls might become more forceful. I believe the danger lies in brushing these studies aside as substantively unimportant, rather than in giving them too much careful consideration.

Moreover, they can help us understand elected officials' abilities to govern. If presidential candidates want to succeed, they need to engage in ever more 'extreme' battleground strategies (visiting three or more states within one day and spending astronomical dollar amounts in the prime battleground states) but this could make it increasingly more difficult to govern. Winning elections requires different coalitions of states than being successful in getting legislation through Congress. My research suggests that a majority of voters in these states is more pessimistic, potentially complicating presidential efforts to enact campaign promises even more.

From this study, it is difficult to ascertain what aspect of battleground status is the mechanism: the closeness of the election, which might lead citizens to believe they can influence the outcome (but see Wilking 2007); the fact that battleground states offer a level playing field for both candidates (both candidates have a real shot at winning the state, which is not true of the safe states), which voters might conclude is fairer and in turn can lead to more positive attitudes toward government (Craig et al. 2006); or candidate and media behavior that emphasizes the importance of one's vote. If the first were true, we should see similarly positive battleground effects among double losers, which we do not. Moreover, while it is impossible to separate out closeness of election and campaign activity because the two are so closely related (candidates target the states that are expected to have a close election outcome), I also ran models that substituted the battleground measure for a variables capturing the margin of victory in a state. These variables did not perform as well as the battleground measure suggesting that electoral

closeness alone is not the driving factor. The same is true for the second possibility, although battleground states also bring with them a host of negative news stories that highlight the unfairness of the electoral process, e.g. voter fraud, malfunctioning voter machines, etc. These could be a bigger concern for double losers, which could adversely affect their feelings of efficacy, but my findings do not support this explanation. Finally, if battleground citizens attach greater importance to their votes, a loss here might loom larger than a loss in a safe state, which is consistent with my findings.

An unfortunate limitation of this study is that these patterns could have been present prior to the election. I find this unlikely since these results hold for a period in which Democratic as well as Republican candidates won. Moreover, these groups of voters originate from different states, with moderate, conservative, and liberal traditions, making it unlikely that these results are a result of local politics alone. In future research, scholars should replicate these findings using surveys that measure both pre and post-election levels of efficacy. However, studies that do control for pre-election attitudes still find election effects (e.g. Anderson and LoTempio 2002), suggesting that there is merit to the findings reported here.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I examined how the Electoral College shapes voters' interpretations of the election outcome. In particular, I analyzed whether winners and losers think differently about politics depending on the success of their preferred candidates at the state level as well as their geographic location. First, I compared groups

of voters based on their dual status of winners and/or losers at the state and national level. I found some support for my hypotheses, with double losers being the most cynical on two out of the four legitimacy attitudes (external efficacy and satisfaction with democracy). Second, I considered national losers in different types of campaign environments, i.e. safe, leaning, and battleground states. The evidence more overwhelmingly supported my hypotheses: on three out of the four attitudes, the campaign environment contextualizes the outcome for national losers but state winners. In all three instances, they are most exhibited the most positive attitudes in the battleground states.

As such, I added two aspects of presidential elections to the study of winners, losers, and attitudes toward government: the outcome at the state level and the campaign environment that precedes the election. The analyses and results presented here indicate that both are valuable additions to our understanding of how election outcomes affect citizens' feelings of efficacy. Winning at the state level matters, but only for voters whose candidate lost the general election. Living in a battleground state further attenuates the negative effects of being a national loser. A more pessimistic viewpoint tells that double losers are least efficacious regardless of their location. Still, living in a safe or battleground state does not further depress their feelings of efficacy or confidence in the electoral process.

Thus, I again find that the Electoral College shapes American politics in meaningful ways. The rules of the game not only determine political outcomes, but also

how citizens interpret these outcomes. "Studying winners and losers thus provides theoretical leverage for understanding the behaviors and attitudes of individuals, but also provides insight into the resilience and fragility of the political system as a whole" (Anderson et al. 2005: 7), although the question remains whether these effects are sustained over time. This is the next step in this research project but there is reason to believe that they do, based on evidence is from European countries (Anderson et al. 2005).

If battleground status rotates and different states are battleground states during each election cycle, the differences between the states will shift and there is little reason for concern. Similarly, in non-close presidential elections, battleground states' importance is smaller and battleground effects might not exist. However, the last couple of presidential elections have been very close and some states were consistently battlegrounds while other states have been considered 'safe' for just as long.

Table 4.1. Political Efficacy post-Presidential Elections, 1992-2004.

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2
	b/se	b/se
State loser/national winner (LW)	0.96	1.19
	(1.23)	(1.63)
State winner/national loser (WL)	-2.18+	-4.89**
	(1.14)	(1.58)
State loser/national loser (LL)	-5.35**	-5.98**
	(1.09)	(1.67)
Battleground status	-0.05	-0.536
	(0.35)	(0.403)
*LW*battleground status*		-0.15
		(0.81)
*WL*battleground status*		1.75*
		(0.85)
*LL*battleground status*		0.37
		(0.63)
Age (<25)	1.36	1.36
	(1.73)	(1.72)
Gender (female)	0.28	0.29
	(0.77)	(0.77)
Race (non-white)	-2.21	-2.13
	(1.46)	(1.48)
Education	3.51**	3.51**
	(0.29)	(0.29)
Income	0.32**	0.32**
	(0.09)	(0.09)
Party ID (Republican)	1.46+	1.68*
	(0.78)	(0.81)
Perot voter	-2.08	-2.09
	(1.65)	(1.68)
EC votes	-0.03	-0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Political culture	-0.22	-0.15
	(0.20)	(0.21)
State median income	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Competitive senate race	0.27	0.19
	(1.02)	(0.99)
Year=1992	7.39**	7.94**
	(2.28)	(2.25)
Year=1996	-3.54**	-3.30*
	(1.35)	(1.31)
Year=2000	4.12**	4.23**
	(1.45)	(1.42)
Constant	33.89**	32.95**
	(5.66)	(5.72)

Adjusted R-squared	0.09	0.09
N	4253	4253

+ <.10, *<.05; **<.01, two-tailed.
OLS Regression with robust standard errors.
Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors).
DV=External Efficacy, rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating higher levels of efficacy.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004.

Table 4.2. Winner and Loser Effects on legitimacy orientations, with moderating effect of living in a battleground state, 1992/1996-2004.

	Electoral Fairness		Satisfaction with Democracy		Trust inGovernment	
	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
State loser/nat'l winner (LW)	1.01	-1.01	1.65	4.52+	2.57*	2.24
	(1.55)	(2.24)	(1.66)	(2.61)	(1.03)	(1.46)
State winner/nat'l loser (WL)	-15.05**	-20.33**	-2.21	-0.66	-2.13+	-4.22**
	(1.66)	(2.84)	(1.74)	(2.71)	(1.11)	(1.44)
State loser/nat'l loser (LL)	-15.24**	-15.51**	-3.65*	-4.23	-2.06*	-2.27+
	(1.71)	(2.54)	(1.68)	(2.89)	(0.92)	(1.20)
Battleground	0.14	-0.88	-0.47	-0.03	-0.03	-0.32
	(0.48)	(0.59)	(0.35)	(0.68)	(0.21)	(0.37)
*LW*Battleground*		1.35		-1.79+		0.20
		(1.09)		(1.02)		(0.64)
*WL*Battleground*		3.43**		-1.07		1.36*
		(1.30)		(1.11)		(0.65)
*LL*Battleground*		0.22		0.36		0.12
		(1.00)		(1.01)		(0.52)
Constant	61.25**	57.64**	57.55**	54.12**	52.95**	54.12**
	(5.32)	(5.35)	(5.02)	(3.84)	(3.83)	(3.84)
Adjusted R-squared	0.19	0.19	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.04
N	2648	2648	2651	2651	4263	4263

+ <.10, *<.05; **<.01, two-tailed.
OLS Regression with robust standard errors.
Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors).
DVs are rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating more positive attitudes.
Control variables included in the model but not shown here are identical to the ones included in models in table 1.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 (In 1992, 'electoral fairness' and 'satisfaction with democracy' questions were not asked).

Figure 4.1. Interactive Effect of Battleground Status on the Relationship between Winning/Losing at the State Level and External Efficacy, National Losers only, 1992-2004.

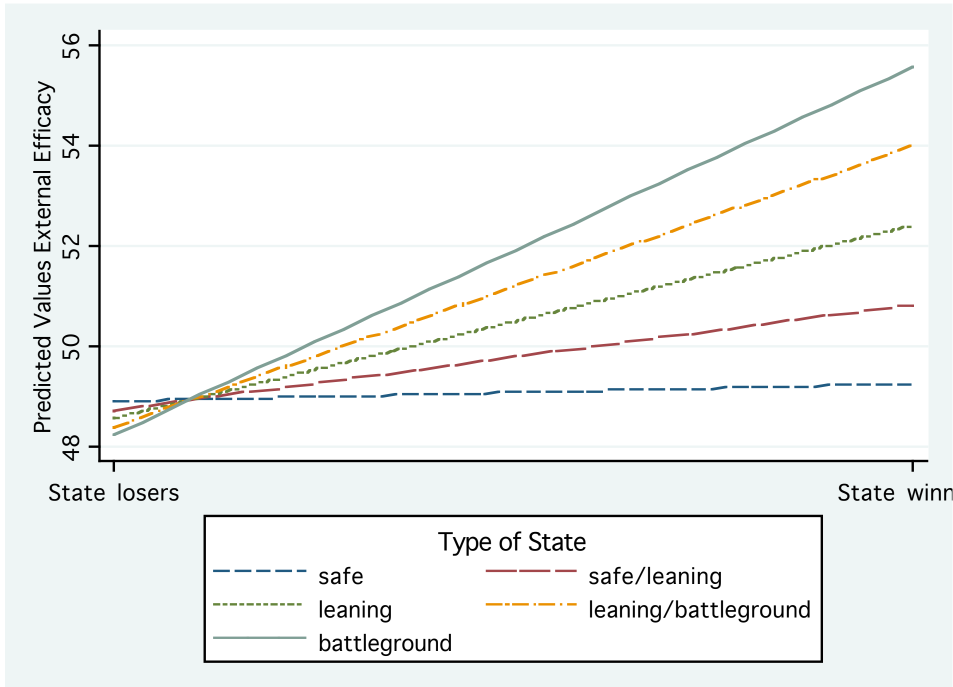
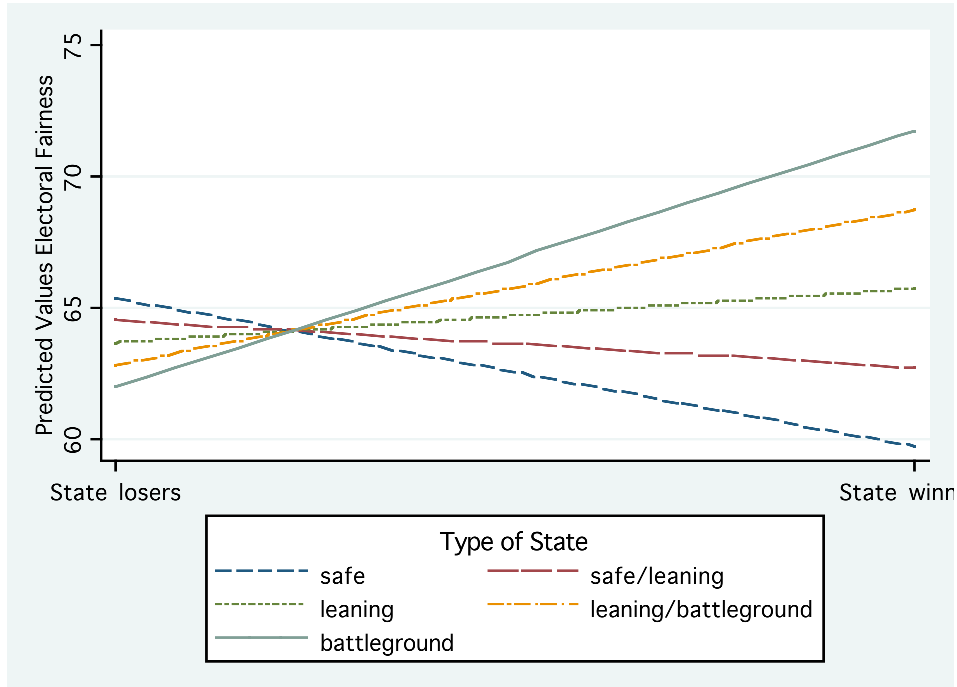


