

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

CAMPAIGN GAFFES: AN ANALYSIS OF WHEN AND WHY THE MISTAKES OF
POLITICIANS MATTER

THADEUS ABRAMOWICH
SUMMER 2017

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Political Science
with honors in Political Science

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Mark Major
Senior Lecturer of Political Science
Thesis Supervisor

Michael Berkman
Professor of Political Science
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to understand the nature of campaign gaffes and the way that they influence a politician's chances of succeeding in his or her election races. Some politicians have come to be known for little more than the mistakes that they made on the campaign trail, while others are able to avoid consequences for high-profile gaffes that they commit. This thesis seeks to make clear why this incongruity exists. By considering changes in political prediction markets, as well as polls, and both the volume and quality of media coverage that the gaffes received, the impact that a gaffe makes on a given campaign can be better understood. The variety of election that the gaffe is committed in plays an important role in understanding the difference that it makes, as does the nature of the gaffe, so this study includes examinations of gaffes committed in presidential primaries, during the presidential general election (by a presidential candidate, vice presidential candidate, or third party candidate), and senatorial elections. Overall, gaffes can be particularly damaging to candidates who are less known to voters, as the additional coverage that they generate may help shape voters still malleable impressions of the candidate. Previous literature on the topic has tended to focus on the difference gaffes made in a single race, or on scandals, which while similar to gaffes, must be considered separately due to their increased degree of severity. Therefore, these findings seek to provide a more generalizable manner of considering gaffes, and to predict the likelihood that a gaffe will affect the outcome of a race.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	3
Defining a Gaffe	3
Differences Between Election Varieties	6
Prior Research on Impact of Individual Gaffes	9
The Importance of Candidate Characteristics	11
Chapter 3 Theory and Methodology	14
Chapter 4 Analysis	18
Presidential Primaries	18
Major Party Presidential General Elections	25
Major Party Vice Presidential Candidates	31
Third Party Presidential Candidates	36
Senatorial Candidates	39
Chapter 5 Conclusion	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Howard Dean, 2004 Democratic Presidential Primary	21
Figure 2. Howard Dean Campaign Coverage	22
Figure 3. George W. Bush, 2000 Republican Primary Campaign	25
Figure 4. George W. Bush Primary Campaign Coverage	26
Figure 5. Al Gore, 2000 Presidential General Election.....	29
Figure 6. Al Gore Presidential Campaign Coverage.....	30
Figure 7. John McCain/Sarah Palin, 2008 Presidential General Election.....	35
Figure 8. Media Coverage of Sarah Palin	36
Figure 9. Gary Johnson, 2016 Presidential General Election	38
Figure 10. Gary Johnson Campaign Coverage.....	39
Figure 11. Rick Lazio, 2000 U.S. Senate Election.....	42
Figure 12. Rick Lazio Campaign Coverage	43
Figure 13. Todd Akin, 2012 Senate Election	47
Figure 14. Todd Akin Campaign Coverage	48

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank both Dr. Mark Major and Dr. Michael Berkman, who provided me with a great deal of feedback and support throughout the process of writing this thesis. Their patience and flexibility was an incredible help. Dr. Major and Dr. Berkman were both constantly approachable and without their guidance this thesis work never would have been possible. I am also grateful for the assistance that I have received throughout my academic career from the Schreyer Honors College, the Paterno Fellows Program, and the College of the Liberal Arts. Finally, I must acknowledge the endless amount of encouragement and support that I received from Susan Abramowich, Patrick Abramowich, Katie Abramowich, Carolyn Abramowich, Stephanie Dando, and so many others who offered advice and well wishes. Without them, I would never have been able to complete this thesis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Much attention is paid to the notable events of a campaign, and while this attention may be disproportionate to the amount that these events impact voters (Nyhan 2012), scholarship does suggest that campaigns and their events do alter the landscape of an election, and that candidates' messages and images do matter (Vavreck 2014). When thinking of accomplished politicians such as Governor Howard Dean, his time in office may not be as well-known as a gaffe that he made on the campaign trail. Dean served as the Governor of Vermont, the Chair of the Democratic National Committee, and innovated the use of the Internet in campaigns (Wolff). However, these accomplishments may not be what Dean is most well known for. Rather, when one thinks of Howard Dean, they may think of an unusual yell of enthusiasm that he emitted during his 2004 campaign in the Democratic Party's Primary, on the night of the Iowa Caucuses. This moment has become better known under the infamous moniker "the Dean Scream." At the time, many thought that the Dean Scream made Howard Dean appear unhinged or crazed (Alberts 2004), and despite initially being the front runner, within a few short weeks of his gaffe, Dean's campaign was over. Was the Dean Scream really the death knell for Dean's ill-fated presidential campaign? If so, why? Is there a way to predict whether a candidate will be able to survive his gaffes? This paper examines the impact that gaffes make in political campaigns, seeking to answer these questions. I offer an analysis of the existing literature on campaign gaffes, and the closely related topics of candidate characteristics, scandals, and elections, before explaining my theory to explain when gaffes can change a candidate's chances of being elected,

and finally present an analysis of the impact that gaffes have made in a variety of different campaigns.

In 1984, journalist Michael Kinsley provided one of the few clear definitions of the term “gaffe.” Kinsley said that a gaffe is “not when a politician lies, but when he tells the truth,” adding that the classical gaffe is to be trivial in nature (Kinsley 1984). This definition may be oversimplifying what a gaffe is—there is little question that Dean’s yelp should fit under the term’s umbrella, but it is hard to see that moment as Dean telling the truth. Perhaps an argument could be made that Dean let his composure slip and revealed himself to be unhinged in that moment, thus demonstrating a sort of “truth.” However, these semantic acrobatics hardly seem ideal, and a less narrow definition than Kinsley’s humorous observation is likely necessary.

Candidates committing gaffes is hardly a new phenomenon, and while some gaffes may contribute to the end of a candidate’s campaign, there are some candidates who are able to evade the negative ramifications of a gaffe. This study seeks to understand why some gaffes seem to matter more. Primarily, it will accomplish this by examining a number of different notable gaffes of different natures, and that occurred under varying circumstances. Measuring the impact made by these notable gaffes on polling and betting markets will provide a baseline for understanding the circumstances that provide the potential for a gaffe to change the course of an election. In order to evaluate the degree to which the gaffe was considered at the time of its occurrence, both the quality and volume of media coverage around the gaffe is also considered.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In understanding the existing literature on this topic, first must be considered any analysis provided about any one particular gaffe that occurred throughout the course of a given campaign. These are important to understand, as they can show the way that gaffes changed these individual elections, which can provide a baseline for the way in which gaffes should be studied and understood. It is also essential to understand how different elections vary in the factors that most impact vote choice. Do voters care about a candidate's character, and do they care more in a certain variety of campaign? Beyond this, there is a significant amount of literature that deals with the topic of scandals. Scandals differ from gaffes in a number of ways, but the most notable of these is their severity. Gaffes are mistakes made by candidates that are ultimately trivial, whereas scandals have significant legal or ethical problems associated with them. However, the way that a scandal's impact is measured, and the circumstances under which it is most impactful, may be able to help provide an explanation for the manner in which the impact of a gaffe can be understood.

Defining a Gaffe

As stated above, journalist Michael Kinsley's humorous observation that gaffes are trivial instances of a politicians mistakenly telling the truth, rather than lying as is their norm (Kinsley 1984), is a prevalent definition when seeking to better understand gaffes. However, Kinsley's

definition does fail in some ways, as it is unable to account for gaffes that are actions rather than misspeaking. Whether it be an unusual noise, or an off-putting mannerism, it seems clear that gaffe is a term that includes more than just unwise statements.

When providing his classic definition, Kinsley discusses a gaffe made in the 1984 presidential campaign by Democratic candidate Gary Hart. Hart remarked upon the fact that he was campaigning in New Jersey, while his wife got to campaign in California, and that this was “good news for her.” He went on to joke that she had had the opportunity to hold a koala while in California, whereas he only got to hold “samples from a toxic waste dump” in New Jersey. Kinsley criticizes the inevitable media cycle that follows a gaffe— the media labels it a gaffe, opponents respond, and the candidate either explains himself or apologizes. In what has been this article’s most lasting legacy, Kinsley then defines gaffes, saying that they are “not when a politician lies, but when he tells the truth,” as well as that they should be trivial in nature (Kinsley 1984). This definition certainly fits the Hart gaffe well. It is clear that Hart would rather have been spending his time with his wife in California, despite his claims that what he really had meant was that he didn’t like having to fly all the way across the country in order to see her. Hart’s thoughts on New Jersey are not particularly important to his candidacy, so Kinsley argues that the media’s focus on this misstatement is uncalled for (Kinsley 1984). Kinsley’s response to Hart’s misstatement is that it, and most gaffes like it, are not worthy of the attention that they are given.

The key component of a gaffe seems to be its triviality, which is what causes Kinsley’s reaction to the media coverage of Hart’s statement. However, gaffes as they have come to be understood must be noted for the negative impression that the gaffe leaves of the candidate by revealing him in an unpolished state. Gaffes are clearly mistakes, but they are mistakes that are

of a very specific level. Corruption, abusing of one's powers, and extramarital affairs are not gaffes, as they are viewed as more serious ethical or legal errors (Rottinghaus 2014). While some gaffes may call into question the character of the candidate who committed them, they are generally presented as mistakes, wherein the candidate misspoke or somehow misrepresented himself, rather than being actual moral failings which the candidate owns and apologizes for. Gaffes leave a negative impression on the candidate who commits them, illustrating a characteristic that is unfavorable to voters. So, gaffes are these trivial instances of a candidate mistakenly representing him or herself in a manner that allows voters to draw negative inferences about that candidate's characteristics.

At least in presidential elections, gaffes seem to be a near-universal phenomenon. In the 2016 election, each presidential candidate committed a gaffe of varying magnitude. Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee, described half of her opponent's supporters as falling into a "basket of deplorables" (Blake 2016). Donald Trump referred to Clinton's running-mate, Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, as the former Governor of New Jersey, likely confusing Kaine with Tom Kean, a former New Jersey Governor (Sheppard 2016). In the primaries, Bernie Sanders suggested in a debate that white Americans cannot relate to black Americans "living in a ghetto" (Savransky 2016). Ted Cruz attempted to woo basketball-loving Indianans with a sports analogy, but mistakenly referred to a basketball hoop as a "basketball ring" (Joseph 2016). At a rally in Virginia, John Kasich spoke of women "who left their kitchens" to volunteer for his campaign (Bump 2016). Marco Rubio, after being criticized at a debate by competitor Chris Christie for his tendency to use pre-prepared lines, repeated a snippet criticizing President Obama five times, validating Christie's criticism (Robinson 2016). When delivering a speech at the Republican Jewish Coalition forum, Ben Carson repeatedly seemed to pronounce "Hamass"

as “hummus” (Wang 2015). Martin O’Malley attempted to shout down demonstrators from the Black Lives Matter movement with a response of “White lives matter. All lives matter,” alienating himself from them (Moody 2015). Ultimately, with the intense scrutiny provided by a presidential election, candidates seem unable to avoid gaffes.

Differences Between Election Varieties

Conventional wisdom on primary elections, and presidential primaries in particular, indicates that as they are more divisive, the party is more likely to struggle in the general election. These divisive primaries can be damaging to the eventual nominee for multiple reasons, including that the losing candidate’s supporters are not willing to support the primary’s winner, or that the difficult primary battle may expose vulnerabilities in the candidates which can be further attacked in the general election (Lazarus 2005). Additionally, success in presidential primaries has been found to be closely related to success in the presidential general election (Norpoth 2004). For incumbent parties, the eventual nominee is nearly always connected to the outgoing administration, and primary support for this nominee is a strong predictor of their chances of success in the general election. No incumbent party candidate who received fewer than 50% of the primary vote would win the general election between 1912 and 2000. For opposition parties, a stronger performance in the primary also indicates that the eventual nominee will perform better in the general election (Norpoth 2004).

In the primaries, candidates tend to adopt extreme policies, before moving toward the center in the general election. In the primary election, candidates are forced to adopt these more extreme policies, appealing to their political base (Hummel 2010). An equilibrium exists in

which the left-leaning candidates all adopt the same liberal policies in the primary, while right-leaning candidates do the same with conservative policies. Though there is a tendency to move toward the center in the general election, both parties do still adopt many policies that are divergent from each other, as to avoid accusations of flip-flopping (Hummel 2010). So, candidates in a primary election are more ideologically alike than in the general election.

With the implementation of the primary system, candidates can struggle to maintain their good first impression for the amount of time necessary to survive the long process of winning a presidential election. The longer process allows for more opportunities to be challenged by adversaries, and more chances to demonstrate one's shortcomings as a candidate. Candidates who ultimately get elected will on average be rather polished and knowledgeable, as they will have survived a long, complicated process in which they faced great competition and media scrutiny. The arduous process of proceeding from the primary election into the general holds a great deal of "screening value" (Popkin 2012).

After the primary process has completed, the candidate who emerged as the winner selects his vice president. Vice presidential candidates are generally selected with the goal of helping their presidential running mate get elected, by either "balancing" the ticket or uniting the party. Usually, vice presidential candidates tend to hurt rather than help their ticket. Only extremely popular vice presidential candidates tend to be helpful to the ticket. Because candidates who are this popular rarely desire to be vice presidents, vice presidential candidates typically are non-controversial figures who neither help nor hurt the ticket (Adkison 1982). However, there is little evidence to suggest that vice presidential candidates affect greatly the popularity of the candidate at the top of the ticket under most circumstances. In 2008, Sarah Palin, the vice presidential nominee on the Republican ticket, received greater media attention

than was typical of vice presidential candidates, and indeed her Democratic counterpart, Joe Biden. Palin's candidacy is unique in that she was likely a detriment to Republicans' chances of success in that election cycle, due to her increasingly low favorability ratings (Kenski 2010). So, in some circumstances, a vice presidential candidate can have a notable impact on the success of the campaign.

The issue of slavery forced a restructuring of American politics in the 1850s, with the Whig Party fading to obsolescence and the Republican Party rising in its place. In the more than century and a half since, no third party candidate has come particularly close to securing the presidency, largely due to this two party system. Though some candidates (such as H. Ross Perot in 1992) have received substantial popular vote support, the Electoral College system prevents third party candidates from seriously threatening the supremacy of the Democratic and Republican Parties (Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino, and Rohde 1995).

Nonetheless, in each election cycle, a portion of the population will choose to support these candidates, despite their likely inability to claim victory. Among voters who are distrustful of the political system and the two major parties, third party support is particularly high, when a strong third party candidate arises. Abstention from the election process, or support for third-party candidates is strongly and significantly predicted by a voter's trust level (Peterson and Wrighton 1998).

Meanwhile, senatorial elections differ from presidential elections in a number of ways. First, senatorial elections have been found to be responsive to presidential approval ratings, but not to economic conditions, whether at the state or national level. This makes it possible for senatorial elections to show responsiveness to the performance of the party that is in power, particularly during mid-term elections (Atkeson and Partin 1995).

Candidate characteristics have been found to be the most important factor in determining the likely winner of a senatorial election. As candidate characteristics are so important in these races, there is potential for significant two-party competition in each state (Abramowitz 1988). Both incumbent senators and challenging candidates for the office are generally not as well known to voters as are candidates for higher offices, such as the president and vice-president, or the state's governor. This may be due to the smaller amount of coverage received by senatorial elections, and the actions of Senators who are in office (Fastnow and Squire 1994). As Senate candidates are less familiar to voters than are candidates for other offices, and because voters' impressions of senatorial candidates are so important to determining their vote choice, when a moment in the campaign, such as a gaffe, does receive a great deal of coverage, it may play a more significant role in shaping voters' impressions of that candidate.

Prior Research on Impact of Individual Gaffes

While there has not been much research conducted on gaffes as a subject, the impact of a number of gaffes has been considered in scholarship that looks at campaigns in a broader context. Notably, the 2012 election, including its gaffes, is considered in 2013's *The Gamble* by John Sides and Lynn Vavreck. The authors consider the impact made by gaffes in both the primary and the general election.

During the primary, the surging campaigns of Rick Perry, Herman Cain, and Newt Gingrich are explained using a theory about candidates in primary elections, saying that they go through periods first of discovery, then of scrutiny, and finally of decline. During discovery, the candidate is favorably covered in the media and starts to rise near the tops of the polls. However,

the scrutiny period raises concerns about their candidacy. Perhaps during this time, unfavorable things from the candidate's past will re-emerge, or he will commit a gaffe that would not have received much attention were it not for his new position near the top of the polls. The scrutiny phase leads to the candidate receiving increasingly negative attention, and finds them starting to lose ground in polls, before the decline phase begins. In decline, the candidate receives minimal coverage (Sides and Vavreck 2013). While it is heavily linked to media coverage and intense scrutiny during this very select period of the primary campaign, the existence of this cycle suggests that candidates in primaries are susceptible to some damage from the gaffes that they commit.

However, in the general election, Vavreck and Sides find that the notable gaffes committed by Obama and Romney do not have much of an impact on the end result. In any of the gaffes that they considered, a significant change in polling was not found. The candidate committing the gaffe would occasionally lose a point or two in the polling after their gaffe, but this change is hardly enough to speculate upon. Vavreck and Sides expect that only more engaged voters will really know or care about gaffes, and that for these people, voting preferences are stable and unlikely to be shifted by a gaffe (Sides and Vavreck 2013).

Other scholars considered Obama's 2012 gaffe in which he claimed that the "private sector is doing fine." Although the gaffe was described as a "gift...handed to Republicans", it was found that less than half of voters were even aware of its occurrence (Tesler 2012), and that Obama had not seen any notable change in his approval rating, or in his polling figures with Romney. In fact, in the weeks after this gaffe occurred, Obama saw an increase in his polling (Nyhan 2012). So, at least in the instance of this particular gaffe in the context of the 2012 election, gaffes are not likely to have a significant impact.

However, in a 2014 article, Nate Silver of *FiveThirtyEight* argues that gaffes committed can matter when they motivate a base. Silver considers a gaffe committed by Iowa Congressman Bruce Braley, who at the time was running for a Senate seat. Braley was recorded talking about Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley as a “farmer from Iowa who never went to law school.” This comment was interpreted as belittling farmers, which are an important sector of the population in Iowa. Silver references that the impact of gaffes is often overstated in the media, but he wonders if this case could be different, as Senate races do not become “sideshows” where resources and media attention are abundant. Additionally, senatorial candidates are not as well known to voters, and thus a gaffe can become their first introduction. Silver argues that the gaffe may not matter much itself, but it may engage a base in opposition to Braley (Silver 2014). He also references Jim Webb’s 2006 Senate upset over incumbent George Allen. Allen had held a double digit lead, but after a video surfaced that included him uttering a racial slur, a grassroots movement formed in Webb’s favor, and this managed to propel him to victory (Karpf 2010). So, it seems clear that the potential held by gaffes is different in a Senate race than it is in a general election.

The Importance of Candidate Characteristics

It is argued that in American politics, character is as important as intellect, public speaking ability, and other factors that we tend to believe are vital to a candidate’s success (Pfiffner 2004). Character includes a number of different aspects, including respect for others, truthfulness, willingness to accept responsibility, self-restraint, and consistency. Voters want to be confident that the candidate that they support can make a wise decision when faced with

unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, character is an important consideration in vote choice and is consistently showed as valued when voters are polled on what they are looking for in a candidate (Pfiffner 2004).

Political candidates, particularly those seeking the presidency, must be adept in order to be elected, as they must prove their worth to the electorate. Candidates are expected to craft a public identity, while also demonstrating a vision of the changes that they believes should be made, and proving that they are capable of leading a large operation, which prior to their election takes the form of their campaign. The public identity is closely related to evaluations of the candidate's character, as it requires that the candidate prove that he can be a respectable representative of his electorate, while also demonstrating integrity and authenticity (Popkin 2012). The image presented by a candidate, and the manner that that image shapes the public's impression of the candidate's characteristics, plays an important role in evaluating his electability.

Scandals, which very clearly call a candidate's character into question, are able to damage the reputations of those in office or those seeking office, often irreparably. Brandon Rottinghaus, in a 2014 symposium on the role of scandals in politics, references how scandals ended the once promising political careers of politicians such as Anthony Weiner and Herman Cain. Scandals, unlike gaffes, seem to be accepted as impactful to campaign hopes, as well as approval ratings. However, there is some belief that while character is essential, some scandal can be forgivable, if the politician is particularly effective and popular (Rottinghaus 2014).

Scandals are defined as "verified allegations of illegal, unethical, or immoral wrongdoing." The legal aspect of scandals varies significantly from how gaffes are understood, but the immoral side can get closer to them. Scandals can be committed by the candidate

themselves, one of their relatives, a campaign official, or a running mate. Scandals are found to hurt a candidate's ability to fundraise, but do generate significant media coverage, which, at least in crowded presidential primaries, can provide a benefit (Rottinghaus 2014). In a comparison of the impact made on elections by congressional scandals pertaining to both corruption and morality, there was little evidence that corruption affected vote choice. Rather, moral scandals can tend to be more impactful, as they are less complicated and more easily understood to voters (Cobb and Taylor 2014). While gaffes and scandals vary in their severity (i.e. verified transgressions rather than mistakes), scandals make clear that voters care about the morality and character of the candidates who they are voting upon.

Chapter 3

Theory and Methodology

Some candidates seem to be able to overcome the consequences of committing a gaffe more easily than others. To understand why this might be the case, I will consider seven different campaign gaffes that occurred under varied circumstances. These circumstances include gaffes committed during the presidential primary, gaffes committed during senatorial elections, and gaffes committed during the presidential general elections, by the presidential candidate, the vice presidential candidate, or a third party candidate. Beyond varying in the variety of election in which the gaffe occurred, the gaffes selected also vary in their content. Each of the gaffes considered reflects negatively upon the candidate who committed it, but the specific concerns about the candidate that the gaffes raise do vary.

To fully understand the impact of these gaffes, I will first seek to understand the landscape of the campaign in which they occurred. What image was the candidate seeking to project to potential voters? Was the candidate who committed the gaffe a clear favorite to win his or her race, or was his or her campaign already struggling? In order to answer this question, relevant data on the state of the election during the two weeks prior to the gaffe's occurrence was collected. Additionally, in order to fully measure the fallout from the gaffe's occurrence, data is presented for the four weeks following the gaffe. Trends across the different campaigns are considered, as well as what the ultimate outcome was.

The campaigns that are selected as cases were chosen due to the availability of data associated with them, as well as the presence of a notable gaffe during the course of the

campaign. In order to see the potential change that a gaffe makes in voters' opinions or in a candidate's chances of being elected, polls and political prediction markets are particularly useful. The availability of this information increases with each election, but the feasibility of its usage starts around the year 2000. The Iowa Electronic Market first operated in 1988, under the premise that its stock prices could be more accurate than polls, as there may be some incentive to lie to pollsters, but people will not lie when it affects their money (Angrist 1995). However, it took a few election cycles before the data available from IEM became robust enough to be used to capture a six week snapshot of a campaign, as prior to 1996 the volume traded was significantly lower. Even today, IEM has its limitations, as it covers only a very select number of races beyond the presidency. Additionally, the prediction market struggles to measure third party candidates, because even the most successful third party presidential candidates rarely have any chance of actually winning the presidency, and thus there is no real betting upon their chances to do so.

In addition to considering data from polls and political prediction markets, the volume of national media coverage is considered throughout the six-week window surrounding the gaffe. This media coverage is measured by considering the total number of daily articles published in three of the largest national newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. Do candidates see an uptick in their coverage immediately surrounding a gaffe? If so, this newfound attention may play an important role in shaping the way that the candidate is viewed by the electorate.

Beyond a consideration of simply the volume of media coverage, the national media coverage received by the candidates is considered for its quality. Is the coverage favorable to the candidate? Does a shift in this favorability exist after the occurrence of a gaffe? To measure

this, an appropriate sample of articles from the same three newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*) over the same six week period is pulled from the LexisNexis database. The distribution of these articles varies based on the total volume of media coverage enjoyed by the candidate. For candidates involved in the presidential race, such as Howard Dean or Sarah Palin, national media coverage was thorough, so every fourth article is included in the sample. For the candidate with the least voluminous coverage, Rick Lazio of the 2000 U.S. Senate race in New York, each article mentioning him throughout this six week period is considered.

The articles which are included in the sample are considered for their positive or negative outlook on the candidate in question's campaign. Articles are coded with a score of 1 if they provided a favorable outlook on the candidate's campaign, or praised or defended his actions. Conversely, articles are coded with a score of -1 when they criticized the candidate, or described his campaign in pessimistic terms. Neutral articles, which reported on the events of the campaign without any discernable favorability for or against the candidate are coded with a score of 0. A daily average of these scores is taken in order to track trends in the quality of coverage received by each of the candidates considered.

Additionally, the amount of these articles that mention the gaffe itself is considered. This was coded with a 0 if the gaffe itself was not mentioned or referred to, and a 1 if it was mentioned or referred to. In this way, the volume of gaffe-specific coverage is considered.

The gaffes selected are notable gaffes that cover a number of campaign types, while also varying in their severity. As they tend to do, these gaffes illuminated potential negative aspects of the character of the candidates who committed them. The specific negative characteristic differs between the gaffes. For some, the candidate's intellect is called into question, whereas

others raise concerns about the candidate's ability to be "presidential." Ultimately, these campaign moments were presented as trivial, whether they were said to be temporary lapses of memory or just an unintended misstatement.

I expect that gaffes will be most impactful to primary campaigns, Senate campaigns, and the campaigns of third party candidates. For presidential and vice presidential major party candidates, I expect that a mistake such as a gaffe is unlikely to convince voters that they should vote for a candidate who is so ideologically dissimilar from the one that they had supported. However, in primary campaigns, where each candidate comes from the same party and similar ideological backgrounds (Hummel 2010), and in Senate campaigns, where candidates are relatively unknown to voters (Fastnow and Squire 1994), and are judged harshly for their character (Abramowitz 1988), there may be more motivation to consider voting for an alternative. Finally, for third party candidates, gaffes may tarnish the candidate's credibility, motivating their supporters to decide to vote for a "lesser of two evils."

Additionally, I believe that the variety of gaffe will affect the ultimate impact that that gaffe has. Based upon the impact that scandals make on campaigns (Cobb and Taylor 2014), gaffes that demonstrate potential failings in the moral fiber or character of a candidate seem likely to do more damage to a candidate than simply misspeaking or demonstrating a lack of knowledge.

Chapter 4

Analysis

When considering the impact made by a gaffe, it is important to have a full understanding of the circumstances of the election. It is possible that the timing of the gaffe can play an important role in the gaffe's chances to affect the campaign's results, as gaffes that occur earlier in campaigns give candidates more time to correct their mistake. Additionally, the severity of the gaffe is important to consider. While gaffes are simply trivial mistakes that result in a less favorable image for the candidate, some mistakes may be more trivial than others. These more serious gaffes may cause a greater change in the level of support for a given candidate. Finally, it is important to understand the context of the election in which the gaffe was committed. As previously discussed, a gaffe may be more costly during a primary campaign than in the general election, as voters have more ideologically similar options available (Hummel 2010) to which they could offer their support, or during a Senate campaign, when candidate characteristics are an essential aspect in determining vote choice (Abramowitz 1988).