Figure 4.2. Interactive Effect of Battleground Status on the Relationship between Winning/Losing at the State Level and Electoral Fairness, National Losers only, 1992-2004.



CHAPTER 5

FROM THE TRAIL TO THE HILL: BATTLEGROUND EFFECTS ON SENATORS' SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT

Introduction

In the year following the 2004 presidential election, Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL) supported President Bush's policy positions 91% of the time whereas Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) supported President Bush 84% of the time. Besides Crapo's lower level of support for Bush, another difference between these two senators is that Martinez represents a hotly contested presidential battleground state while Crapo hails from a safe state; Idaho gets little to no attention during presidential election campaigns due to its electorate's long-standing Republican voting record. For instance, Martinez's state received 22 campaign visits during Bush' 2004 reelection campaign whereas Crapo's state received zero. Presidential campaign visits provide great opportunities for presidential and congressional candidates to interact and form relationships that can extend beyond Election Day. But, as a result of the Electoral College, not every senator has equal chances to interact with future presidents. This raises the question whether, by way of shaping presidential candidate behavior, the Electoral College shapes senators' post-election support for presidents' policy positions.

If we find evidence for this, there are important implications for our understanding of the role of campaigns in American politics – as shaped by the EC – as well as citizen representation. First, U.S. politics is campaign-centered: election

campaigns are central to the conduct and understanding of American government between elections (e.g. Tenpas 2003). However, there is also a sense that campaigning is detrimental to governance; a presumption that campaigning and governing are negatively related (Ornstein and Mann 2000; Tenpas 1997). While I agree with the underlying premise of this criticism – how presidents campaign affects their ability to govern – I am less pessimistic about the nature of the relationship between campaigning and governing. In fact, Electoral College strategies can positively affects citizens' attitudes about governmental legitimacy, as we have seen in previous chapters, and potentially also be springboards for relations among political elites. On the other hand, a more pessimistic outcome, at least from a presidential perspective, might be that senators from the securely red or blue states are more reluctant to vote with their president.

Second, a majority of states are underrepresented during the campaign period: They receive barely any candidate or media attention. This inequality during the election period has already led to dissatisfaction among public officials with the electoral rules, as proposals like the "National Popular Vote" illustrate.[79] There is evidence that presidents give disproportionate attention to battleground states during the governing period as well (Doherty 2005; Garret and Sobel 2003). This suggests that the quality of citizen representation depends in part on a state's significance under the Electoral College. The study presented here uncovers whether these inequalities also persist through the behavior of representatives in the U.S. Congress.

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[79] Information about this proposal can be found on www.nationalpopularvote.com.

Scholars of executive-legislative relations have largely overlooked campaign effects on such relationships. Herrnson and Morris (2006) observe that "systematic research on either the president's role as congressional campaigner or the benefits that accrue to the president as a result of his campaign activity is still limited" (3). As I discussed in the introductory chapter, this lack of research can be explained by the fact that most scholarship on presidential elections and campaigns has a narrow temporal focus; it tends to ask questions that relate to the campaign period exclusively, treating "the campaign solely as an electoral phenomenon" (Tenpas 1997). Between the party conventions and Election Day, where do presidential candidates go, what television ads are aired where, and what are the effects of these and other campaign events on the voter? While these questions are important, few political scientists have asked: how does a presidential candidate's behavior during the campaign affect his experience in office in terms of building governing coalitions, fulfilling campaign promises, or maintaining public support for his policy positions?

In this chapter, I examine the effects of presidential candidates' Electoral College strategies on U.S. senators' subsequent roll-call voting. I argue that senators who hail from battleground states and share their party idenfication with the president-elect are more supportive of his policy positions following the election. Moreover, this effect should be most pronounced among senators who ran for (re)election themselves – senators who should benefit most from presidential campaign attention. One of the mechanisms I propose to account for this effect is indebtedness (Herrnson and Morris

2006) or, put differently, senators return the favors they enjoyed during the campaign by being more supportive of the president after the campaign. Alternatively, campaigns, and visits in particular, offer opportunities for presidential candidates to build governing coalitions, which then translate into increased senatorial support. I proceed by developing theoretical expectations, largely based on research on presidential campaigning during midterm elections. Next, I describe the data and methods I use to test my hypotheses, followed by a discussion of the results and their substantive import. Finally, I discuss directions for future research.

Theoretical Framework and Expectations

Why should we expect the nature of presidents' (re)election campaigns to shape senators' subsequent voting behavior? In fact, this idea is opposite to what most mainstream theories of legislative behavior predict. Some theories depict legislators as purely forward-looking seekers of reelection (e.g. Mayhew 1974)[80] whereas others exclude presidential influence altogether and view ideology and party as the most important predictors of senatorial votes (e.g. Bond and Fleisher 1990). In sum, these strands of research hold that presidential campaign behavior has little or no effect on subsequent roll-call voting in the U.S. Congress.

Recent studies have begun to investigate the links between campaigning and governance (e.g. Garret and Sobel 2003; Sulkin 2005; Taylor 2007). Sulkin (2005) states that "[w]e know very little about how legislators' experiences as candidates shape their

[80] See Sulkin (2005: 4) for a similar argument.

subsequent activity in office" (3). She develops and finds evidence for a theory of issue-uptake in which winning legislators adopt and pursue the key issues of their challengers' campaigns after the election. While she focuses exclusively on congressional campaigns, her general point is well taken: legislators' behavior in office is shaped by more than party, ideology, or concerns about the next election alone. Instead, campaign features, such as which issues are discussed most frequently, might have longer-term implications for governance and policy-making than previously thought.[81] It is certainly possible presidential Electoral College strategies have similar long-term effects and that it matters for legislative-executive relations where and with whom presidential candidates campaigned. If so, what aspects of these strategies shape these relations?

Being from a presidential battleground can improve the prospects of Senate candidates directly and indirectly. First, when visiting states, presidential candidates often campaign on behalf of fellow party members who are running for a seat in the U.S. Congress, for instance by mentioning them in a speech or attending a fundraiser on their behalf.[82] Having a president campaign for you is not inconsequential. While no one has explicitly studied the effects of presidential campaign visits on congressional candidates'

[81] One could argue that legislators take up their opponents' issues merely because it enhances their chances of success in the next election. Still, this does not negate the general argument that legislators' future behavior is informed by past experiences, even when these past experiences have no apparent relationship to the present. After all, they beat their opponents so there is little reason to continue to care about them or their issues, especially if their constituents do not signal that they desire this.

[82] Anecdotal evidence suggests that senators will try to avoid being seen with the president if his approval ratings are low. While this certainly happens it might not be as common as one might think. Of the four presidential elections under study here, President Bush had the lowest approval ratings in 2004, hovering around 50% (Gallup.com). However, a superficial perusal of his campaign speeches suggests that, on most occasions, senators or members of the House accompanied him.

electoral fortunes during a general election, a handful of studies have investigated such effects during midterm elections (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991; Herrnson and Morris 2005; Jacobson, Kernell, and Lazarus 2004). Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman (1991) find that these visits help same-party senatorial candidates, albeit marginally, by increasing voter turnout as well as campaign contributions. Herrnson and Morris (2005) echo this argument and claim that President Bush's visits during the 2002 midterm elections made a difference for 47 congressional candidates: 90% of House candidates who received a Bush visit won their election as opposed to 49% of those who did not.[83] Similarly, outgoing President Clinton's campaign efforts during the 2000 election turned out favorably for a number of Democratic congressional candidates (Jacobson, Kernell, and Lazarus 2004). In sum, presidential attention seems to have a direct and positive impact on the (re)election efforts of congressional candidates of the president's party (but see Keele, Fogarty, and Stimson 2004).

Second, presidential coattails – the notion that congressional election outcomes are influenced by presidential elections – can indirectly improve the electoral chances of Senate candidates (Campbell and Sumners 1990; Mondak 1990). In other words, if a presidential candidate is able to attract voters in a particular state, this works to the advantage of his party's congressional candidates, who should also receive more votes. The objective of Electoral College strategies is to mobilize and persuade large numbers

[83] The authors present raw numbers and do not control for factors such as presidential popularity in a state or a candidate's electoral viability. However, even if presidents tend to visit congressional candidates who stand a good chance of winning the election regardless of presidential support, the candidates' *perceptions* might still be that they won in part due to this support.

of voters in the battleground states. And with some success: Campaign visits increase voter turnout during the presidential election (Hill and McKee 2005), with the most pronounced mobilization effects being found among partisans (Holbrook and McClurg 2005).[84] Thus, if presidential coattails are at work, this increase in (partisan) voter turnout should prove to be very beneficial to same-party senatorial candidates from presidential battlegrounds, or at the least create this perception among these candidates. Moreover, battleground states receive disproportionate amounts of television advertising, grass root efforts, and local and national media attention (Shaw 1999, 2006), of which senatorial candidates also reap the benefits.

However, the focus of presidential candidate attention is mainly a product of Electoral College strategies drawn up by the campaigns (Shaw 2006), unlike midterm elections, during which presidents campaign in states and districts where congressional candidates face fierce competition and presidential popularity is high (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991; Hoddie and Routh 2004; Herrnson and Morris 2005, 2007b). Electoral College strategies take into account a state's number of electoral votes, past elections' competitiveness, and advertising costs, but hardly factor in which states have competitive congressional races (Brams and Davis 1974; Bartels 1985; Althaus et al. 2002; Shaw 2006).

[84] The findings in Chapter 4 support these findings to the extent that turnout is higher in battleground states with a moralistic political culture. This suggests that future studies of battleground effects on senators' voting behavior should take into account the dominant political culture of each senator's home state.

We might think that presidential candidates are also concerned with the fortunes of their fellow party members and visit states with competitive Senate races in an effort to help these candidates. However, this type of behavior is relatively rare. I find that presidential candidates are primarily concerned with their own prospects and, only if their battleground designation coincides with a competitive state race, will they reach out to these candidates.

TABLE 5.1 HERE

In an analysis shown in Table 5.1, I find large discrepancies between the states presidential candidates identify as battlegrounds and the states that host competitive Senate races (see table 5.1). Of the 63 competitive Senate races that took place in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004, 27 were in states the winning presidential candidate labeled safe - either for his or his opponent's party – and to which he paid little or no attention. In fact, almost half of Senate candidates experiencing a competitive race (31) received zero or only one visit from the winning presidential candidate. On the other hand, sixteen non-competitive Senate races took place in battleground states, thirteen of which received four or more visits. These senatorial candidates were relatively secure of a seat in the U.S. Senate and thus less likely in need of presidential candidate support. However, they resided in a very intense campaign environment, which provided numerous opportunities to interact with the presidential candidates, e.g. by appearing on stage with them. For instance, in 2004 President Bush attended a private fund-raiser in Ohio, which raised $3 million for, among others, Senator George V. Voinovich (R-OH), whose reelection bid

was never in any real danger.[85] The question arises whether these Senate candidates are equally appreciative of presidential candidate attention as candidates are whose race is very close. I return to this point below.

In addition to senators who ran their own races, there are also senators from presidential battleground states whose (re)election bid does not coincide with a presidential election year. In this instance, hailing from a battleground state might not be very advantageous. But these senators might have other considerations when presented the opportunity to interact with their party's presidential candidate. The president is a powerful player in American politics with many sources of influence, as Neustadt (1960) rightfully recognized: prestige, public appeal, and a unique constitutional vantage point, which help the president set the agenda and gain support for policy proposals. Receiving attention from and establishing a relationship with the (future) president of America can thus provide senators access to many valuable resources during and after the campaign season.

If senators from battleground states benefit from an intense presidential campaign environment,[86] we are still left with the question why this would influence their post-election behavior. There are two, not mutually exclusive, possibilities. First, in plain terms, senators who enjoyed benefits during the election season return the favor during the governing period. Herrnson and Morris (2006) call this "the indebtedness

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[85] Mark Niquette, The Columbus Dispatch, "President Stops in Ohio, Plans Bus Tour Today; Bush to discuss plan for second term, according to aides." July 31, 2004.
[86] While some senators might be more ambivalent about their state's status as a battleground than others, it is unlikely that senators detest it.

hypothesis," which states "when a president successfully campaigns for congressional candidates, [they] express their gratitude by becoming more supportive of the president's legislative agenda" (7) – an agenda that the future president has incessantly promoted during the campaign (Hendriks and DeVries 2008).

Psychological theories of reciprocity, a construct related to indebtedness, state it is a strong motivator of behavior. In fact, "in response to friendly actions, people are frequently much nicer and much more cooperative than predicted by the self-interested model" (Fehr and Gächter 2000: 159). If this theory is accurate, we should see the strongest effects among senators who ran their own (re)election campaign since they arguably benefited most from the concentration of presidential campaign events in their states and are thus most likely to return this favor.

The next examples from the 2004 campaign trail illustrate how this relationship of indebtedness might take shape. When likely Democratic nominee John Kerry visited Missouri in late March 2004, state Treasurer Nancy Farmer, the party's favored challenger for U.S. Senator Bond's seat, joined him at both of his public events. Farmer, who had little name recognition among Democrats, made "no secret that she hope[d] that Kerry -- who just set a fund-raising record for a Democratic presidential hopeful – [would] help her attract more attention and money." [87] And when Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) was asked to sit in President Bush's box to listen to the First Lady's speech during the 2004 National Republican Convention, he accepted the invitation even though it

[87] Jo Mannies, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "Candidates Look for Coattails Early On/Teaming Up Can Hurt As Well As Help, Observers Say." April 5, 2004.

meant forgoing his own reelection campaign event scheduled that same night.[88] Neither Kerry nor Farmer won office, making it impossible for us to examine the effects of their campaign relationship. On the other hand, Voinovich, whom I discussed above, and Gregg did have the opportunity to express their gratitude to President Bush by being more supportive of his policy positions. As a matter of fact, Gregg's support for President Bush's policy positions jumped from 93% in 2004 to 98% in 2005, which could in part be due to Gregg returning the favor to Bush.

Alternatively, a more reciprocal relationship might form during the presidential campaign season, namely one that is rooted in the formation of governing coalitions between presidential candidates and congressional candidates (Covington 1987, 1988; Seligman and Covington 1989). This theory depicts presidential campaign events, in addition to voter mobilization and persuasion efforts, as stepping-stones for a lasting governing relationship between presidents and senators. Some scholars have emphasized the importance of governing coalitions if a president is to be successful in getting his policy proposals approved by Congress (Neustadt 1960; Covington 1987). While changes in the electoral system and congressional organization have complicated a president's efforts to convert electoral coalitions into governing coalitions (Covington, 1989), campaign visits might still offer such an opportunity. Through face-to-face communication, which is essential for coalition building, presidential candidates can try to win congressional support for their policy positions. And senators whose home state is

[88] Thomas Rains, The Union Leader (NH), “President Issues Special Invite to Granite State’s Sen. Gregg.” September 1, 2004.

considered a presidential battleground state have the greatest chance to interact and form a coalition with their presidential candidate, and vote accordingly once in office.

As final theoretical explanation of the connection between presidential campaigns and congressional governance is based on Samuel Kernell's work (1997), who argues that presidents behave strategically by going over the heads of Congressmen and women to build public support for policy positions. The unitary character of the executive gives the president – and presidential candidates – an edge over Congress by allowing them to have a clear policy agenda and send unambiguous messages to the electorate about how they want Congress to vote. This tactic, also referred to as "going public," is considered very useful if presidents are in need of legislators' support (Kernell 1997).

While presidential candidates may not discuss different policy issues in battleground states than in safe states (Hendriks, De Vries, and De Landtsheer 2007), the frequency with which battleground states are exposed to these issues is much higher (Shaw 2006). The president's agenda should thus be more salient among voters in these states (Hendriks and De Vries 2008), which could pressure senators to vote accordingly.[89, 90] As a result, it is more likely for senators to move into the policy direction of the president than vice versa, even though coalition building does not

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[89] The fact that presidential campaign issues are salient among voters (and senators) does not mean that voters and/or senators also adopt presidential candidates' *positions* on this issue. However, interaction between a president and Member of Congress outside the electoral arena, e.g. visits to the White House, does help to maintain their support for his policy positions (Covington 1988).

[90] The losing candidate's issues should also be salient, according to this logic. However, presidents are not known for advancing their opponents' policy proposals, rendering the losing candidate's issues inconsequential after the election.

necessarily imply this. In short, these coalition building efforts, in combination with issue salience, potentially lead senatorial candidates from battleground states to move closer to the president's positions, especially on the issues that form the core of his campaign platform. If this theory is accurate, we should see effects among all senators of the president's party, regardless of whether they ran their own (re)election campaign.

To sum up, the hypotheses I test in this chapter are the following. First, compared to in-party senators from safe states, in-party senators from presidential battleground states are more supportive of the president's policy positions, all else equal (H 1), which suggests that coalition-building took place during the presidential election campaign. Second, in-party members from presidential battlegrounds are even more supportive of the president's policy positions if they just ran for (re)election themselves, all else equal (H 2), which suggests that (re)elected senators return the favors they enjoyed during the presidential election campaign.[91]

Before testing these hypotheses, I will briefly address the expectations for out-party senators. Even if these senators benefited from the intense campaign environment in their home states, they have no opportunity to reciprocate by increasing their support nor can they continue a relationship with their party's presidential nominee after the election. However, it is possible that presidential candidates also try to build governing coalitions with senators of the opposing party, although this is unlikely. In other words,

[91] It is possible that the policies the president proposes better line up with the policy preferences of senators from battleground states since the president adjusted his campaign promises to those states in order to attract more votes. However, there is no evidence that presidents' campaign promises have strongly deviated from overall party platforms in recent elections (Patterson 1996).

any campaign influence on out-party senators should be much subtler, e.g. through issue salience. I run models for all senators and out-party senators alone to verify this but expect to find small or no effects among the latter group.

Data and Method

To test the above hypotheses, I collected individual-level data for U.S. Senators in 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, years following a presidential election. If we are to see campaign effects during the governing period, they should be most pronounced during the first year after a presidential election (Brace and Hinckley 1992; Herrnson and Morris 2006). I focus on the U.S. Senate for the following reason. Existing studies on Electoral College strategies assign battleground status to entire states, not to districts or counties (Shaw 1999, 2002). Since senators represent the entire state they, as opposed to members of the House, are a better test case for my hypotheses. [92] Additionally, it allows me to test for the moderating effects of the presence of Senate elections since only a third of the Senate is up for reelection at the same time.

The dependent variable – support for the president – is operationalized as percentage support for the president's positions on roll calls on which he took a public position, adjusted for absences (Congressional Quarterly, Inc.).[93] The independent

[92] There is evidence that campaigns focus on districts and media markets in addition to states. This suggests that representatives are also differentially affected by campaigns. However, I am not aware of a measure/data that has information on which districts and media markets were targeted over a larger number of election years.

[93] CQ support scores have been criticized for many reasons, among them that they include noncontroversial votes and many votes on the same issue (see Edwards III (1985) for a summary of this critique). Then again, Edwards III finds that CQ scores correlate highly with other measures of presidential support suggesting that they might be more valid than some people contend.

variables of interest are battleground state, number of presidential campaign visits, and presence of a senatorial election. I use two different measures to analyze battleground effects on senatorial support for the president: 1) the number of visits by the winning candidate to a state, and 2) a dummy variable based on Daron Shaw's research on presidential Electoral College strategies. These measures diverge somewhat from earlier battleground measures I used for two reasons. First, the theoretical expectations lead me to believe that candidate visits, as one aspect of battleground status, play a unique role since they offer opportunities for presidential candidates and senators to interact. This aspect of presidential campaigns in particular might affect senators' roll call votes. Second, I am only interested in the effects of the winning candidates' Electoral College strategies, which reduces the number of categories for states to three (safe, leaning, and battleground). Treating these categories as an ordinal scale is analytically unappealing and I therefore reduce these three categories to a dummy variable with battleground states receiving a 1 and safe and leaning states receiving a 0 (see Appendix G). In other words, I coded senators as being from a battleground if their state was on Clinton's battleground lists for 1992 and 1996 and Bush' battleground lists for 2000 and 2004. I also ran models including dummies for battleground and leaning states with safe states being the reference category and discuss this approach when it significantly changes the results.