Presidential Primaries

The 2004 Democratic Primary featured a relatively open field. In the weeks leading up to the Iowa Caucus, Howard Dean, the former Governor of Vermont and future Chair of the Democratic National Committee, was viewed as the front runner, despite not breaking 50% in polls taken in the weeks before the first states voted. Dean had adopted a populist variety of

message, and was innovating the political campaign with his grassroots efforts and usage of the Internet (Wolff). However, other candidates, such as John Edwards, Dick Gephardt, and John Kerry still maintained respectable portions of the electorate, preventing Dean from becoming the prohibitive favorite (Hulse 2004). In the days leading up the first ballots being cast, Dean's share price in the Iowa Electronic Market was waning slightly, but he still held the highest price of any candidate. However, Dean would lose Iowa by a rather significant margin. In the days immediately before the election, his lead had evaporated, and on election night, Dean received only 18% of the vote, whereas new frontrunner John Kerry took 38%, and the insurgent John Edwards received 32% (Shepard 2004).

As the race turned toward New Hampshire, neighbor to Dean's home state of Vermont, Dean sought to re-inject his movement with energy. Delivering a concession speech, Dean turned his attention away from his disappointing performance in Iowa, and looked ahead to the primaries in other states. He ended his speech by assuring his supporters that "Not only are we going to New Hampshire, we're going to South Carolina and Oklahoma and Arizona and North Dakota and New Mexico and we're going to California and Texas and New York and we're going to South Dakota and Oregon and Washington and Michigan. And then we're going to Washington, D.C., to take back the White House." After ending this list, Dean enthusiastically yelled. The noise that he created was high pitched and awkward, and instantly became a topic of political conversation due in large part to its sheer absurdity (Alberts 2004).

In the days after Dean's Iowa concession, which was now being known as his "I Have a Scream" speech, Dean became an easy target for late night talk shows. Dean attempted to embrace the reaction to his speech, saying he enjoyed the jokes being made at his expense, and the techno remixes of his yell being shared all over the Internet (Wilgoren 2004). However,

pundits were quick to announce Dean's post-Iowa moment as his campaign's death knell. They suggested that Dean's scream proved that he was "driven by anger" and "completely unhinged" (Alberts 2004). His speech was labeled as "incoherent" and as being delivered with a "rabid nature." Meanwhile, the clip of Dean yelling was replayed on cable news at least 633 times in the four days following its occurrence (Gerhart 2004). Dean remained optimistic about his chances, but the consensus of many seemed to be that Dean's chances of winning the White House ended with his unexpected loss and unseemly shriek.

Dean did end up losing the New Hampshire primary, this time finishing second to John Kerry. However, while both his Iowa Electronic Market share price and polling numbers did suffer in the days immediately following the Iowa Caucus and the Dean Scream, he seemed to be regaining some ground immediately before voters in New Hampshire went to the polls. Despite this, after losing in the New Hampshire primary, Dean was not considered to have any real chance at the party's nomination by either of these measures. Perhaps if he had more time, Dean could have continued to move past the embarrassment that he suffered in Iowa, but with both of these defeats coming so closely together, Dean was not able to recover.

Figure 1 shows that Howard Dean did receive his greatest levels of media coverage in the week after his surprising loss in the Iowa caucus, as well as in the days after his second defeat in the New Hampshire primary. Dean's decline in both polling and political prediction market measures is also evident within this graph, though it is clear that this trend begins before Dean's famous gaffe.

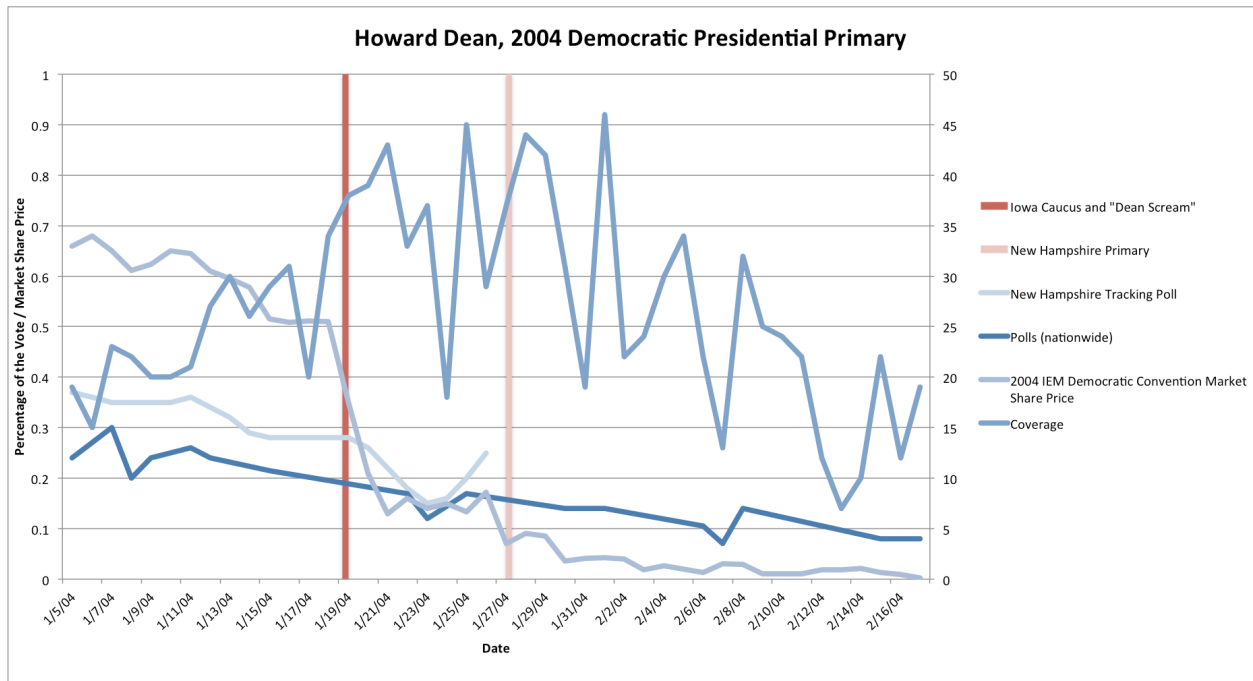


Figure 1. Howard Dean, 2004 Democratic Presidential Primary

Figure 2 demonstrates the favorability of the coverage received by Dean throughout the same time period. The highest periods of positive coverage for Dean occurred prior to the Iowa caucus when he was considered to be the frontrunner for the Democratic Party's nomination, and was lauded for running an innovative campaign. However, after a slide in the polls and a disappointing performance in the Iowa caucus, Dean's coverage became much less favorable. The peak of this non-favorable coverage seems to have come prior to coverage of his now-famous gaffe's beginning. Dean received harsher media treatment for simply performing poorly on caucus day than he did for the "Dean Scream." However, at least some coverage of the gaffe did persist for weeks after Dean committed it.

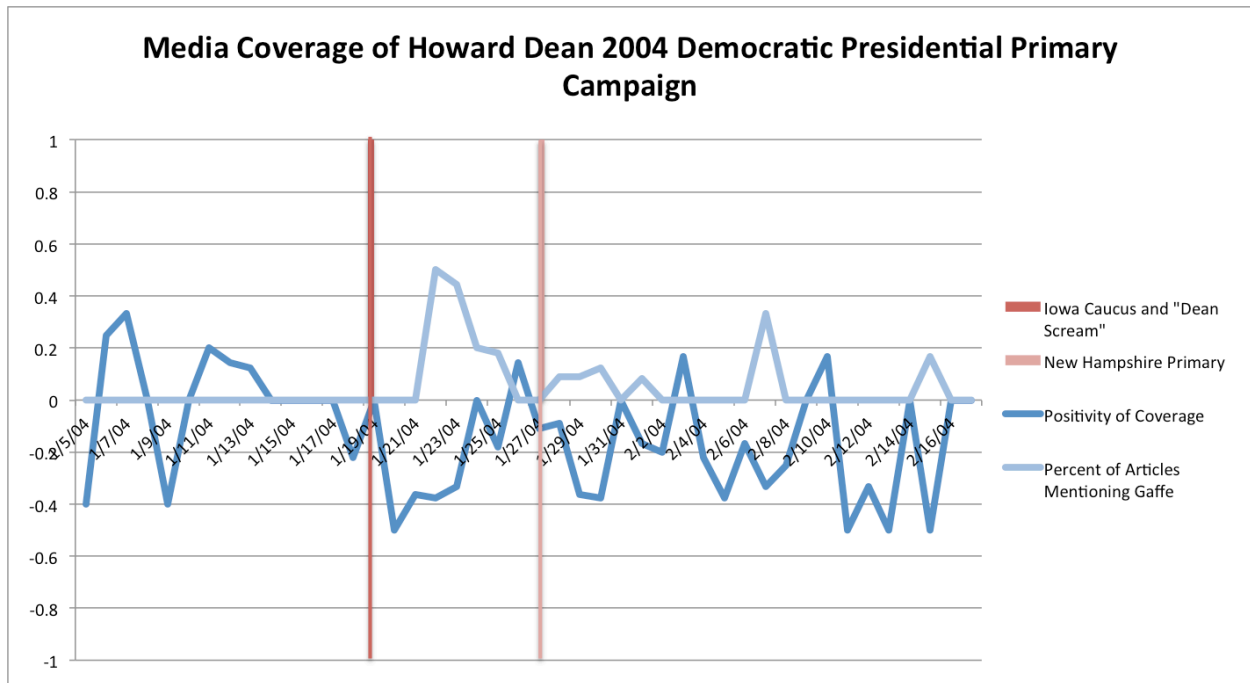


Figure 2. Howard Dean Campaign Coverage

George W. Bush was prone to committing his own unique variety of gaffe, colloquially known now as a “Bushism.” The term, which refers to linguistic missteps or malapropisms, originated with the 41st President, George H.W. Bush. However, during his 2000 campaign for the Republican nomination, and then to be President, the younger Bush made it clear that he shared this habit with his father (Herbert 2000). Voters interpreted Bush’s propensity for “serial syntactical aberrations” (Allen 2000) in a number of different ways. For many, it was endearing, and made Bush seem relatable, but for other voters, Bush’s missteps raised questions about his intelligence, or his grasp of important questions of policy (Allen 2000). While Bush was generally understandable in spite of his verbal struggles, their repeated occurrence led to concern about his intellectual maturity, and even some speculation that Bush may have had a motor disorder that caused his frequent errors (Milbank 2000).

In the Republican primary, Bush's path to the nomination seemed likely to be an easy one. For over two years leading to the first ballots being cast, Bush lead every other Republican candidate by a safe margin in polls taken about who voters' preferred nominee would be. This trend continued through when the first ballots were cast, as Governor Bush won the Iowa caucus. The candidate who would become his most fierce competition, Arizona Senator John McCain, skipped this early competition, instead focusing his efforts on New Hampshire and South Carolina (Lawrence, Keen, Page, and Benedetto 2000) . While Bush handily won the Iowa caucus, polls in New Hampshire showed that McCain was either slightly ahead of Bush, or the two were in a virtual tie (Benedetto 2000). However, as the other Republican candidates moved on from Iowa to New Hampshire, Bush's struggle with his "Bushisms" intensified.

On January 11th, at an event in South Carolina, Bush uttered one of his first high-profile Bushisms, when, in a discussion about his education plan, he said "The question we need to ask: Is our children learning?" ("The 'Misunderestimated' President" 2009). After the campaign moved to New Hampshire, Bush empathized with those who were struggling economically, saying that he knew how hard it was to "put food on your family." The next day, after viewing a performance about perseverance put on at an elementary school, Bush told the students that he appreciates "preservation," and that "It's what you do when you run for president - you've got to preserve." On January 29th, Bush asked, "Will the highways on the Internet become more few?" when discussing a proposed merger between Time Warner and America Online. The next day, January 30th, Bush mistakenly referred to himself as the First Lady of Texas. Earlier that month, Bush had said, "If the terriers and bariffs are torn down, this economy will grow." He had meant tariffs and barriers (Hutcheson 2000). These misstatements, while trivial, did occur with a frequency that could have caused concern, and their timing was far from ideal, as a number of

them were clustered within the short week between the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary.

The New Hampshire primary was held on February 1st, and Senator McCain outpaced Governor Bush by 18 points. His win was expected; most polling in the lead up to the election indicated that McCain held a lead of approximately ten points (Benedetto 2000). However, the margin that McCain ultimately won with was perhaps surprising.

After New Hampshire, the Bush and McCain campaigns went on to South Carolina, where the campaign's tone shifted. After losing to the upstart McCain, Bush took a more aggressive strategy, and successfully portrayed Senator McCain as a centrist, which allowed him to gain the support of the evangelical right of South Carolina (Herbert 2000). The campaign lasted until Super Tuesday, with McCain picking up a few more victories, but never being able to replicate the success that he had achieved in New Hampshire.

While Bush was still able to secure his party's nomination, the gaffes that he committed in the lead up to the New Hampshire primary left him susceptible to John McCain's challenge. As McCain had devoted so much of his time and resources to New Hampshire, voters there saw him as a very legitimate alternative, as indicated by his polling lead. However, McCain's ultimate margin of victory surpassed the lead that he had held in the polls, so it is certainly possible that some voters gave him their support after Bush's series of gaffes. Bush did lose in New Hampshire after his string of gaffes, and saw a subsequent dip in his IEM price, but this did return to its previous levels after Bush's victory in the next primary, South Carolina, which he won by 11 points (Kenna 2000). The McCain victory in New Hampshire seems likely to be more easily attributed to the massive amount of time and resources that he had dedicated to the state. As the campaign continued, Bush's misstatements became less frequent, and McCain's

resources started to run out. Bush's support increased, and he managed to secure his party's nomination despite his propensity to misspeak.

Bush's media coverage generally increased in volume throughout the window considered here, though there does not seem to be a trend that closely connects his "Bushisms" to this increase. Figure 3 demonstrates that the IEM price for Bush is very responsive to his performance in the primary races, as it declines significantly after his loss in the New Hampshire primary, before increasing again with his victory in South Carolina's.

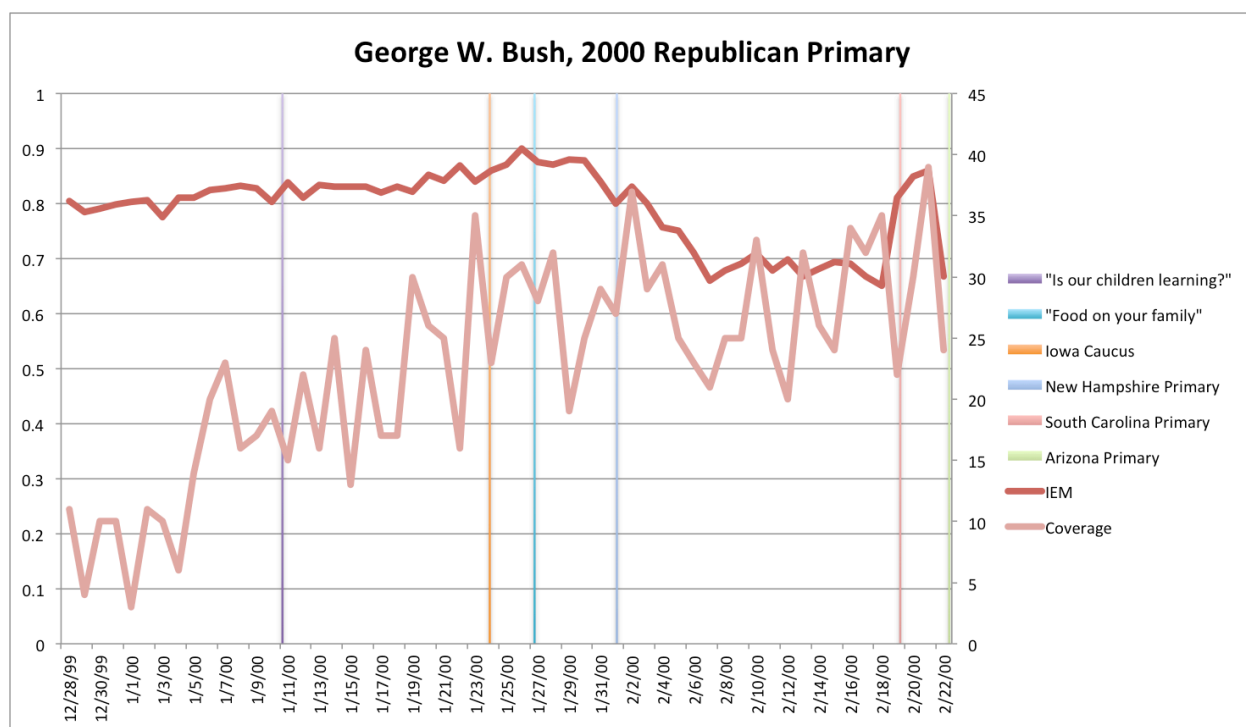


Figure 3. George W. Bush, 2000 Republican Primary Campaign

Bush's gaffes did not attract significant attention themselves, as shown in Figure 4. The malapropisms to which Bush was prone were an expected component of his personality, and while all gaffes are trivial in nature, Bush's tendency to mix up his words is exceedingly so. That said, coverage of Bush tended to be more positive when his gaffes were not part of the discussion, as they could occasionally lead to questioning of whether he had the intellect

required for success in the presidency (Allen 2000). The most negative coverage experienced by Bush occurred after McCain's clear victory in the New Hampshire primary. The viability of the establishment-favored Bush was openly questioned during this period, as McCain drew praise from a wide audience (Milbank 2000).

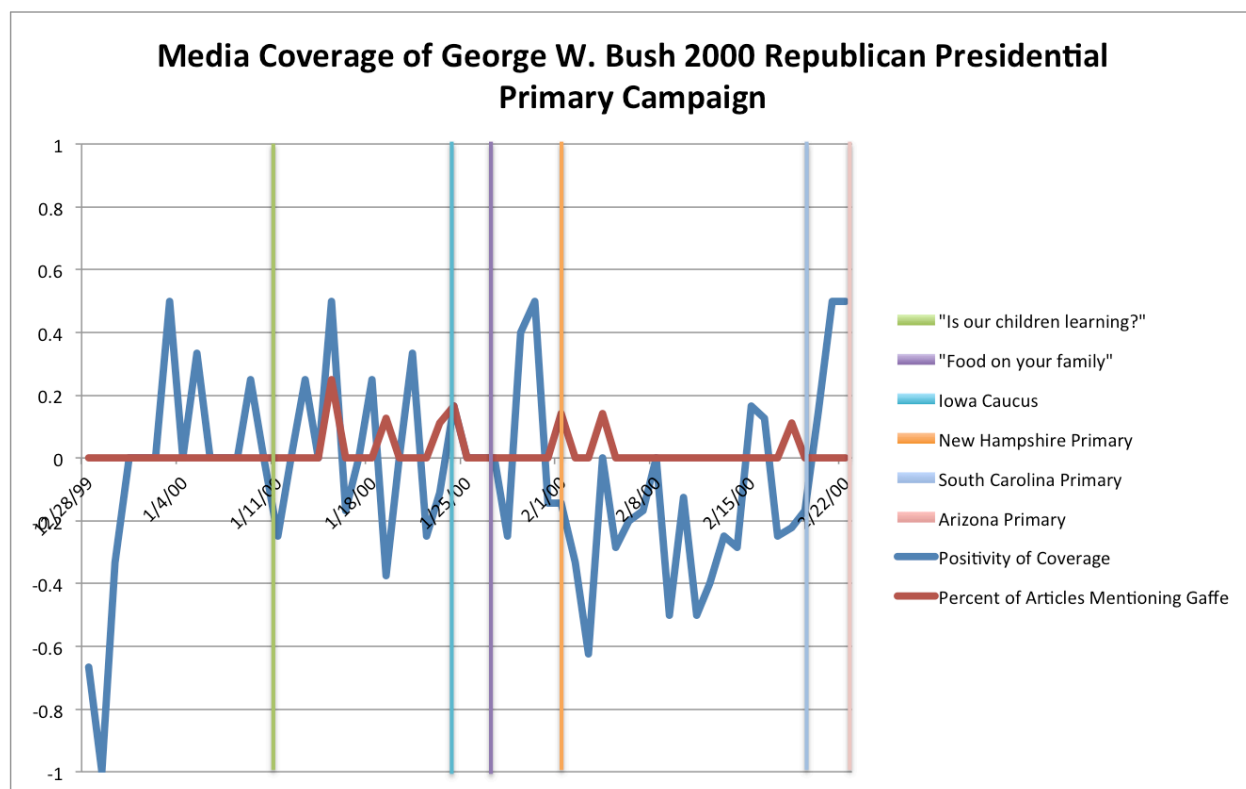


Figure 4. George W. Bush Primary Campaign Coverage

Major Party Presidential General Elections

The 2000 presidential election pitted Vice President Albert Gore against Texas Governor George W. Bush. The race was famously closely contested, as the two very different candidates competed for voters' support. The first debate held between Vice President Gore and Governor Bush occurred on October 3rd, 2000 at the University of Massachusetts. Heading into the debate, the race was tight, with Gore as a moderate favorite. While the event was initially viewed to be

somewhat of a draw (Moore 2000), the week of discussion following it would not be favorable to Gore. At this debate, the stark contrast between Bush--who as noted in the previous segment was thought of as personable but perhaps intellectually lacking for the presidency-- and Gore-- a cautious speaker, who cultivated an image as a more cerebral option-- was clear. Throughout the first debate, Gore, who had a reputation for being a policy wonk, was quick to use facts and statistics, while Bush used a more personal approach (Lawrence and Page 2000). In a column for *Salon*, Jake Tapper summarized the event, saying “Gore's still unlikable; Bush still seems dumb. Feels like a tie.” The general sentiment among political pundits seemed to be that the debate lacked a clear winner, with some suggested that what prevented Gore from defeating Bush was his reactions to Bush’s statements (Moore 2000).

The debate stayed mostly civil, with both candidates giving the issues significant focus. Both candidates attempted to be pleasant throughout the debate, and in general, the event lacked many of the personal attacks that debates can be expected to contain. However, throughout the course of the debate, when Governor Bush would say something that Vice President Gore disagreed with, the latter would visibly and audibly react. Gore’s sighing, smirking, and eye rolling made him seem arrogant (Benedetto 2000), and while he may have bested Bush on the issues, the negative impression that he made was lasting.

A USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll conducted on October 6th and 7th indicated that while voters felt Gore was smarter than Bush, they liked Bush better. Gore still lead in this poll, but nearly every poll taken in the aftermath of the debate showed Bush gaining on him. The turnaround in this poll was attributed by its pollster, Mark Rozell of Catholic University, to Gore’s “smart-alecky performance in the debate” (Benedetto 2000). In comparison with a poll conducted just after the parties’ conventions, voters now found Gore to be less “honest and

trustworthy.” Fewer voters also felt that Gore “[cared] about the needs of people like you.”

While Gore lost ground in these categories, Bush gained it. After the conventions, 42% of voters found Gore to be honest and trustworthy; 39% felt the same about Bush. After the first debate, only 34% thought of Gore as honest and trustworthy, with 48% agreeing that this description fit Bush (Benedetto 2000). While Gore still led polls at this time, his lead was shrinking, and voters were finding him increasingly unlikable. In a letter to the editor published in the October 5th edition of the *New York Times*, a voter summarized her impression of the debate, saying that “The loud sighs, cocky smiles and interruptions provided me with more information in five minutes than did 90 minutes of listening to the candidates' rehearsed answers” (White 2000). A focus group conducted after the debate on undecided Florida voters did say that Gore had won the debate. However, the voters described him as arrogant, condescending, and too lawyer-like. One member of the group even pointed out Gore’s sighing specifically as a reason that his performance was not likable. Another said that what he was looking for was “the kinder, gentler candidate” (Hampson 2000). While voters and pundits may have been impressed with Gore’s knowledge, it is clear that he had not charmed voters, or convinced them of his likability.

Both polls and the Iowa Electronic Market indicated a spike for Gore on the day after the debate, as he was being declared the slight winner of the event. However, in the week between the first and second debate, Gore slipped approximately 5% in the polls, and his IEM share price fell from 0.6 to 0.552. Responding to the criticism about his sighing and likability, Gore seemed to enter the second debate with a strategy of being overly civil. This however, allowed Bush to attack Gore without consequence, and make claims without being challenged (Tapper 2000). Rattled by the impression left by his first debate performance, Gore’s campaign continued to lose ground in the week after the second debate. Throughout the course of the campaign, Gore would

not top the position he was in on the day after he had “won” the first debate, and both measures of his chance to win the election steadily fell.

Figure 5 indicates Gore’s chances in the IEM prediction market, as well as his daily polling standing, and the amount of articles he was discussed in in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. The peak of Gore’s coverage during this period of the election came in the wake of his first debate with Governor Bush, as the candidates’ performance was deliberated upon. Immediately after the debate, both Gore’s polling and IEM share price trended upward, but as the coverage of his debate performance peaked, both of these predictors began to fall, a trend that they would continue to follow for the next four weeks.

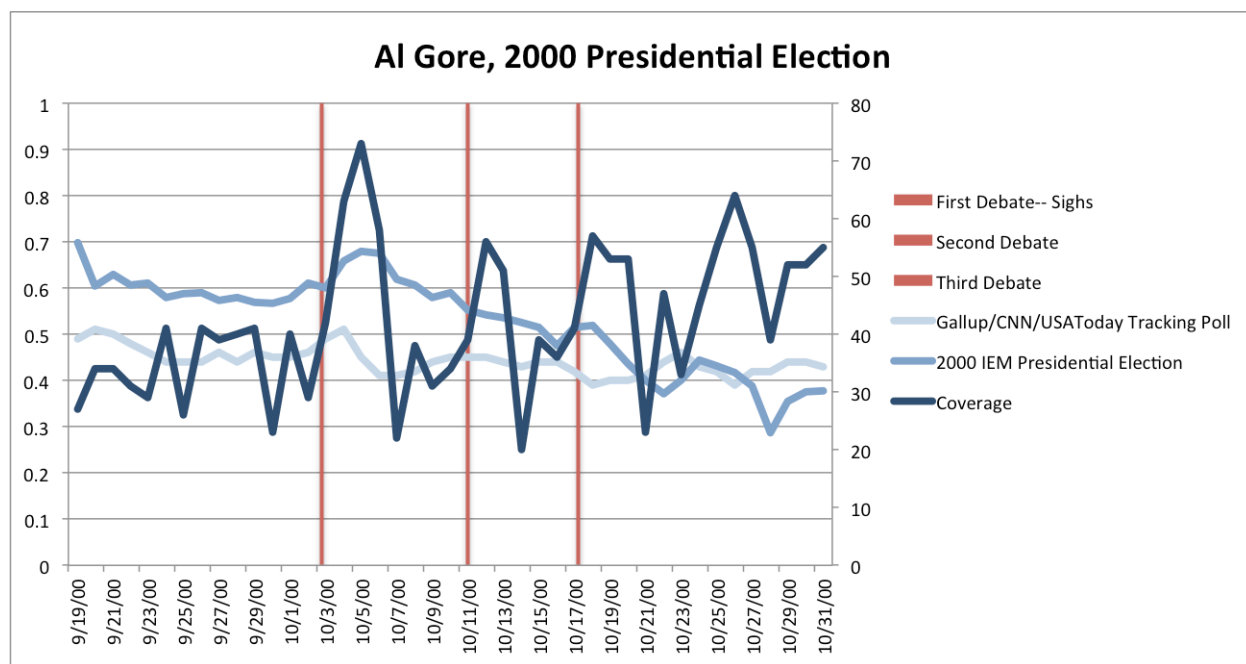


Figure 5. Al Gore, 2000 Presidential General Election

After the first presidential debate, discussion of focus groups, and analysis of both the content and style of the candidates’ performances were considered as the national media evaluated the debate’s victor. Gore’s sighing was included in this analysis, and most frequently

it was referenced in analysis of the first debate, or in articles published directly in advance of the second debate, as shown in Figure 6. Gore's performance in the first debate did not seem to garner significant attention in the media coverage after the second debate had occurred.