For election years 1988 to 2004, Shaw (1999, 2006) collected data on candidate appearances in each of the 50 states, between late August/early September and Election

Day.[94] It is possible that the relationship between visits and support is nonlinear, with a change from zero to one visit having a much larger effect than a change from fourteen to fifteen visits. I tested this by including a quadratic term for candidate visits ($visits^2$) in all regression models reported below. The coefficients for this term were not significant, however, nor did any of the model fits improve. To still control for the fact that some senators received an exorbitant amount of visits, I include a dummy for senators who received more than 16 visits in all models. The correlation between this battleground measure and presidential visits is moderately high (.49, p<.000).

Since hypothesis 2 assumes that battleground effect on legislative support depends on whether senators ran for (re)election during the presidential campaign, I include a variable that indicates this (0 if not, 1 if yes) as well as the interaction terms *battleground*Senate election* and *visits*Senate election*.

Control variables include a senator's ideology (and party in the pooled sample), a senator's term in office, the president's term in office, the presidential vote share per state, and a dummy variable for president. A senator's ideology should be a strong predictor of presidential support and is thus included as a control variable. I use ideological distance between a senator and the president-elect, which is operationalized as the absolute distance between a senator's DW-nominate score and the president's DW-nominate score (Poole and Rosenthal 1991, 1997), with the expectation that a greater

[94] For 1988, 1992, and 1996 these include visits by the presidential nominees whereas for 2000 and 2004, Shaw also collected data on vice-presidential nominee activity in the states. To be consistent, I only include visits by presidential candidates.

distance leads to lower legislative support of the president's policy positions. I acknowledge that some of the votes that make up the presidential support score are also included in this ideology measure. Ideological distance from the president rather than the senators' DW-nominate scores themselves makes the measure less endogenous, although it still suffers from this problem.[95] The advantage of using ideological distance is that it allows me to group senators who served under different (i.e. Democratic and Republican) administrations together. This keeps the sample size fairly large which is highly desirable when testing moderator effects. Finally, it should make for a more conservative test of the hypotheses since ideological distance will likely explain a substantial part of the variance in presidential support.

A senator's term is a second control variable (1 if first term, 0 for second term and beyond), which measures whether first term senators are more supportive of the president. The president's term in office is a third control variable (0 if first term, 1 if second term) with the expectation that second term presidents receive less support, partly because their approval ratings are generally lower and partly because second-term presidents are considered lame-ducks, creating less incentive for senators to court the president or return any favors.

For every senator I also included the percentage of the statewide vote the president received in the last election. This can be interpreted as a proxy for presidential popularity as well as potential coattail effects. Thus, a larger vote share should lead to

[95] DW-nominate scores and presidential support correlate .91; ideological distance and presidential support correlate .83.

increased support for presidential policy positions, although past research is ambivalent about the exact influence of presidential popularity (see Bond and Fleisher 1980, 1990; Cohen 1982; Cohen et al. 2000). Alternatively, presidential vote share indicates the ideological leaning of a state, which senators could interpret as an indicator of their constituents' policy preferences. In either case, a higher presidential vote share should lead to higher presidential support. Finally, I included a dummy variable for president (0 if Clinton, 1 if Bush) to capture any president-specific effects.

Results

TABLE 5.2 HERE

Table 5.2 shows the results for the pooled sample, which includes both in and out-party senators. Model 1 tests the impact of candidate visits on senators' support for the president and shows that this effect is in the expected direction, reaching conventional levels of statistical significance ($p<.05$, one-tailed). The coefficient indicates that one presidential visit to a state leads to almost half a percentage point increase in support from the senators from that state. Admittedly, this is a small increase. A comparison with the impact of presidential vote share in a state can give us some leverage on the finding's substantive meaning. If the vote share jumps from 50% to 60%, senatorial support increases with three percentage points. Similarly, eight candidate visits as opposed to zero also results in a 3-percentage point increase in support.[96] During the period 1992-2004, thirty senators received eight or more campaign visits.

[96] However, 95% confidence intervals overlap slightly here, indicating that we should be cautious when extrapolating from these results.

Although presidential campaign visits have the expected effect on presidential support among all senators, the motivations among senators are likely to differ. Out-party senators who received a large number of visits probably represent more moderate constituencies, at least at the presidential level, and might therefore be more supportive of the president-elect. In-party senators from battleground states should be counter-pressured. On the one hand, they represent more moderate states and we might thus expect them to oppose certain presidential initiatives. On the other hand, they should have benefited from candidate visits to their state, which should make them more supportive. Below, I discuss results for in-party senators only, which can give us more insight into the mechanism responsible for the increase in support.

The battleground coefficient in model 2 is also in the expected direction but not significant. Substituting this measure for a dummy that assigns a 1 to battleground *and* leaning states, however, indicates that there might be a small battleground effect. The coefficient for this dummy is 1.763 ($p<.1$, one-tailed).

The control variables offer no surprises: President Bush enjoyed greater support, second-term presidents enjoy less support, and the size of a president's vote share in a state is associated with higher support from senators from that states. Finally and in line with previous research, ideology and party have the largest impact on senators' decisions to vote for or against presidents' policy positions. It is remarkable though that, even after controlling for these powerful determinants of senatorial behavior, we still detect a campaign effect.

TABLE 5.3 HERE

Table 5.3 shows the results after separating in and out-party senators. Results from models 3 and 4 confirm my expectations that battleground effects on out-party senators are smaller. Moreover, the coefficients fail to reach statistical significance. As I discussed above, out-party senators have fewer incentives to be more supportive of a president's policy positions: even if they benefited from campaign attention from their presidential nominee, they lack the opportunity to return any favors or realize executive-legislative relationships developed on the campaign trail. The results presented here confirm these expectations.

Model 5 tests battleground effects on in-party senators using the visit measure, whereas model 6 includes the battleground dummy. In contrast to the model for out-party senators, the coefficient for the number of presidential visits remains in the hypothesized direction *and* is highly significant, indicating that the more campaign visits the president-elect paid to a state, the more supportive his party's senator(s) from that state is (are) of his policy positions.[97] Holding all other variables at their means, a senator receiving zero campaign visits from presidents-to-be has an average presidential support score of 89, whereas a senator whose state received eight visits has an average score of 92 (with 95% non-overlapping confidence intervals). While this might not be a huge effect for an individual senator, there are quite a few senators who fall into this category. In the period 1992-2004, Bush and Clinton paid eight or more visits to the states of seventeen in-party

[97] Including the dummy battleground variable and the election variable does not change the results.

senators in the three months before Election Day. If all these senators are slightly more supportive as a result of these visits, this could substantially help presidents in the policymaking arena.[98]

Similar to findings from Table 5.2, the battleground measure is not significant. However, when substituting it with a dummy that includes leaning states, battleground effects are present (B=1.715, $p<.05$, two-tailed). This suggests that, for senatorial candidates, even being from leaning states, which receive some presidential candidate attention, might make them more reciprocal.

TABLE 5.4 HERE

Finally, models 7 and 8 include the interaction terms *visits*Senate election* and *battleground*Senate election*. The first one is not significant, indicating that the effect of presidential visits holds for *all* in-party senators, regardless of the presence of a senate race. This finding challenges the indebtedness hypothesis (Herrnson and Morris 2006), which posits that senators who were just up for (re)election return favors enjoyed during the campaign. Instead, it is consistent with the theory that campaign visits are opportunities for presidential candidates and senators to build lasting governing coalitions. The fact that we can be more confident in the effects of visits than battleground status suggests that, even in times when the strategy of "going public" is winning ground, face-to-face time remains an important aspect of coalition building.

FIGURE 5.1 HERE

[98] I also tested whether visits had a greater impact on the support of senators from states with a larger presidential vote share. This turned out not to be the case.

The regression results of model 8 provide some support for hypothesis 2, which states that the occurrence of a senator's election moderates the relationship between battleground status and presidential support. Specifically, while the effects of presidential campaign visits are not conditional – i.e. not dependent on the presence of a senator's own election – the statistical significance of the interaction term *battleground*Senate election* indicates that battleground effects are. Figure 5.1 plots the regression slopes for senators who ran for (re)election and those who did not, holding all other variables constant at their means. It shows that senators who were not up for (re)election support the president at practically equal levels, regardless of whether they represent a battleground or a safe state.

Running for (re)election *and* being from a battleground state, on the other hand, makes a senator significantly more supportive of his or her president's policy positions. A test of the slopes confirms this: the presence of an election leads to more than a 3% increase in presidential support among senators from battleground states ($p<.05$), while being from a battleground state has virtually no effect on those senators who did not run for (re)election. As I noted above, this interaction effect only holds for the battleground variable and not the number of visits. One explanation is that the first indeed measures more than just visits: it represents states which, in addition to visits, also receive considerable attention from vice-presidential candidates, the local and national media, television ads, and grass root efforts. It might be particularly this kind of campaign

environment that helps senatorial candidates who are running for public office themselves, for which they reciprocate after the election.

The significant findings for the control variables term, president, presidential vote share, and ideological distance are all in the predicted directions. Not surprisingly, ideological distance between a senator and his president has a large negative effect on his or her support for the president's policy positions. While this variable is problematic for reasons I discussed above, the results for campaign visits do not change substantively when I exclude ideological distance. Excluding it does change the coefficient for the interaction term *Battleground*Senate election*: it remains in the hypothesized direction but is no longer significant ($p<.2$) Future research should establish the robustness of this finding, for instance by using different indicators for a senator's ideology. Secondly, if the president received a larger vote share in a senator's home state the senator is also more supportive. Whereas previous studies on the influence of presidential popularity in Congress have been inconclusive, this finding indicates that it does increase a president's legislative success.

The dummy for President Bush is also highly statistically significant in all models, indicating that President Bush enjoyed considerably more support than President Clinton in his first years of each term. This finding could be a result of 2001, the year of 9/11 in the aftermath of which Bush received overwhelming support from both Republicans and Democrats. Also, presidential support is lower during the second term, which is consistent with the theory that second-term presidents are less powerful: the so-

called lame-duck presidents. Finally, a senator's term is not significant. In other words, newly elected senators are not more or less supportive of their president's policy positions compared to seasoned senators.

Discussion

While small, the effects of Electoral College strategies on subsequent roll-call voting are important. They suggest that presidential campaign strategies have spillover effects that extend into the policymaking arena. They create goodwill among same-party senators from battleground states and thereby might actually facilitate executive governance, despite a scholarly concern that campaigning is detrimental to governance. In fact, when presidential candidates tour the swing states in efforts to build electoral coalitions, they might simultaneously be building the foundations for governing coalitions, which could result in a few key votes that help presidents fulfill campaign promises.

On the other hand, same-party senators from safe states are less supportive of their president compared to their counterparts from the battleground states, which might mean that presidents have to try harder to get this first group of senators aboard their policy proposals. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this might have happened to Bush in 2001. To rally support for his budget proposal he visited many states that he had never visited during his campaign. One explanation of this behavior is that president Bush 'went public' to increase support among the electorates in safe states in an effort to

influence members of Congress who were more reluctant to support him as a result of his campaign behavior.