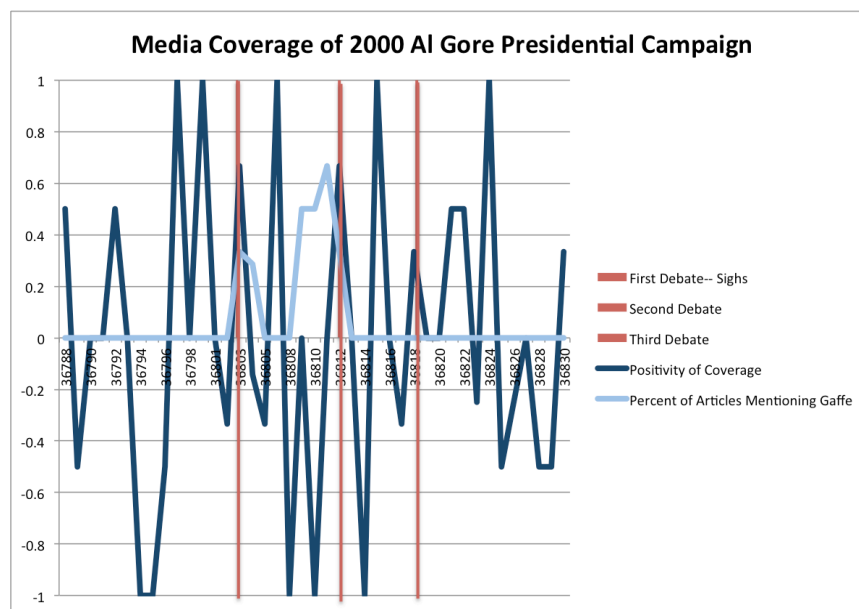


Figure 6. Al Gore Presidential Campaign Coverage

Strong partisans may also be further polarized by candidates making gaffes. A 2000 Pew Research Center poll that suggested that Gore's personality may have been costing him votes to the more personable Bush shows the support enjoyed by both candidates from strong partisans both before and after the debate. After Gore's arrogant performance, he went from holding the support of 90% of ideologically liberal Democrats to holding 89% of their support. However, this group shifted more into the "don't know" category than they did to Bush. In September, Bush held 5% of liberal Democrat votes, but after the debate, he had only 1%. Among conservative Republicans, the same trend existed, but opposite. Gore's support among this group stayed steady at 5% both before and after the debate, and Bush's support increased, but only by a very small amount, as he held 91% of conservative Republicans before the debate, and 92% after it had occurred (Kohut 2000).

Major Party Vice Presidential Candidates

The case selected for vice presidential candidates appearing on major party tickets is Sarah Palin, John McCain's running mate in 2008. Palin, the 44 year old Governor of Alaska, was seen as a surprising pick to be McCain's running mate and the first woman on a GOP presidential ticket (Bumiller and Cooper 2008). Prior to her being elected to be governor in 2006, Palin had been the mayor of a small Alaskan town called Wasilla. In the 2006 gubernatorial race, Palin had challenged her party's establishment, calling for reform from an outsider, and she won in a landslide, in large part due to her youth and charm (Yardley 2008). It was speculated that McCain had selected Palin to offset the youthful Barack Obama, who the Democrats had nominated, as well as to win over some of Hillary Clinton's supporters who may have been unhappy with Obama's primary defeat of their candidate of choice. However, Palin's political stances were very dissimilar from Clinton's, with their only real similarity being that they are both women. On the whole, McCain's unexpected pick was viewed as bold, but rash and panicky (Baker 2008).

Almost immediately, accusations began to be made that the McCain campaign was intentionally keeping Palin away from journalists. In the first month after her nomination, Palin had done two interviews, had not held any news conferences, and had responded to only one question from the reporters who were tasked with following her along the campaign trail. Conversely, her Democratic counterpart, Senator Joe Biden, had held four press conferences and participated in 89 interviews (Kurtz 2008). So, the series of interviews that Palin agreed to do

with Katie Couric of *CBS Evening News* were bound to be newsworthy. These interviews began airing on September 24th, and contained a number of moments that were rather unflattering for the vice presidential nominee.

During the Couric interviews, Palin was said to look noticeably uncomfortable. Palin told Couric that, in order to avoid a second Great Depression, her running mate, Senator McCain, would be reforming Wall Street. Couric asked for specific example of how this would be accomplished, or where there was evidence of banking reform in McCain's record. Palin struggled to find examples, telling Couric "I'll try to find some and I'll bring them to you" (Kurtz 2008).

She doubled down on a previously derided comment about how an ability to see Russia from her home state of Alaska gave her foreign policy experience. She explained that Alaska's neighbors on both sides are foreign countries, and that her involvement with Russia included "trade missions" and even national security considerations. Palin had not ever met a foreign head of state until September 23rd, the day before her interviews with Couric began to air (Arthur 2008). Palin generally failed to discuss policy specifics, instead sharing her personal views about a number of different subjects. In a September 30th installment of the interviews, Palin failed to name a single newspaper or magazine that she reads, saying that she reads "Um, all of them, any of them that have been in front of me over all these years" (MacGillis 2008). Palin also failed to name a single Supreme Court decision that she had disagreed with, besides *Roe v. Wade* (Mak 2012).

Palin's discomfort with the interviews was clear, and the answers that she provided left her vulnerable to attacks of her qualification for the position. Famously, Tina Fey and Amy Poehler acted in a sketch on the September 27th edition of *Saturday Night Live* in which Fey

portrayed Palin and Poehler played Couric. Some of Fey's lines in this sketch were quoted verbatim from the answers that Palin had given in the interview, and she also joked about needing to "phone a friend" (Bloom 2008). An editorial in the September 28th edition of the Washington Post labeled Palin as "clearly out of her league," and unable to provide answers to questions that include an appropriate level of content (Parker 2008). Altogether, the Couric interview was seen as disastrous for Palin having exposed her weaknesses in a nature that remained salient in the news cycle for a full week, due to the interview's multiple installments.

Despite the universally negative reception to Palin's interview with Couric, there was no clear impact on the polls. Using a national aggregate of polls asking voters to choose between the Obama Biden ticket and McCain and Palin's, the McCain Palin ticket lost less than 1% of the 44.5% that they held before Couric's interview with Palin. However, the Iowa Electronic Market share price was much less favorable to McCain-Palin within this timeframe. The day before the first of the Couric interviews aired, a share in a McCain-Palin victory with a return of \$1 sold for \$0.457. Two weeks after the last of the Couric interviews, this price was practically a third of what it had been, now being sold at \$0.167.

Polls had showed concern about Palin's ability to perform in the role that she was running for prior to the Couric debates airing. In a poll that was conducted a week before the interviews, 62% of voters said that they were concerned if Palin had to step in as president, while only 33% thought that she was qualified for that role. Three days after the interviews started airing, an ABC News/Washington Post poll showed that 32% of voters were less likely to vote for the McCain ticket because of Palin. At the beginning of September, only 19% of respondents had said that this was the case. From mid-September until Election Day, the Obama campaign would continue to open an increasingly large lead. Though many factors, such as Obama's

popularity, and the 2008 financial crisis can likely be considered causes for this, it does not appear that Palin's presence on the ticket was helpful to McCain's prospects. Ultimately, McCain and Palin lost by 7.3 percentage points.

A CBS News poll conducted both shortly before and after the interview's airing does show some small movement, however it seems to be a minimal impact. Whereas 9% of Republicans supported Obama/Biden prior to the interview, 12% did after the interview's airing. According to the same poll, 9% of Democrats had supported the McCain/Palin ticket prior to the interview, but only 8% did after the Couric interview aired. McCain/Palin did not lose support among Republicans during this time frame, but Obama/Biden's support among Democrats rose by two percent, from 83% to 85%. Ultimately, support for the Obama/Biden ticket did continue to grow after Palin's gaffe, but not by a striking amount.

Figure 7 shows no noticeable spike in Palin's media coverage in response to her interview with Couric. While the interview was poorly received, it did not generate additional attention for Palin. Rather than her gaffe being a focus, Palin instead received her most significant media attention in the days following her debate against Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Joe Biden. The polling figures for the McCain-Palin campaign also do not show much impact from Palin's interview, and while the ticket's IEM share price fell significantly after Palin's interview, this seems to be part of a larger trend.

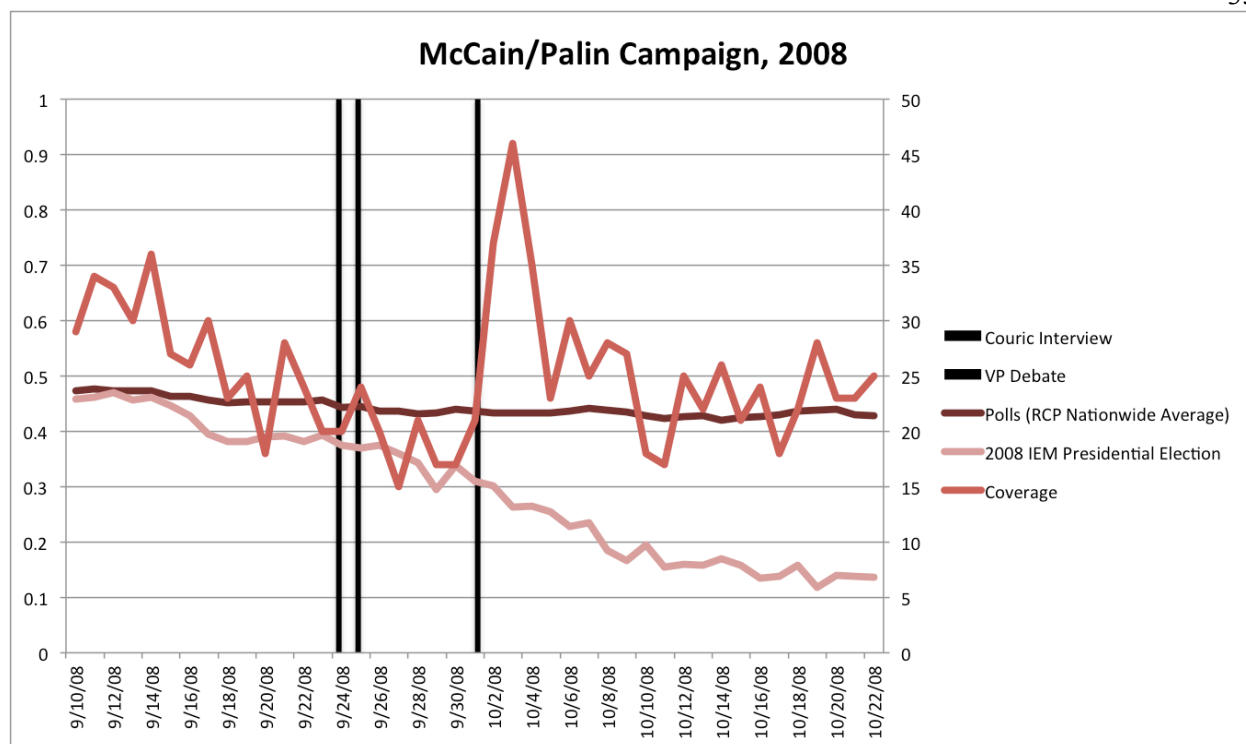


Figure 7. John McCain/Sarah Palin, 2008 Presidential General Election

Overall, Palin's coverage during this period trended toward the negative. However, one of the periods with the highest amount of negativity occurred immediately after Palin's interview with Couric. Despite this, Figure 8 shows that coverage of the gaffe did not continue for much more than a week after its occurrence. Palin appeared on a major party ticket, making her entire schedule newsworthy and volume of coverage relatively high. Therefore, additional news about Palin may have taken the place of additional coverage for her interview. Ultimately, the unflattering interview between Couric and Palin may have contributed to voters' lasting impression of her, as polling indicates, and it certainly lead to some negative attention for Palin and the McCain campaign, but it was not a mistake that would play a long-lasting role in the 2008 election media narrative.

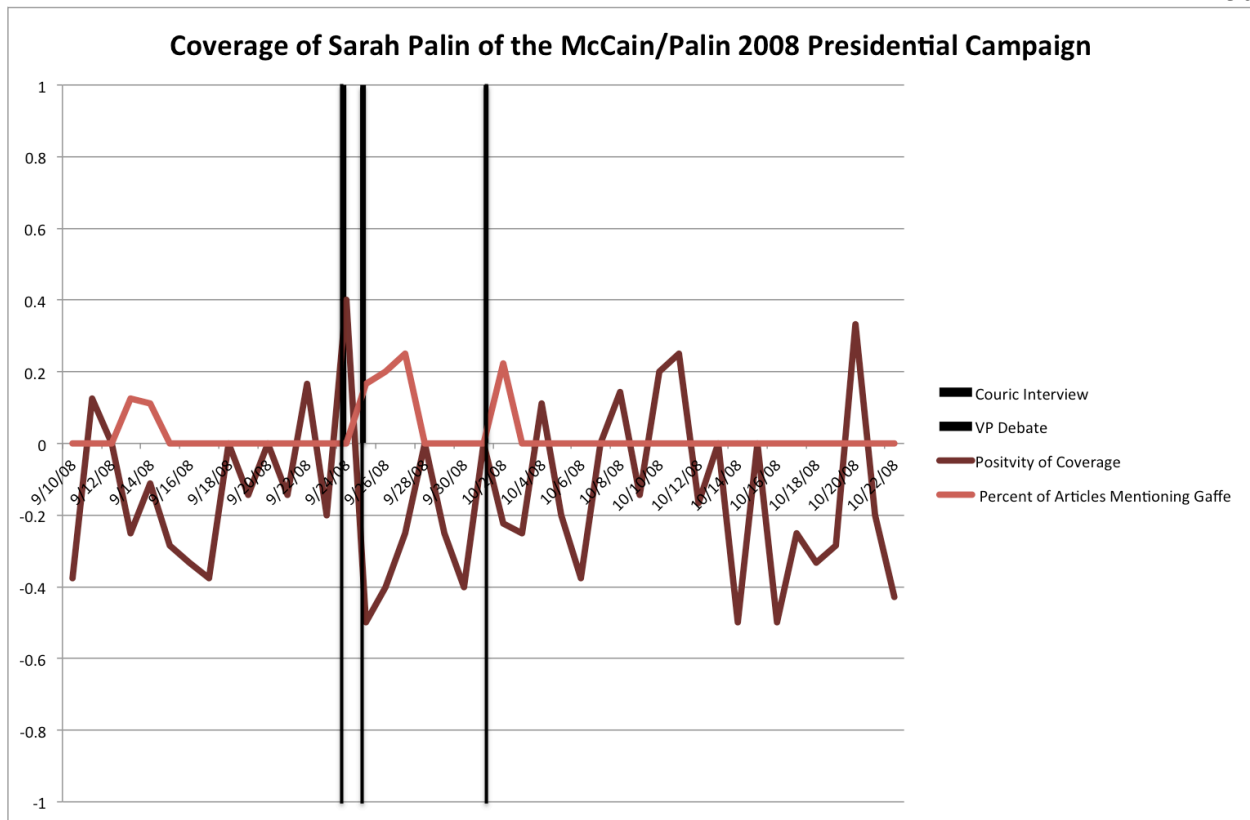


Figure 8. Media Coverage of Sarah Palin

Third Party Presidential Candidates

Third Party candidates do not gain significant traction during each election cycle. To understand the role that gaffes play when they do, Libertarian Gary Johnson's 2016 campaign will be considered. Johnson was expected to outperform the average third party candidate, and while he did accomplish this, the margin by which he was able to do so may have been limited by campaign miscues (Berenson 2016).

Johnson, the 2016 Libertarian nominee for President, was presented with an opportunity to significantly outperform the percentage of the vote that he earned in 2012, when his party first

nominated him. The major party candidates in 2016, Democrat Hillary Clinton, and Republican Donald Trump, were both viewed rather unfavorably, which left more room for third party candidates to gain support (Berenson 2016). In the late summer, Johnson's share of national popular vote polls crept towards 10%. In some individual states, Johnson's support was well above 10%, even reaching as high as 18.5% in New Mexico ("2016 Election Forecast"), a state where he had served as a Republican governor for eight years. However, after showing a potentially weak grasp of foreign policy in a series of nationally televised interviews, Johnson's appeal as an alternative to the unpopular major party candidates was lessened.

On a September 8th appearance on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, Johnson was asked by Mike Barnicle, a contributor to the show, what his strategy would be to address the conflict in Syria. Johnson's response was "And what is Aleppo?" To many, this seemed to signal that Johnson did not have a clear understanding of international affairs, as Aleppo is the epicenter of Syria's current conflict, and its subsequent refugee crisis. Johnson later claimed that he simply misheard Barnicle's question, and that while he may not know everything at the top of his head, he would be able to surround himself with the right people to supplement his knowledge and to provide responsible leadership (Zorthian 2016).

However, despite Johnson's claims of a simple miscommunication causing his mistake, he suffered a similar embarrassment less than three weeks later. On September 28th, MSNBC's Chris Matthews hosted a town hall session with Johnson and his running mate, former Massachusetts Governor Bill Weld. Matthews asked Johnson who his favorite foreign leader is, and Johnson suffered what he described as "an Aleppo moment", failing to name a single leader of any country. Eventually, he attempted to answer the question with the former Mexican president Vicente Fox, but was unable to remember his name. The Johnson campaign suggested

that he simply needed to stop and think before responding to Matthews’s question, but Johnson’s second foreign policy related mistake had damaged his credibility even further (Worland 2016). In the two weeks following Johnson’s second “Aleppo moment”, his polling average fell to 6%, showing that he had lost nearly a third of the support that he held prior to his first gaffe.

Figure 9 demonstrates the fall in Johnson’s polling, as well as the amount of media coverage that he received from major national outlets. Two of the three highest peaks of coverage for Johnson during this time period occurred immediately following his gaffes, the first coming on September 8, and the second peak coming on September 29. The highest amount of coverage received by Johnson was on September 26, a day in which the first presidential debate was held, which Johnson was notably held out of.

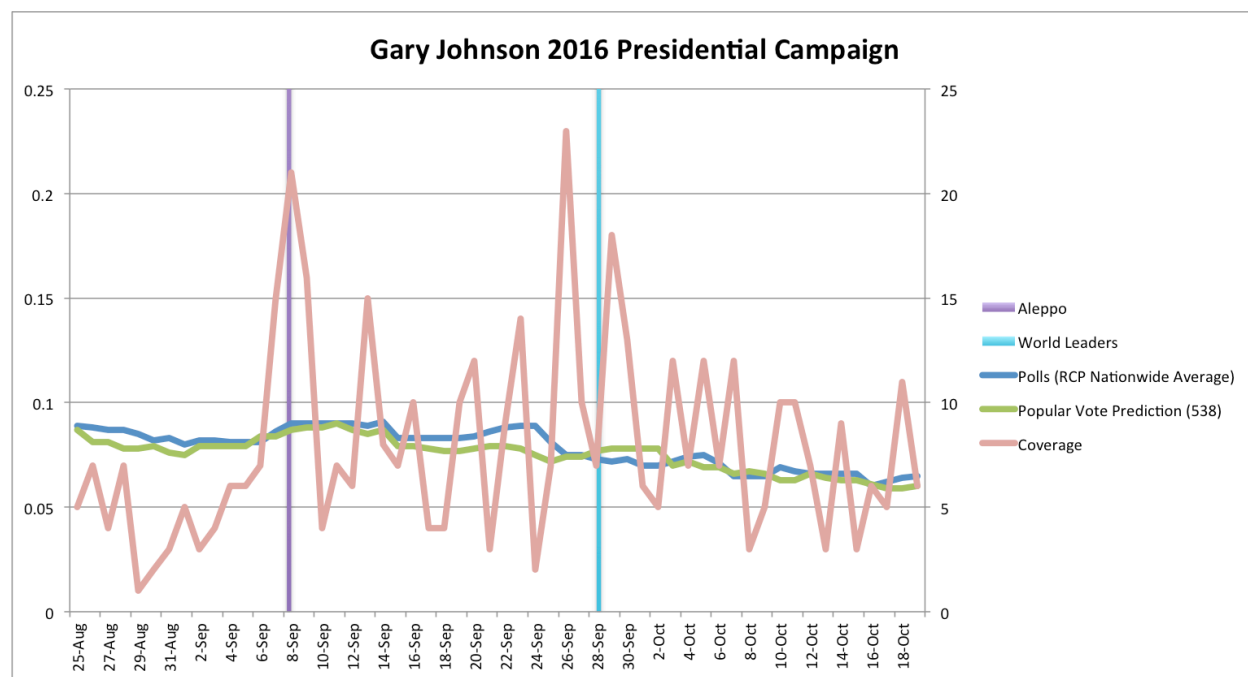


Figure 9. Gary Johnson, 2016 Presidential General Election

After both of Johnson’s high-profile gaffes, the media coverage that he received was overwhelmingly negative, and the gaffes were also the focal point of the narrative around him, as shown by Figure 10. In fact, on the day immediately following both the Aleppo gaffe and the

world leader gaffe, every article mentioning Johnson that was sampled described his recent misstep. These articles about the gaffe were also entirely negative. Perhaps in part due to the occurrence of the second gaffe, Johnson's error remained in the media narrative about his campaign for nearly a month after its initial occurrence.

Johnson went on to earn 3.9% of the popular vote (Berenson 2016). This was a significant improvement from his 2012 campaign, but was certainly underwhelming when considered in the context of the position that he held in the polls throughout August and early September.

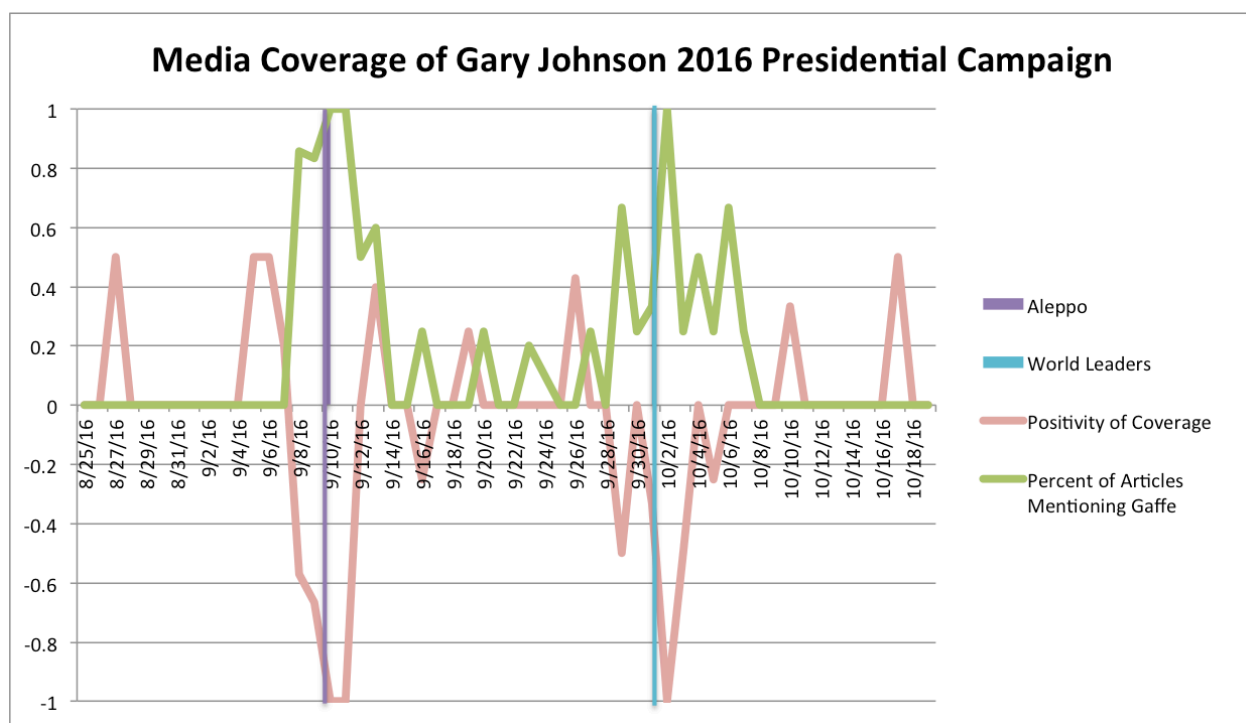


Figure 10. Gary Johnson Campaign Coverage

Senatorial Candidates

In general, senatorial elections do not receive the national coverage that presidential campaigns do. Similarly, pollsters and betting markets do not report on the state of senate

campaigns with the same consistency or frequency as they do for presidential elections (Silver 2014). However, this trend can be reversed in cases of exceptionally noteworthy candidates, as was found in the 2000 New York and 2012 Missouri Senate elections. The former of these featured a candidate who was already well-known nationally: then-First Lady Hillary Clinton. The latter attracted national attention in large part due to comments made over the course of the campaign by one of the candidates, then Congressman Todd Akin. These campaigns have been selected due to the availability of data, as well as the high profile gaffes made by the participants in them.

The 2000 New York Senate race ultimately featured a matchup between Hillary Rodham Clinton, who during the campaign was the First Lady of the United States, and Long Island Congressman Rick Lazio. Rumors swirled around Clinton's potential candidacy throughout 1999, though it was initially speculated that she would be running against New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who was viewed as an early favorite, before ultimately dropping out due to a prostate cancer diagnosis and an impending divorce (Polner 2007). What was once shaping up to be a close race between Clinton, who was accused of carpet-bagging and deceit associated with her husband's scandals, and Lazio turned into a decisive Clinton victory.

Prior to the debate between Clinton and Lazio, the race was expected to be at least competitive. Polls throughout the summer had showed the two candidates tied. Just before the debate, both polling and prediction markets showed Clinton opening up a small lead, but the race was certainly far from decided (Matthews 2016). On September 13 2000, Clinton and Lazio participated in a nationally televised debate, moderated by Tim Russert. In the debate, Lazio took on an aggressive approach, challenging Clinton about the usage of soft money—funds that are not subject to individual limitations. Clinton and Lazio had both expressed an opposition to

soft money, but neither had renounced its usage, as they did not want to give their opponent such an advantage (Nagourney 2000). Lazio used the debate as an opportunity to get Clinton to pledge that she would not accept this soft money. Representative Lazio had brought a document for he and Clinton to sign. When the discussion turned to soft money, he removed it from his pocket, crossed the stage and approached Clinton's podium, demanding that she sign it. Clinton refused, instead offering Lazio a handshake (Baumann and Caldwell 2015).