One limitation of this study is that it cannot establish causality. In other words, do senators become more supportive of the president as a result of battlegrounds status and visits or do presidential candidates target states that already have more supportive senators? This could be resolved by using an alternative dependent variable, namely the difference between senators' presidential support before and after the election. Unfortunately, this would cut the sample size nearly in half since newly elected senators do not have pre-election support scores nor would we be able to compare support scores across presidents (from 2000 to 2001 in this case).[99] Thus, we are left with the possibility of an alternative explanation that senators from battleground states were already more supportive of the president before the campaign – and the visits – took place. However, a comparison-of-means test for presidential support scores among battleground and safe state senators, who were already in office prior to the election, shows that there is no real difference between these two groups of senators and thus does not support this alternative explanation.

Future studies should include multiple measures of presidential support to control for method variance. For instance, a slightly different way to measure the effect of battleground status on senators' voting behavior would be to only look at the specific votes that relate to a president's campaign promises. This might be a more accurate

[99] I did similar analyses with this independent variable but found significant results for none of the variables (the one of interest nor the control) and the R-squares were very low.

reflection of the relevant votes, since it is especially these issues that the president promotes during his campaign and expects more support on from senators. On the downside, this will again significantly reduce the number of votes included in the study and thus might also reduce the sample size. As such, my approach is more systematic and uncovers general campaign effects on senatorial behavior.

Finally, one might argue that battleground status is a proxy for a state's electoral competitiveness or moderateness. Shaw (1999) shows battleground status is not merely a function of competitiveness but that other concerns also factor into a candidate's choice to campaign more heavily in a certain state, such as advertising costs and number of Electoral College votes. For the years of interest, I calculated the correlation between a president's margin of victory in a state ($y<5\%$), one measure of a state's moderateness, and battleground status. The correlation is moderately high ($r=.58$), which suggests that battleground status indeed captures moderateness but that they are not perfectly correlated. Moreover, including margin of victory does not substantively change the results presented here. In fact, the finding that hailing from a battleground state *increases* in-party senators' support contradicts the proposition that senators who represent moderate constituencies show less agreement with the president.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to examine battleground effects on executive-legislative relations by looking at the relationship between presidential campaign activity in the so-called battleground states and senators' support of presidents' policy positions in the

years immediately following a presidential election. I tested two theoretical frameworks. First, based on literature on presidential campaign activity during midterm elections, I theorized that senators who ran their own (re)election campaign should appreciate presidential campaign activity in their state the most and should thus be more supportive of the president's policy positions post-election. The theoretical link I proposed was indebtedness or reciprocity, which was substantiated by the finding that the presence of election moderates the relationship between battleground and support.

Interestingly, if we only look at the president-elect's number of campaign visits to a state we find that more campaign visits makes *all* in-party senators more supportive, regardless of the presence of a senate election. Since senatorial candidates often have the opportunity to accompany their party's presidential nominee during these visits, this suggests that there is something unique about the face-to-face interaction between presidential and Senate candidates. I proposed that visits offer opportunities for presidential candidates to rally congressional support for their policy positions by building governing coalitions. In addition, these visits can also be construed as instances of "going public" (Kernell 1997), where the (future) president goes over the heads of members of Congress and tries to build public support for his policy positions, which in turn pressures members to vote accordingly.

Future research should include more administrations, barring the availability of reliable and consistent measures of battleground, and use multiple measures of battleground, presidential support, and ideology to confirm or specify the findings

reported here. Overtime analysis of congressional support for the president is also a fruitful direction as it can tell us whether Congressmen's support changes when their state becomes a battleground state. Targeting states is not an exclusive feature of the general election campaign; candidates behave similarly during the primary season. However, of the many candidates active during the primary season, only two will go on to compete in the general election and only one will eventually occupy the White House. Nonetheless, politically important relations between presidential candidates and state-level officials could develop during campaigns and I believe this deserves more attention from political scientists. Finally, more qualitative and in-depth research can reveal exactly which features of presidential campaign visits drive the effects found in this study. For instance, how much time do congressional candidates spend with presidential candidates? Is this interaction merely symbolic or are substantive issues also discussed? And to what extent do congressional candidates believe presidential candidate attention help their electoral fortunes?

More generally, what does this study mean for research on presidential campaign effects and the Electoral College? I believe it calls for a recognition that campaign influence extends beyond the voter and beyond Election Day. It should not come as a surprise that presidential elections, which can hold the nation in a grip from three to over twelve months, have long-lasting effects on American politics. Still, very few scholars have entertained this possibility or examined it empirically. It also suggests that the institution by which Americans elect their president not only shapes presidential

candidate behavior but, indirectly, senatorial behavior as well. And despite the existing concern that excessive campaigning is detrimental to governing, I find that this relationship is more complex. In fact, presidential campaigning has the potential to positively affect presidents' experiences in the policymaking arena. Finally, the Electoral College prioritizes competitive states leading to unequal representation of states during the campaign season. This study shows that the Electoral College can also affect how U.S. senators represent their constituents.

Table 5.1. Senate Races during Presidential Elections, 1992-2004.

State designation by winning presidential candidate	Senate race	
	Non-competitive*	Competitive*
Safe	42 (57%)	27 (43%)
Lean	16 (22%)	14 (22%)
Battleground	16 (22%)	22 (35%)
Total	74 (101%)**	63 (100%)

A competitive Senate race is defined as a race that was won by 55% or less of the total vote in comparison to the opposition's total (Hoddie and Routh, 2004).
** This number does not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Table 5.2. Battleground effects on presidential support among all senators, for the years 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005.

	Model 1: visits	Model 2: Battleground
Candidate visits	0.422+	
	(0.219)	
Battleground dummy		0.771
		(1.358)
President Bush	5.691**	5.799**
	(1.573)	(1.566)
Pres. 2nd term	-3.248*	-3.226*
	(1.273)	(1.280)
Presidential vote share	0.300**	0.296**
	(0.096)	(0.097)
Sen. 1st term	2.162	2.226
	(1.840)	(1.846)
Ideological distance	-26.862**	-26.465**
	(4.066)	(4.155)
Opposition party	-16.965**	-17.330**
	(3.117)	(3.176)
Visit dummy	-1.288	
(1 if visits>16)	(5.609)	
Constant	76.429**	77.256**
	(4.722)	(4.735)
Adjusted R-squared	0.753	0.750
N	396.000	396.000

The coefficients were generated using OLS regression. Standard errors are in parentheses.
+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, two-tailed test.
[a] Two third-party senators were dropped from the analysis as well as two senators for whom no presidential support scores were available.

Table 5.3. Battleground effects on presidential support in and out-party senators, for the years 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005.

	Out-Party Senators Only		***In-Party Senators Only***	
	Model 3: Visits	**Model 4: Battleground**	**Model 5: Visits**	**Model 6: Battleground**
Candidate visits	0.255		0.400**	
	(0.450)		(0.137)	
Battleground		-0.565		0.882
		(2.661)		(0.928)
President Bush	8.806**	8.881**	4.307**	4.472**
	(2.956)	(2.932)	(1.046)	(1.064)
Pres. 2nd Term	1.648	1.139	-6.769**	-6.726**
	(2.459)	(2.475)	(0.817)	(0.827)
Presidential vote share	0.426*	0.464*	0.192**	0.169*
	(0.184)	(0.188)	(0.065)	(0.067)
Sen. 1st term	4.966	5.232	0.011	-0.336
	(3.348)	(3.359)	(1.236)	(1.245)
Ideological distance	-29.847**	-28.046**	-28.890**	-29.850**
	(6.933)	(7.132)	(3.173)	(3.232)
Visit dummy	6.949		-6.597+	
(1 if visits>16)	(10.341)		(3.919)	
Constant	52.385**	50.091**	85.107**	86.955**
	(11.166)	(11.495)	(3.242)	(3.321)
Adjusted R-squared	0.196	0.189	0.499	0.482
N	192.000	192.000	204.000	204.000

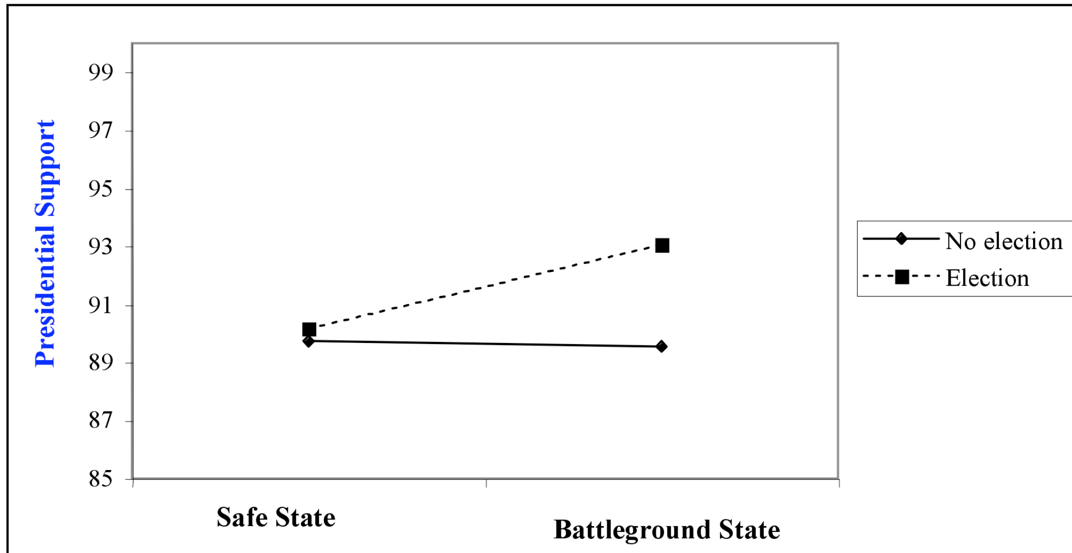
The coefficients were generated using OLS regression. Standard errors are in parentheses.
$^{+}$ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, two-tailed test.

Table 5.4. Interactive election effects among in-party senators, for the years 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005.

	Model 7: Visits	**Model 8: Battleground**
Candidate visits	0.281+	
	(0.166)	
Battleground		-0.907
		(1.195)
Senate election	-0.884	-1.041
	(1.095)	(1.047)
Visits*Senate election	0.222	
	(0.233)	
Battleground*Senate election		3.191+
		(1.852)
President Bush	4.127**	4.305**
	(1.064)	(1.071)
Pres. 2nd term	-6.764**	-6.752**
	(0.822)	(0.823)
Presidential vote share	0.210**	0.187**
	(0.068)	(0.069)
Sen. 1st term	0.363	-0.258
	(1.436)	(1.431)
Ideological distance	-28.817**	-29.974**
	(3.189)	(3.231)
Margin of victory	0.873	1.596
	(1.042)	(1.113)
Visit dummy	-7.742+	
(1 if visits>16)	(4.184)	
Constant	84.389**	86.309**
	(3.429)	(3.469)
Adjusted R-squared	0.496	0.489
N	204.000	204.000

The coefficients were generated using OLS regression. Standard errors are in parentheses.
+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, two-tailed test.