On the night of Clinton and Lazio's debate, most journalists seemed to believe that Lazio had won the night, positioning himself on a moral high ground above Clinton (Tomasky 2015). The pledge moment was one of a few that were mentioned in the press coming out of the event, but it was hardly being described as a turning point. However, as the debate's climactic moment was re-watched, and more voices began to provide commentary, the impression of Lazio's bold move changed. The Clinton team described Lazio's grandstanding as "menacing", and his stunt generally came to be perceived as an uncomfortable invasion of Clinton's personal space (Baumann and Caldwell 2015). Columns published in the debate's wake claimed that in that pivotal moment, Lazio had proven that he lacks the "gravitas" of a U.S. Senator. Lazio was now seen as a bully, not as a moral superior ("Lazio's Cheap Stunt"). For his part, Lazio defended the move. In fact, he called criticism of his debate performance sexist, telling reporters that the only reason that he was being criticized for making his "forceful point" was that he was a man and Clinton was a woman (Archibald 2000).

Throughout the summer, polls had showed a virtual tie between the two candidates, and coming into the debate, they indicated that Clinton held a slight lead. The Iowa Electronic Market's share prices also showed Clinton as the race's current favorite, but not by a particularly wide margin. However, the two candidates became separated in the fallout of the debate.

Voters, particularly women, who had initially liked Lazio had found his debate performance to be very off-putting. Clinton came out of this moment appearing calm, and with a sense of humor, whereas Lazio had been overly aggressive. To that point, a September 27th Newday poll found Clinton leading Lazio by 10 points, with 37% of respondents saying that they felt Lazio was conducting his campaign with too much aggression and negativity, and with more respondents finding Lazio unlikable than Clinton (Saul 2000). Clinton went on to defeat Lazio by 12 points. Interestingly, the Lazio moment was reconsidered in 2016, as Clinton and Donald Trump competed for the presidency, with many predicting that if Trump performed like Lazio had, Clinton would once again endear herself to voters, and women in particular (Anderson 2016).

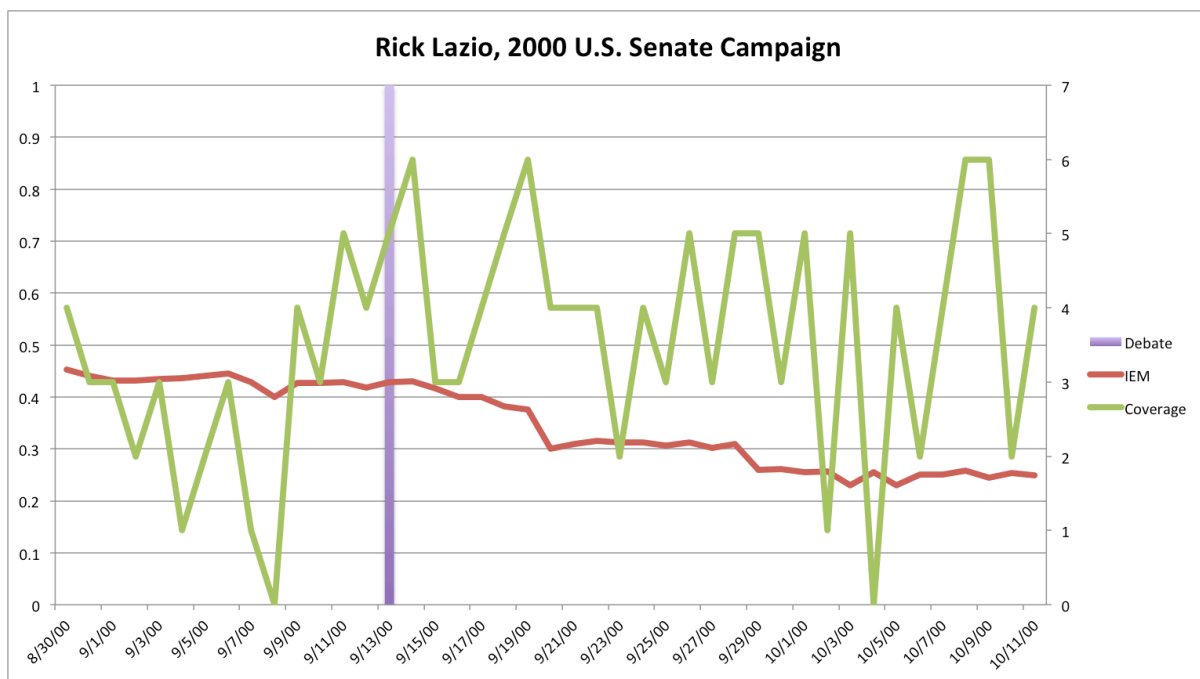


Figure 11. Rick Lazio, 2000 U.S. Senate Election

Coverage of Lazio's debate gaffe persisted for over a month after its occurrence, as seen in Figure 12. Though he was unopposed, Lazio only officially won New York's Senate primary on September 12, two days before his debate with Clinton (Squiteri 2000). The nationally

televised debate between the two candidates therefore received significant and lasting attention, and Lazio's aggressive maneuver was one of the debate's most noteworthy moments. The issue of soft money in the campaign was also one on which Lazio and Clinton exchanged barbs for a number of weeks after the gaffe, so Lazio's soft money pledge remained a part of the discussion. However, the two candidates did eventually agree to stop the use of soft money, leading to calls for a similar pledge to be used in other races nationwide (Kerry and Weld 2000). This created the potential for further mention of Lazio's gaffe, though potentially in a positive light, as there was praise offered to he and Clinton for keeping soft money out of their campaigns.

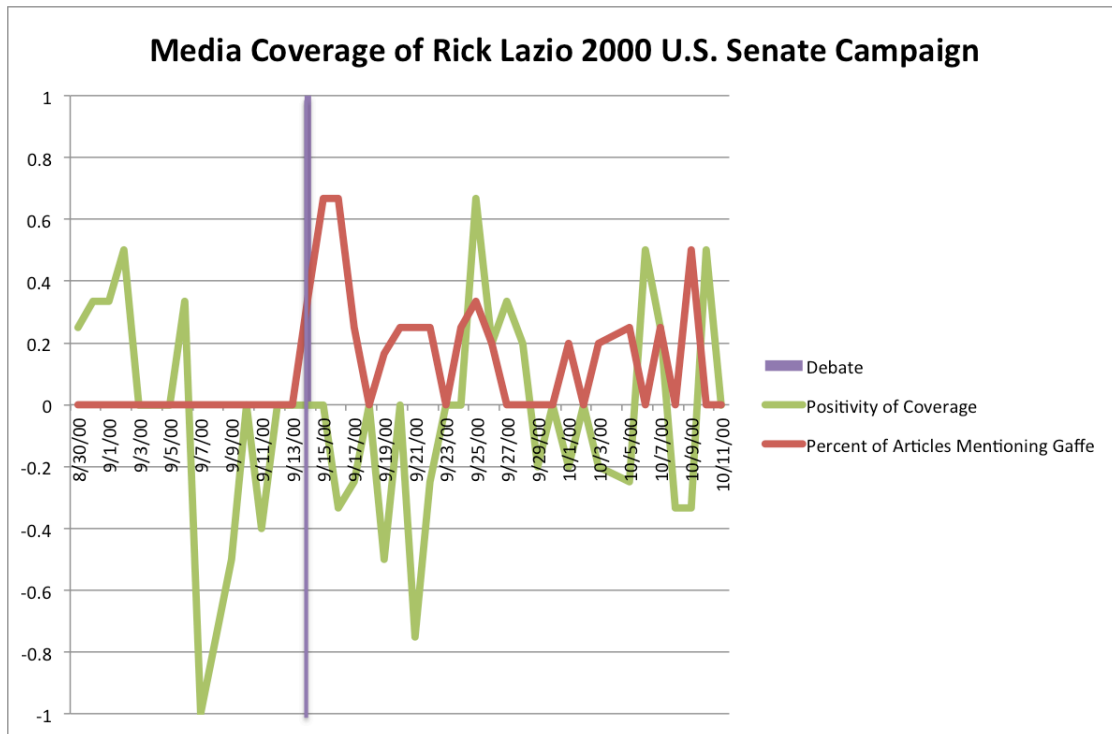


Figure 12. Rick Lazio Campaign Coverage

The 2012 Missouri Senate race pitted U.S. Representative Todd Akin, a Republican, against the incumbent, Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill. Missouri had become increasingly Republican leaning since McCaskill's 2006 election, so Akin was viewed as an early favorite. John McCain won the state in 2008, and in a 2010 Senate race, Republican Roy Blunt defeated

his Democratic opponent by 14 points (“Race Preview”). When considering this trend, one would expect that Akin was in a favorable position.

In mid-August, a Survey USA poll was released, which indicated that Representative Akin held 51% of the vote, and led McCaskill by 11 points. However, a week after the poll’s release, on August 19th, an interview with Akin aired on a local St. Louis station. In this interview, Akin was explaining his staunchly pro-life views. He suggested that in cases of “legitimate rape”, women’s bodies are able “to shut that whole thing [pregnancy] down.” This comment was immediately met with backlash (Blake 2012), as Akin’s comments were interpreted to be minimizing the trauma experienced by rape victims, and accusing many of them of misconstruing the events of their assault. Akin quickly released a statement, expressing empathy for victims of rape, and claiming that he had misspoken. The Romney-Ryan campaign also denounced Akin’s statement (Blake 2012).

In the first poll conducted after Akin’s statement, he still clung to a one-point lead. An August 20th poll released by Public Policy Polling revealed this tightening of the race, but also indicated some underlying problems for Akin. His statement was found to be inappropriate by $\frac{3}{4}$ of Missourians included in the poll, and 79% of the population disagreed with his comments. Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of those surveyed had a favorable opinion of Akin. Nearly 60% held an unfavorable opinion (“Akin Still Leads...”). However, other pollsters believed that this poll did not leave ample time for the gaffe’s impact to be felt in the poll. An August 22nd Rasmussen poll indicated that Akin now trailed McCaskill by 10 percentage points, and an August 23rd St. Louis Post-Dispatch/Mason-Dixon poll corroborated this, showing McCaskill leading by nine. The latter of these showed that less than a fifth of Missourians had a favorable view of Akin (McDermott 2012).

Even strong partisans may also have been left uncertain by Akin's comments. In the most recent poll conducted prior to his gaffe, a Survey USA poll conducted between 8/9/12 and 8/12/12, Akin held the support of 91% of Republicans and 14% of Democrats, which added up to an 11 point lead over McCaskill, who had only 80% of Democrats' support, and 5% of Republicans. The first poll conducted after the gaffe, an August 20 poll from Public Policy Polling showed McCaskill holding 88% of Democrats', whereas Akin had only 8%. Akin's support from Republicans was down to only 71%, with 10% of Republicans now supporting McCaskill, and 19% saying they were undecided.

After Akin's controversial statement, many local Republicans suggested that he drop out of the race, whereas Democrats hoped for him to stay in the race, as he represented a beatable opponent (McDermott 2012). From this point forward, polls indicated that there was a general tightening of the race, but McCaskill maintained her previously unlikely advantage over Akin. Only one poll that was released after Akin's controversy indicated that he was leading McCaskill, but this poll also showed Akin performing at a pace far behind Romney's, and indicated that almost 1/6 of the electorate was unsure ("Missouri Results"). When Missourians went to the polls, Akin lost to McCaskill by almost 16 points.

The impact made by Akin's gaffe was immense. After his comments, Akin rapidly went from a comfortable favorite in the campaign to a clear underdog. Voters expressed a clear discontentedness with his remarks, and this gaffe seems to be one that can most easily be attributed as the reason that a candidate lost his given campaign. This is perhaps unsurprising, as, among the gaffes that are considered, the triviality of Akin's is most questionable. Akin's views on rape and abortion could very well inform the actions that he would take as a legislator, making his comments hold some importance. However, if Akin is to be believed, the insensitive

and harsh stance that he took was the product of very poor self-expression rather than his legitimate holding of these unpopular views, with Akin claiming to have “misspoke” (Blake 2012). It is certainly possible though, that Akin was simply attempting to minimize the backlash that resulted from his sharing of his true views. Nonetheless, Akin’s interview, which was largely labeled as a gaffe (Blake 2012), changed the landscape of the Missouri Senate election.

Figure 13 shows the national media attention received by Akin after his “legitimate rape” comments. In what was previously a little-covered race, for a week after Akin’s gaffe he was the subject of between 19 and 55 combined daily articles in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. After this week, the coverage of Akin almost returned to its previous volume level, and he also saw his polling support begin to improve. However, it would be unable to reach the previous level of support that Akin had received.