Figure 5.1. Moderating Effect of the Presence of a Senate Election on Presidential Support, among In-Party Senators, 1992-2004.



Note: The DV is the Senators' presidential support score.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation examines the impact of the United States' presidential selection system – the Electoral College – on post-election politics. In particular, it traces whether citizens think and feel differently about politics depending on their geographic location in a safe or battleground state as well as whether senators are more or less supportive of presidential policy proposals as a function of presidential campaign activity in their state. I argued that the most important mechanism by which the Electoral College shapes citizens' and elites' behavior is through presidential candidates' battleground strategies.

Previous research has documented with great detail where presidential candidates spent most of their time and money in order to win the necessary 270 electoral votes to secure victory (e.g. Althaus et al. 2002; Shaw 1999, 2006). Much less is known about how these strategies affect citizens' relationships with their government, even though opponents of the Electoral College claim citizens in the safe states are frustrated with the system and withdraw from politics as a result.

The reason for this gap in the literature is that much of the campaign effects literature focuses on voter turnout and vote choice and much less on how campaign events might shape post-election attitudes such as trust in government or beliefs about governmental responsiveness. Moreover, political psychologists often ignore the potentially powerful role of electoral institutions in shaping political behavior and

attitudes and instead focus on individual differences, such as income, education, or party identification, as the prime predictors of citizens' political orientations and activity.

I took two approaches to systematically examine Electoral College effects on post-election politics. The first builds on a handful of studies that investigated whether living in a battleground state politically engages citizens whereas living in a safe state leads to withdrawal from politics. The findings of these studies are inconclusive but suggest that a fruitful approach might be to examine how individual differences moderate citizens' reactions to living in a battleground state. I added to this an examination of state-level differences with the expectation that states' political cultural norms, which vary significantly across states, interact with battleground status. In other words, pre-existing political norms condition how a state's residents respond to disproportionate candidate attention.

The second, more novel approach examines battleground effects on senators' voting behavior during the governing period. Previous research shows that presidential campaigning for congressional candidates during midterm elections increases these candidates' chances of electoral success (Herrnson and Morris 2007a). In return, these candidates are often more supportive of presidential policy initiatives after the election (Herrnson and Morris 2006). Senators who represent presidential battleground states enjoy the advantage of being able to campaign and interact with the potential next president, even when they are not running for (re)election themselves. I examined how this by-product of Electoral College strategies shapes these senators' post-election roll

call votes. In particular, are they more supportive of presidential policy proposals during the first year after the election?

My findings have important implications for the literatures on campaign effects and institutional effects on political behavior. They suggest taking into account the contours of electoral institutions is a valuable approach when trying to understand how citizens think about their politics and how elites behave in office. Before discussing these implications in more detail, I first summarize the most important findings. Next, I speculate whether these conclusions will hold for the most recent election. Finally, what would American politics look like without the Electoral College and can my findings help us understand its impact on citizens' attitudes?

Summary of Findings

Battleground effects vary in a number of predictable ways across individuals and states. First, analyses of survey data from the period 1992-2004 show that citizens are not equally likely to be affected by living in a safe or battleground state. Overall, I found minimal support for the idea that living in a battleground states has a dramatic impact on how citizens conceive of (their role in) politics. However, two individual characteristics that surfaced as potential moderators of battleground effects were local media use and independence of party. For instance, citizens in battleground states who frequently watch local news are less optimistic about the fairness of the election and government's responsiveness. Independents, on the other hand, were much more likely to agree that

every vote can make a difference when living in a battleground state. In fact, their attitudes were indistinguishable from partisans in this case.

Second, the Electoral College contextualizes how voters interpret presidential election outcomes, thereby shaping their legitimacy orientations. This effect is two-fold. First, the outcome of the state-level contest matters for voters whose preferred candidate lost the general election. If their candidate won their state, they feel more efficacious and more satisfied with democracy. Additionally, candidates' Electoral College strategies add another dimension to the election outcome such that battleground voters who lost at the national level but won at the state level more positively evaluate the electoral process and governmental responsiveness than their counterparts in safe states.

A third finding is that state political culture interacts with battleground status and shapes how state electorates react to living in a battleground state. Whereas previous studies assumed that battleground strategies affect all state electorates equally, I suggested that this should be dependent on a state's dominant political culture. Elazar's (1966) theory of political cultures in the United States proved to be very helpful in explaining differences between citizens' political attitudes as a function of their state's battleground status. Citizen living in states with predominantly moralistic cultures, in which participation in politics and political competition is highly valued, have a profoundly different reaction to being targeted than citizens living in states with predominantly traditionalistic cultures, in which political competition is much less appreciated. The first group of citizens was much more trusting of politics and the

fairness of the election and believed government was responsive to their needs. The opposite was true for the latter group: living in a battleground state in some cases made citizens even more pessimistic. This also in part explained why we do not see larger increases in voter turnout among the battleground states: turnout increases significantly in moralistic battleground states but is much more stagnant in traditionalistic battleground states. Without recognizing this distinction, we might conclude that battleground status has only very little impact on turnout levels.

Finally, turning my attention to non-executive elites, I found that senators' roll call votes depend on the amount of attention the president-elect paid to their state during the campaign period. In particular, senators of the president's party were more supportive of his policy proposals when representing a state that received numerous candidate visits. This supported my theory that presidential candidate visits can serve as important opportunities for presidential and senatorial candidates to build lasting governing relationship. Moreover, senators who ran for election themselves were even more supportive when representing a battleground state, suggesting that they return favors to the president that they received during the campaign season.

Most of these findings are small but dismissing them for that reason would be premature. There are a number of reasons to suggest that battleground effects might in fact be bigger. First, the survey data used in Chapters 3 and 4 was not specifically designed to measure Electoral College effects. Ideally, one would have representative samples from all 50 states with survey questions that measured respondents' perceptions

of the role of their state under the Electoral College. Whereas the National Annenberg Election Survey employs large samples, the number of measures relevant to my research questions is small. The National Election Studies, on the other hand, asks most questions of interest but the sample size is much smaller with a number of states lacking representation altogether. The Minnesota survey presented in Chapter 2 included questions specifically designed to examine citizens' perceptions of their state and found greater variation among respondents based on their belief that Minnesota was a battleground state. In other words, future studies that utilize more appropriate survey items might uncover larger effects.

Second, the battleground measure used in this dissertation is imperfect. In Chapter 2, I suggested that citizens vary in their perceptions of their state, e.g. by partisanship. Whereas Shaw's measure takes this into account – it allows presidential candidates to differ in their assessments of states – it does not capture more subtle differences in candidate or citizen perceptions. For instance, it is possible that safe state residents who border a battleground state and share a media market with battleground residents are more likely to believe they live in a battleground state and thus matter to the candidates than residents of the same state who live on the other side of the state.

Nonetheless, future studies might still find that battleground strategies have only small effects on citizens' post-election attitudes and behavior. We might then conclude that the implications of these strategies for American politics are negligible and undeserving of future consideration or concern. This implies that small effects are

equivalent to unimportant effects. However, in the world of politics small differences can have large consequences. For instance, if all Independents in battleground states feel slightly more confident in their voting power, this could lead them to be more active in other elections as well, such as midterm or local elections. They might also be more likely to become involved through interest groups or contacting their representatives. This in turn could enhance their sense of actual and perceived representation.

Implications for the Study of American Politics

This dissertation has important implications for a number of theoretical frameworks in political science. First, models of presidential campaign effects need to be reconceptualized to more explicitly include post-election effects as well as effects on non-executive elites. This notion is not new and Sulkin (2005) has already argued very convincingly that congressional campaigns have similar, long-lasting effects.

Second, electoral institutions structure political behavior and attitudes in obvious but also less obvious ways. It is well known that the Electoral College shapes where presidential candidates spent most of their time and money to mobilize and persuade voters. The finding that some citizens are therefore more politically interested and active might not come as a surprise. But the fact that members of the U.S. Congress are also affected by how presidential candidates campaign for office is more unexpected and deserves further attention from political scientists.

This also calls for a greater recognition of the connections between campaigning and governing. Whereas political science literature is neatly divided into studies that

cover the campaign period and studies that cover the governance period, this research shows that electoral institutions have longer-lasting effects that bleed into the governing period. These effects are subtle but could condition how effectively a president can govern.

Third, states are important political entities and how citizens experience politics is in large part dependent on the state they live in. With the advent of Internet in political campaigns, it is tempting to focus on the national character of presidential campaigns. After all, is not everyone able to access campaign information through modern technology and should this not blur state boundaries? On the one hand, this is true: it is much easier to donate to political campaigns and battleground residents are indeed no more likely to make contributions to presidential campaigns than safe state residents (Lipsitz forthcoming). However, battleground states still receive more visits, campaign ads, and GOTV efforts, not only from the major party candidates but also from the parties themselves as well as a host of interest groups and Political Action Committees. These events have noticeable effects on these states electorates. Moreover, I found some of the most pronounced differences between safe and battleground residents in 2004 survey data, the most recent election under study. This undermines the notion of a trend toward more national campaigns with fewer between-states differences.

This brings us to the 2008 election, which saw unprecedented amounts of campaign money. This was a unique election in many other respects as well: there was no incumbent president or vice-president running for office but we saw the first African-

American presidential nominee and the first Republican female vice-presidential nominee. In addition, states that had been safe in previous elections were now in play, e.g. North Carolina and Indiana. However, a number of things remained the same, foremost that only a handful of states received the bulk of campaign attention. Table 6.1 shows the number of visits by McCain and Obama to a selection of battleground and safe states and the pattern is very similar to those of 2000 and 2004.

TABLE 6.1 HERE

Therefore I expect that many of the findings presented in this dissertation will hold. Whereas I found that independence of party and local media use were important, in the 2008 election other individual differences might play a role, in particular racial and ethnic minority. But, I expect winners and losers are equally likely to differ on attitudes of trust and efficacy. Some of these differences might be even more pronounced as some states switched parties for the first time in a long time. Voters typically on the winning side at the state level were now losers and vice-versa. This could have a profound effect on how they envision their role in politics. Moreover, losers in 2004 were particularly pessimistic about politics but being on the winning side should have changed this significantly, in particular if their candidate fought hard for their votes. In other words, the Electoral College should still condition reactions to winning and losing although perhaps in slightly different ways than in previous elections.

Where 2008 might deviate from my findings is on political culture. Obama appeared to be able to overcome some of the cultural norms that I found could be hurdles

to candidates' mobilization efforts. For instance, he was very effective in mobilizing citizens in North Carolina, a state with a dominantly traditionalistic culture. If we find that political culture's influence was much more limited in the 2008 election, it begs the question whether candidates' battleground strategies can alter a state's political culture, if only very gradually. Was Obama's success in North Carolina unique or will we see that political engagement becomes the norm in this state evidenced by higher-than-normal turnout rates in 2010 and 2012?

American Politics Without the Electoral College

Opponents of the Electoral College often charge that a direct popular vote would be more democratic because everyone's vote would count. However, we know even less about this alternative's exact impact on citizens' political engagement than we know about the Electoral College's impact. But we can safely assume that presidential candidates will still face monetary and financial constraints as well as be driven by the most important objective of campaign efforts: win as many votes needed to become the next president. Whether the importance of these votes is defined by the Electoral College or by a direct popular vote, candidates will thus remain strategic and target certain voters over others.

Goux and Hopkins (2008) argue that one of candidates' most important consideration under a direct popular vote will be the relative costs of media markets vis-à-vis the number of swing voters in these media markets. Rural areas would likely receive less attention than they do under the current system because they are

predominately Republican and media markets in these areas reach relatively few voters. Urban areas on the other hand should see an increase in candidate attention.

How the media cover these differences will make a difference. As the media study in Chapter 2 showed, local newspapers are quite aware of the status of their state. This is very likely to play a role in how citizens perceive the electoral process and subsequent trust in the system, as Chapter 3 showed that local media use interacts with battleground status to predict these attitudes. Without the Electoral College will the media report on the asymmetry of candidate attention to rural and urban areas? Similarly, will we then hear equally loud objections from political commentators that presidential candidates divide their attention unequally between rural and urban areas and that this disenfranchises certain citizens?

Moreover, a one percent difference in the polls between the two major candidates is about 13 million voters, equivalent to California's absolute turnout in 2008.[100] This suggest that to swing the election, minority group, whether rural, racial, or ethnic, are not as attractive to persuade or mobilize unless candidates find a way to speak to all these groups with one message. Under the Electoral College, minority groups have more power. For instance, Hispanics and African-Americans played a crucial role in a number of states, e.g. New Mexico and North Carolina, but their power would be diminished under a direct popular vote. If this is true, individual differences might be even less important in explaining campaign effects than I found in this dissertation.

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[100] Numbers are based on 2008 turnout numbers, which can be found at www.elections.gmu.edu.

Questions that remain are: Will states still be important political entities under a direct popular vote? Will the organization of polling stations and the vote count be in states' hands? If so, would citizens still be interested in how their state voted and would this matter? As long as other representative offices are defined by state, a person's home state is likely to remain an important part of one's political identity. On the other hand, a national presidential campaign could blur state boundaries and diminish someone's association with one's state thereby leading to fewer differences between state electorates.

Conclusion

The Electoral College is a complex institution and its effects on American politics appear to be equally complex. Whereas it structures candidates' strategies of where to campaign in relatively straightforward ways, this dissertation dispels the notion that these strategies have similarly straightforward implications for how citizens think about politics or senators behave in office. Political commentators have made sweeping statements that voters in safe states are disenfranchised but the evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that we need to refine these statements by recognizing that not all citizens are equally affected by disproportionate campaign attention but that, nonetheless, the Electoral College shapes citizens' relations with government in subtle but important ways.

Table 6.1. Candidate Visits in Various States, 2000-2008.

State	2000 (Bush and Gore)	2004 (Bush and Kerry)	2008 (Obama and McCain)
Florida (4, 4)	22	43	26
Pennsylvania (4, 4)	20	19	33
Ohio (2, 4)	12	34	34
Michigan (4, 3)	26	10	9
Illinois (2, 0)	17	0	2
AL, AK, CT, DE, HI, ID, OK, ND, NE, SD, UT, VT (0, 0)	0	0	0

Notes: Not all states are in the table. In parentheses are the scores each state receives according to Shaw's categorization for 2000 and 2004, respectively. There are no categorizations for 2008 yet.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. State-Level Voter Turnout (VEP), 1992-2004.

	b/se
Turnout t-1	0.84**
	(0.04)
Battleground	0.69**
	(0.20)
Political culture	-0.10
	(0.12)
*Battleground*Culture*	-0.07+
	(0.04)
Competitive Senate race	1.08**
	(0.37)
1996	-11.49**
	(0.53)
2000	-3.40**
	(0.47)
2004	1.21*
	(0.48)
Constant	13.70**
	(2.70)
Adjusted R-squared	0.9
N	196

OLS regression coefficients with standard errors.
+p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01, two-tailed.

Appendix B. Mean differences between winners and losers on four legitimacy orientations.

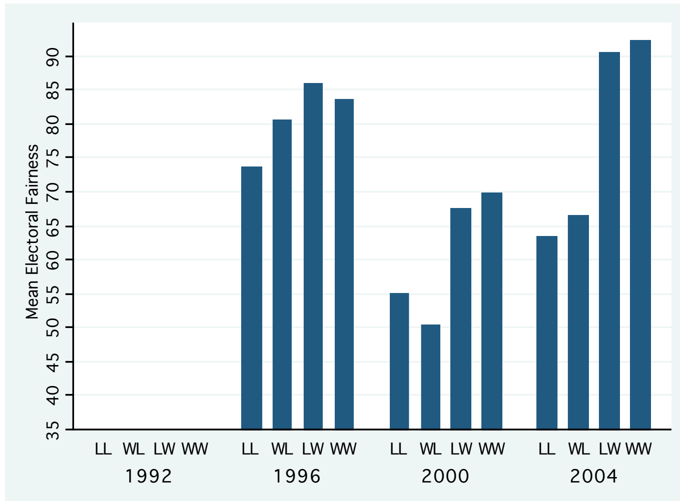
		Preference for losing candidate	Preference for winning candidate
Electoral Fairness	1996	**75**	**82**
	2000	**49**	**65**
	2004	**64**	**91**
Satisfaction w/Democracy	1996	68	70
	2000	69	71
	2004	**48**	**58**
External Efficacy	1992	52	53
	1996	45	44
	2000	48	50
	2004	**43**	**53**
Trust in Government	1992	43	44
	1996	**40**	**47**
	2000	49	48
	2004	**44**	**55**

Notes: Bolded entries are statistically significant at p<.05. Samples include voters *and* non-voters who expressed a preference for a candidate. All variables range from 0 to 100 with higher valued indicating more positive attitudes.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1992-2004.

Appendix C.

The first part of my analysis also includes two other measures of external efficacy: "How much attention does government pay to what people think" (Attention) and "Elections make government pay attention to what people think" (Elections). All these measures have been recoded to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating higher levels of efficacy.

Figure C-1. Mean Levels of Electoral Fairness for Four Types of Voters, 1992-2004.



Note: Voters only. The first letter refers to the status of the voter at the state level while the second letter refers to the status at the national level (e.g. WL indicates state winner/national loser). Same goes for all figures.

Figure C-2. Mean Levels of Satisfaction with Democracy for Four Types of Voters, 1992-2004.

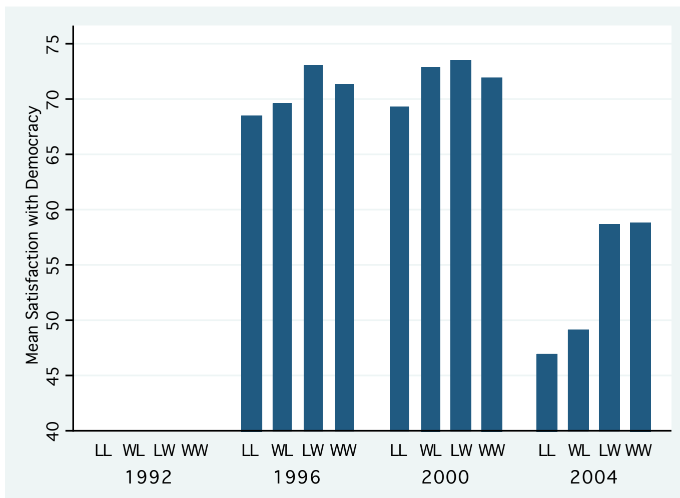


Figure C-3. Mean Levels of Political Trust for Four Types of Voters, 1992-2004.

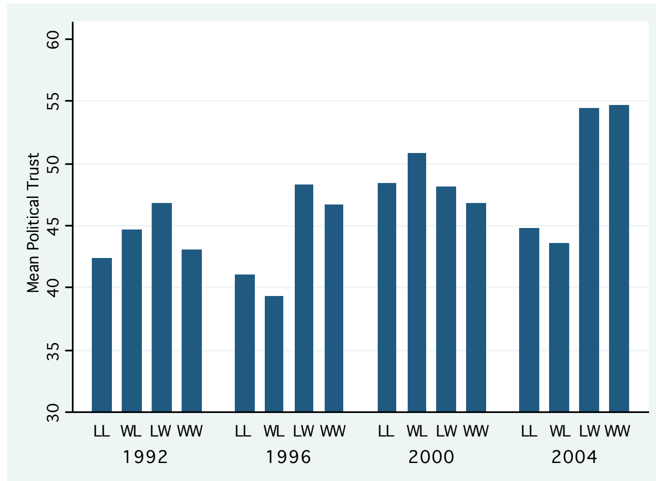


Figure C-4. Mean Levels of External Efficacy for Four Types of Voters, 1992-2004.

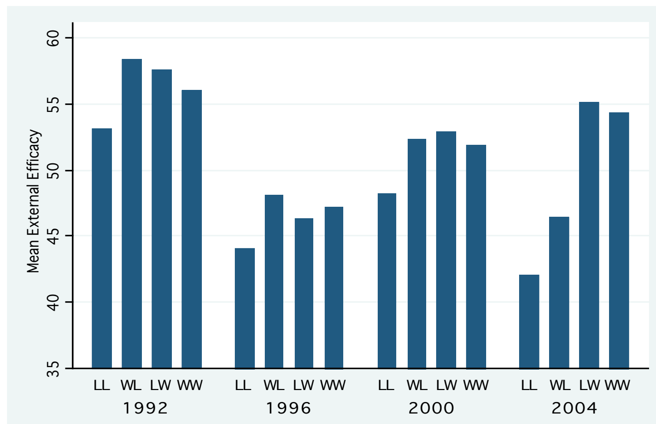


Figure C-5. Mean Levels of Responses to Elections Measure for Four Groups of Voters, 1992-2004.

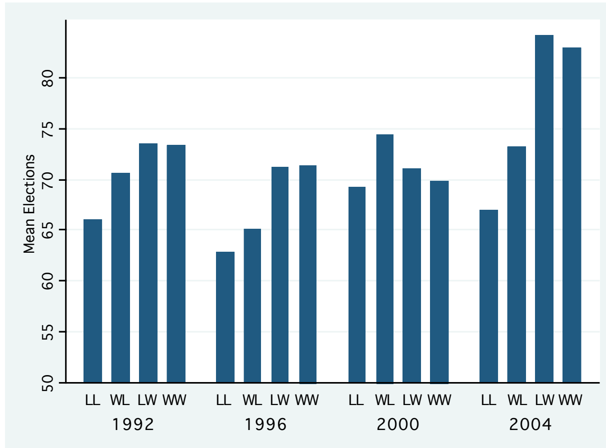
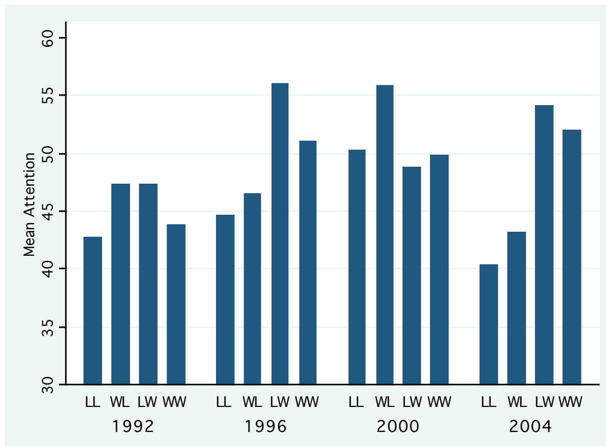


Figure C-6. Mean Levels of Responses to Attention Measure for Four Groups of Voters, 1992-2004.



Appendix D. Winner and Loser Effects on Legitimacy Attitudes, by year.

Table D-1. External Efficacy

	1992		1996		2000		2004	
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
State loser/nat'l winner (LW)	4.05	7.85+	.33	-3.15	-4.35	-2.96	4.5	1.74
	(3.02)	(4.17)	(2.64)	(3.69)	(3.34)	(3.92)	(3.72)	(5.26)
State winner/nat'l loser (WL)	1.43	3.18	-2.87	-1.34	-4.95	-7.35*	.93	-6.63
	(3.07)	(4.05)	(2.89)	(4.37)	(3.14)	(3.62)	(4.91)	(6.15)
State loser/nat'l loser (LL)	-5.34**	-5.71+	-3.58	-5.23	-5.16+	-5.84+	-6.44	-3.56
	(2.05)	(2.81)	(2.91)	(4.89)	(2.64)	(3.12)	(3.8)	(5.87)
Battleground	.39	.54	-1.01*	-1.48+	.84+	.36	.72	-.03
	(.81)	(.79)	(.5)	(.88)	(.43)	(.75)	(.85)	(1.21)
LW*Battleground		-2.85		2.69		-.40		1.28
		(2.18)		(2.64)		(1.16)		(1.80)
WL*Battleground		-1.36		-1.62		1.57		4.10*
		(2.51)		(1.76)		(1.39)		(1.58)
LL*Battleground		.23		.90		.57		-2.19
		(.87)		(1.52)		(1.36)		(2.05)
Constant	39.62	41.94	33.95	34.75	23.22	21.49	25.38	16.73
Adjusted R^2	.06	.07	.08	.09	.09	.09	.12	.13
N	1507	1507	1057	1057	942	942	747	747

+ <.10, *<.05; **<.01, two-tailed.
OLS Regression with robust standard errors.
Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors).
DV=External Efficacy, rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating higher levels of efficacy.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004.

Table D-2. Political Trust

	1992		1996		2000		2004	
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
State loser/nat'l winner (LW)	4.08**	4.28*	2.30	3.84	1.42	-.97	2.52	1.28
	(1.33)	(1.89)	(2.41)	(3.23)	(2.11)	(2.59)	(2.44)	(3.44)
State winner/nat'l loser (WL)	-1.15	-2.81	-9.28**	-10.80**	2.11	-.49	-5.45*	-7.40*
	(1.90)	(2.22)	(2.12)	(2.99)	(2.67)	(3.26)	(2.44)	(3.07)
State loser/nat'l loser (LL)	-1.06	-2.04	-5.95**	-4.36	.33	-.88	-7.01*	-4.53
	(1.39)	(1.64)	(1.82)	(3.61)	(1.99)	(2.14)	(2.84)	(3.95)
Battleground	.10	-.22	.03	.29	-.24	-1.14+	.24	-.32
	(.45)	(.49)	(.55)	(.90)	(.38)	(.65)	(.54)	(1.01)
LW*Battleground		-.26		-1.12		1.49		.52
		(1.02)		(1.62)		(.95)		(1.49)
WL*Battleground		1.34		1.50		1.73+		1.00
		(1.55)		(1.16)		(.93)		(1.42)
LL*Battleground		.55		-.87		.94		-1.81
		(.38)		(1.37)		(.79)		(1.29)
Constant	44.31	44.69	49.58	48.68	51.37	48.49	62.02	58.78
Adjusted R^2	.02	.02	.07	.07	.03	.03	.10	.11
N	1514	1514	1057	1057	945	945	747	747

+ <.10, *<.05; **<.01, two-tailed.
OLS Regression with robust standard errors.
Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors).
DV=Political Trust, rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating higher levels of trust.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004.

Table D-3. Satisfaction with Democracy

	1996		2000		2004	
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
State loser/nat'l winner (LW)	1.95	2.05	5.28+	8.03	-1.96	3.07
	(2.20)	(3.34)	(3.12)	(5.07)	(5.97)	(7.97)
State winner/nat'l loser (WL)	-4.51+	-3.33	6.35	7.85	-7.13	-5.07
	(2.44)	(3.87)	(4.50)	(5.50)	(7.20)	(8.78)
State loser/nat'l loser (LL)	-3.25	-3.68	1.15	-.26	-7.41	-7.27
	(2.42)	(4.15)	(3.06)	(3.62)	(6.00)	(9.40)
Battleground	-.89	-84	-.19	-.17	-.21	.69
	(.65)	(.84)	(.47)	(.76)	(.92)	(2.01)
LW*Battleground		-.12		-1.21		-2.79
		(1.66)		(1.43)		(2.52)
WL*Battleground		-1.02		-.74		-1.23
		(2.18)		(1.37)		(2.56)
LL*Battleground		.23		1.04		-.04
		(1.51)		(.99)		(3.07)
Constant	76.26	76.58	59.56	64.03	59.44	63.44
Adjusted R^2	.03	.03	.03	.03	.06	.06
N	1055	1055	852	852	744	744

+ <.10, *<.05; **<.01, two-tailed.
OLS Regression with robust standard errors.
Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors).
DV=Satisfaction with Democracy, rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating higher levels of satisfaction.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1996, 2000, and 2004.

Table D-4. Fairness of Elections

	1996		2000		2004	
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
State loser/nat'l winner (LW)	1.16	.06	-3.74	-5.93	-.78	-4.80
	(2.70)	(3.85)	(4.11)	(4.34)	(2.92)	(4.01)
State winner/nat'l loser (WL)	-5.36	-1.35	-14.65**	-23.50**	-17.75**	-23.57**
	(3.51)	(4.40)	(4.96)	(4.74)	(4.67)	(6.50)
State loser/nat'l loser (LL)	-8.23*	-6.76	-6.81	-7.26	-21.05**	-22.59**
	(3.33)	(4.11)	(4.13)	(5.65)	(3.97)	(3.88)
Battleground	-.68	-.21	1.19	-.44	.56	-.95
	(.68)	(.83)	(.89)	(1.11)	(.79)	(.62)
LW*Battleground		1.02		1.69		2.26+
		(1.73)		(1.79)		(1.28)
WL*Battleground		-3.25+		5.49**		3.32
		(1.90)		(1.82)		(2.01)
LL*Battleground		-.84		.39		.99
		(1.36)		(.1.73)		(1.63)
Constant	68.42	67.75	22.05	11.09	64.76	60.68
Adjusted R^2	.06	.07	.15	.16	.26	.27
N	1052	1052	854	854	742	742

+ <.10, *<.05; **<.01, two-tailed.
OLS Regression with robust standard errors.
Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients (standard errors).
DV=Fairness of Elections, rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating higher levels of fairness.
Source: American National Election Studies, 1996, 2000, and 2004.

Appendix E.

For mediated moderation to be present the following needs to hold. First, in the original model the interaction term needs to be statistically significant. In a second model that predicts the mediator—political interest—, the same interaction needs to be significant. A third and final model predicting the original dependent variable should include both the interaction and the mediator. In this model, the regression coefficient of the mediator should be significant and in the predicted direction *and* the size of the interaction coefficient should be substantially smaller than the interaction coefficient in the original model (see Muller et al. 2005).

When I ran these models for external efficacy, I found the following. In the original model the *WL*battleground* interaction is significant. The second model is identical except the dependent variable is now political interest. The results showed that the interaction term was significant, indicating that political interest is higher among battleground voters. In the third model, political interest significantly predicts external efficacy but the interaction coefficient is not substantially smaller than in the original model. In other words, I find no evidence for mediated moderation.

I ran similar tests for electoral fairness and political trust but again did not find evidence for political interest as a mediator. In other words, while living in a battleground state has a positive effect on someone's interest in campaigns, it does not help explain why a state win is important for national losers.

Since the effects are strongest in 2004—the first election after the highly contested 2000 election and a close election itself—, I ran the same models for external efficacy on 2004 respondents only and found that political interest mediates part of the interactive battleground effect.

Appendix F. States' Battleground Status, 1992-2004

Year	0-Both Safe	1	2	3	4-Both Battleground
1992	AK ID IN NE ND SC UT VA WY AR CA DC MA MN NY RI VT WV	MI OK IL IA MD	AL FL SD TX CT DE OR TN WA	CO MT NC PA KY LA ME MO NM WI	GA MI NJ OH
1996	AL AK ID KS NE ND MS UT WY AR DC DE HI IA MD MA MN NY OR RI VT WA WV	IN OK SC TX VA CT ME WI	MT SD NC IL MI MO PA	AZ CO FL GO KY TN NH NJ OH CA	LA NV NM
2000	AL AK CO GA ID IN KS MI MT NE NC ND OK SC SD TX UT VA WY CT DE DC HI MD MA NJ NY RI VT	CA	AZ KY LA NV OH IL	MN WV	AR FL IA ME MI MO NH NM OR PA TN WA WI
2004	AL AK GA ID IN KS KY MS MT NE ND OK SC SD TN TX UT VA WY CA CT DC HI IL MD MA NY RI VT	LA NC DE NJ	AZ AR CO VA	MO NV WV ME MI MN OR WA	FL IA NH NM OH PA WI
Source: Adapted from Daron R. Shaw (2006; 1999).					

Appendix G. Categorization of States According to the Winning Candidate, 1992-2004.

Year	Safe	Leaning	Battleground
1992	AK ID IN MI NE ND OK SC UT VA WY AR CA DC MA MN NY RI VT WV	IL IA MD AL FL SD TX CT DE OR TN WA NH NV AZ KS PA	MT NC MI MO AZ CO FL GO KY NJ OH LA NM
1996	AL AK ID KS NE ND MS UT WY AR DC DE HI IA MD MA MN NY OR RI VT WA WV	IN OK SC TX VA CT CA ME WI SD IL MO MI PA NH MT	NC AZ CO FL GA KY TN LA NV NM
2000	AL AK CO GA ID IN KS MI MT NE NC ND OK SC SD TX UT VA WY CT DE DC HI MD MA NJ NY RI VT	CA AZ KY LA NV OH IL	MN WV AR FL IA ME MI MO NH NM OR PA TN WA WI
2004	AL AK GA ID IN KS KY MS MT NE ND OK SC SD TN TX UT VA WY CA CT DC HI IL MD MA NY RI VT LA NC DE NJ	AZ AR CO VA	MO NV WV ME MI MN OR WA FL IA NH NM OH PA WI