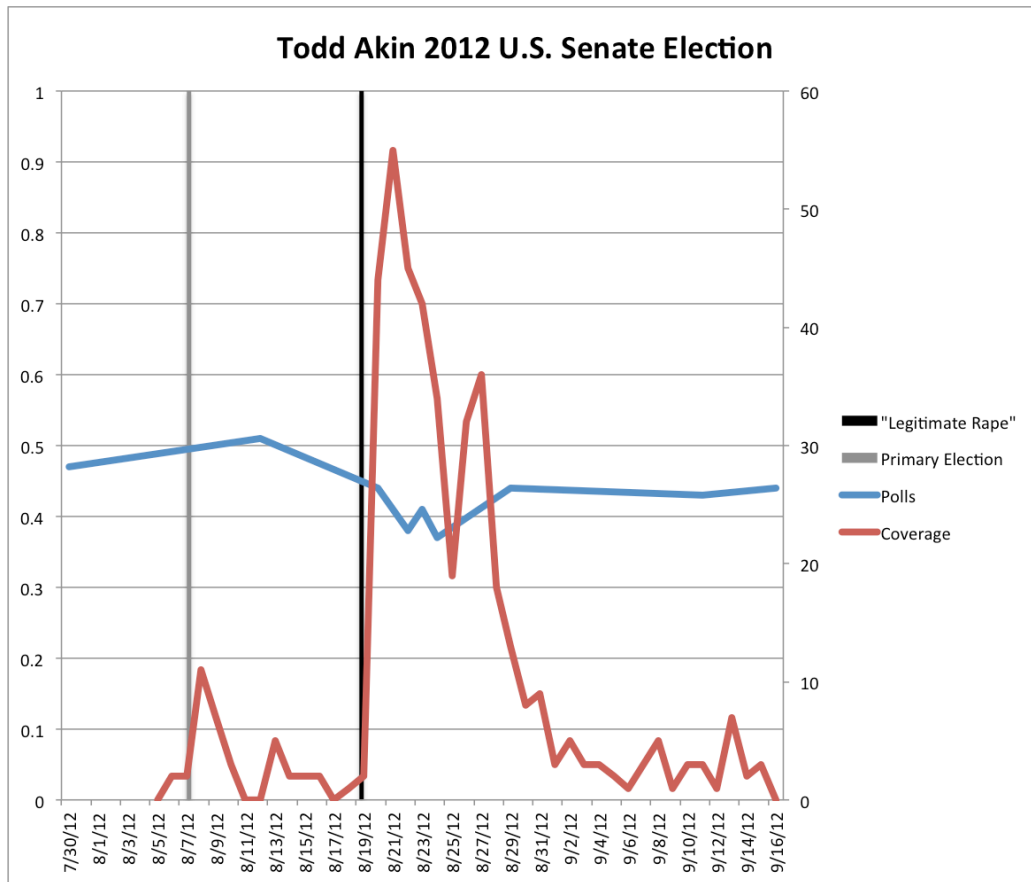


Figure 13. Todd Akin, 2012 Senate Election

The coverage of Akin was infrequent until after his gaffe, at which point Akin's comments became a part of any discussion of his campaign. Akin's remarks were universally decried. Many members of his own party not only denounced Akin's quickly recanted views, but went so far as to call for him to drop out of the race (Sullivan 2012). The argument laid forth by Akin was practically not supported or defended by anyone in the analysis after its occurrence. As the campaign went on it, it seemed that Akin could not be mentioned at all without also noting his controversial comments. In addition to coverage about the gaffe itself and the response that contemporary politicians had to it, Akin's comments led to some discussion of how the Republican Party would handle the topic of women's issues and abortion in its platform, as

the 2012 Republican National Convention was held less than two weeks after Akin's supposed misspeak (Shear and Weisman 2012). Figure 14 below shows the intense negative coverage received by Akin, as well as the frequency with which discussion of his gaffe became part of any mention of his candidacy.

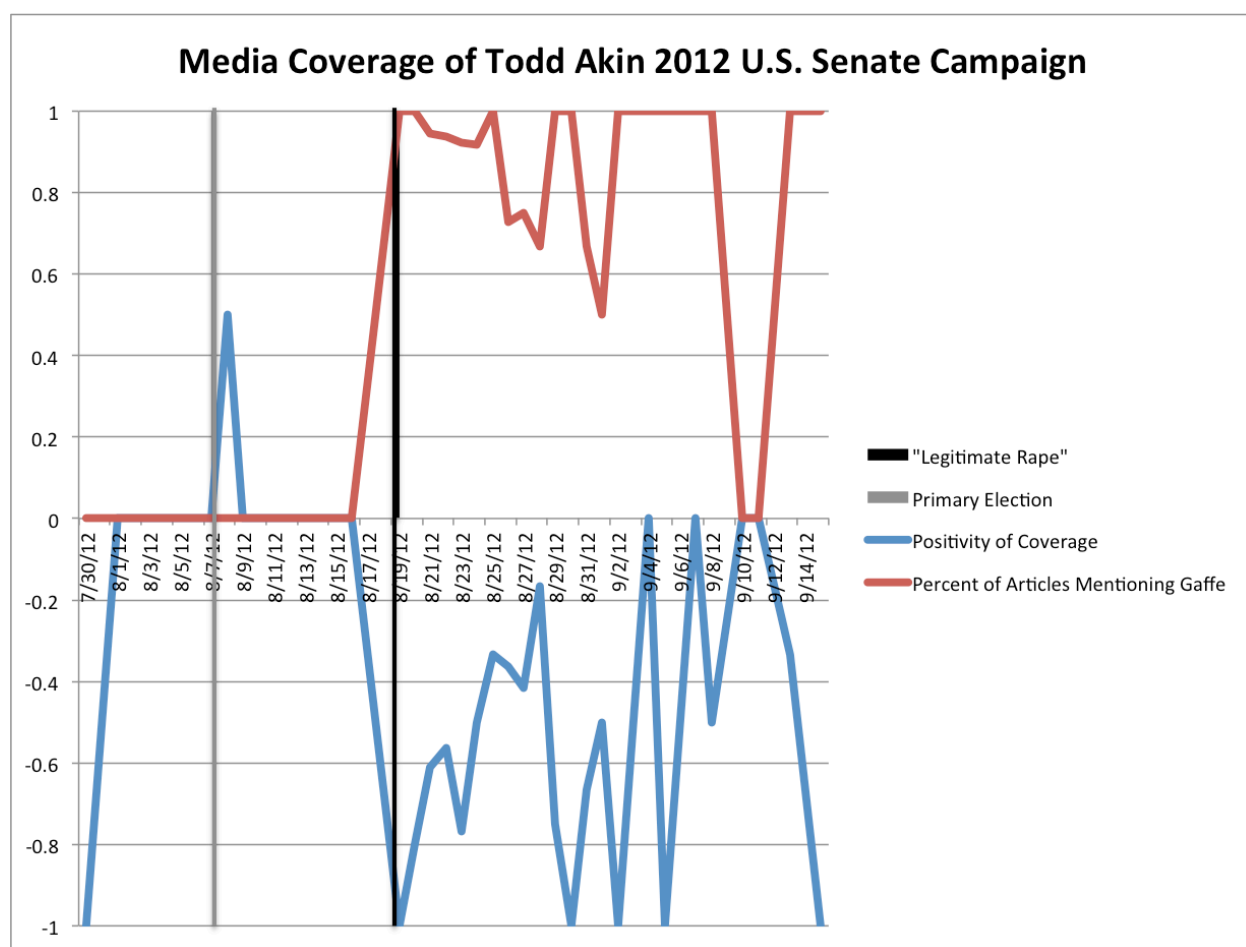


Figure 14. Todd Akin Campaign Coverage

Chapter 5

Conclusion

While it seems too simple to conclude that gaffes simply do not matter, it is difficult to measure the impact that they specifically have on moving polls and impacting an election, as there are so many other factors that can make a difference in the election outcome. In general, it does seem that a candidate is likely to experience at least a small drop in their polling after committing a gaffe that comes to receive a significant amount of media attention. The candidate did not see an immediate increase in his polling average following the gaffe in any of the cases considered. Generally speaking, simple misstatements such as Bush's seem both unlikely to make a significant impact, and unlikely to receive a massive volume of coverage. However, gaffes such as Gore's and Lazio's, which shaped voter's impressions of the character of the candidate, seem to have set in place a less temporary trend. The negative effect on a voter's impression of a candidate's character is the most detrimental aspect of a gaffe. For Lazio, and in particular Akin, the period of greatest national attention received throughout the entirety of their campaigns occurred immediately after their respective gaffes. This may have played a factor in shaping voter's still malleable opinions on these relatively unknown candidates.

Altogether, gaffes do seem able to shift a voter's opinion on the likability and characteristics of a given candidate, as shown by polling data taken shortly after the gaffes committed by Gore, Lazio, Akin, and Palin. Gaffes may have potential to be more detrimental when they confirm a voter's suspicions about negative characteristics associated with that candidate, such as Dean's tendency to be unhinged, or Gore's pompous attitude.

Curiously, a number of candidates considered, including Bush, Lazio, and Akin underperformed their polls on Election Day or Primary Day. While all three had seemed likely to lose based upon the polling data, the margin by which they lost was greater than expected. For Bush this may be attributable to the small amount of time between his gaffes, the polling, and the voting in New Hampshire, and there may also be some amount of the polling data lacking, as both Lazio and Akin lost Senate races, which are clearly less-covered than presidential campaigns. However, the potential that polls fail to fully encompass the damage done by significant gaffes may be worthy of further consideration.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“2016 Election Forecast.” *FiveThirtyEight*.

Abramowitz, Alan. 1988. “Explaining Senate Election Outcomes.” *American Political Science Review*. 82.2: 385-403.

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, Phil Paolino, and David W. Rhode. “Third-Party and Independent Candidates in American Politics: Wallace, Anderson, and Perot.” 1995. *Political Science Quarterly*. 110.3: 349-367.

Adkison, Danny M. 1982. “The Electoral Significance of the Vice President.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 12.3: 330-336.

“Akin Still Leads McCaskill by a Point.” August 20, 2012. *Public Policy Polling*.

Alberts, Sheldon. January 23, 2004. “Scream May End Dean’s Dream.” *National Post*.

Allen, Mike. October 1, 2000. “Bush’s Gaffes Are Back as Debates Near.” *The Washington Post*.

Anderson, L.V. September 26, 2016. “Hillary Clinton Should Hope for Another Rick Lazio Moment in Her Debate with Trump.” *Slate*.

Angrist, Stanley W. 1995. “Iowa Market Takes Stock of Presidential Candidates.” *The Wall Street Journal*.

Archibald, Randal C. September 20, 2000. “Lazio Says Debate Critics Are Sexist.” *The New York Times*.

Arthur, Bill. September 26, 2008. “Foreign Policy Experience is ‘Next-Door.’” *Bloomberg*.

Atkeson, Lorna Rae and Randall W. Partin. 1995. “Economic and Referendum Voting: A Comparison of Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections.” *The American Political Science Review*. 89.1: 99-107

Baker, Peter. August 30, 2008. “A Bold Move, With Risks.” *The New York Times*.

Balz, Dan. October 5, 2000. "Debate Changes Little; Both Sides Agree Flaws Emerged." *The Washington Post*.

Baumann, Nick and Patrick Caldwell. "Republicans Blew Their Chance to End Hillary Clinton's Campaign 15 Years Ago. Have They Learned Their Lesson?" March 19, 2015. *Mother Jones*.

Berke, Richard L. October 4, 2000. "Bush and Gore Stake Out Differences in First Debate." *The New York Times*.

Benedetto, Richard. January 31, 2000. "Polls Show Bush Losing Ground." *USA Today*.

Benedetto, Richard. October 10, 2000. "Poll: Bush more honest, likable Gore losing ground after first debate." *USA Today*.

Berenson, Tessa. November 9, 2016. "Third Parties Faded to the Background in a Shocking Election." *Time*.

Blake, Aaron. September 10, 2016. "Did Hillary Clinton Just Make Her Own '47 Percent' Gaffe?". *The Washington Post*.

Blake, Aaron. August 20, 2012. "Todd Akin, GOP Senate Candidate: 'Legitimate Rape' Rarely Causes Pregnancy; The Social Conservative Just Opened Up a Can of Worms, and Democrats are Smiling." *The Washington Post*.

Blake, Aaron. August 20, 2012. "Todd Akin's real sin; Rep. Todd Akin's Senate campaign might be effectively over, but not for the part of his comment that people are focusing on." *The Washington Post*.

Bloom, Julie. September 29, 2008. "Tina Fey Tries Another Palin Spoof." *The New York Times*.

Bump, Phillip. February 22, 2016. "John Kasich's Comments About Women Leaving Their Kitchens, Explained (Sort of)". *The Washington Post*.

Cobb, Michael D., and Andrew J. Taylor. 2014. "Paging Congressional Democrats: It Was the Immorality, Stupid." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47.02: 351-56.

Collins, Gail. September 15, 2000. "Public Interests; Winging it In Buffalo." *The New York Times*.

- Cooper, Michael and Elizabeth Bumiller. August 30, 2008. "Alaskan is McCain's Choice; First Woman on G.O.P. Ticket." *The New York Times*.
- Fastnow, Christina and Peverill Squire. 1994. "Comparing Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections." *Political Research Quarterly*. 47.3: 705-720.
- Gerhart, Ann. January 24, 2004. "Dear Dean Team: Tips on Defusing Your H-Bomb." *The Washington Post*.
- Getlin, Josh. September 14, 2000. "In a Heated N.Y. Senate Race, a Heated Exchange." *The New York Times*.
- Hampson, Rick. October 4, 2000. "Out of 11 in focus group, Bush loses one to Gore Still, Democrat was rated both good, bad." *USA Today*.
- Herbert, Bob. August 28, 2000. "In America; Political Tongue Twisters." *The New York Times*.
- Herbert, Bob. February 21, 2000. "In America; Lessons in Reality." *The New York Times*.
- Hulse, Carl. January 17, 2004. "The 2004 Campaign: Political Memo; As Voting Nears, Candidates Put Premium on Momentum." *The New York Times*.
- Hummel, Patrick. 2010. "Flip-Flopping from Primaries to General Elections." *Journal of Public Economics*. 94.11-12: 1020-1027.
- Hutcheson, Ron. January 29, 2000. "For Bush, Words Sometimes Fail. Verbal Gaffes Dog George W. On the Campaign Trail." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- Joseph, Andrew. April 26, 2016. "Ted Cruz Called a Basketball Hoop a 'Basketball Ring' While Recreating a Scene from 'Hoosiers.'" *USA Today*.
- Kenski, Kate. 2010. "The Palin Effect and Vote Preference in the 2008 Election." *American Behavioral Scientist*. 54.3: 222-238.
- Kerry, John and William Weld. October 3, 2000. "Money Needn't Win." *The New York Times*.
- Kinsley, Michael. 1984. "Jerseygate." *New Republic*.

- Karpf, David. 2010. "Macaca Moments Reconsidered: Electoral Panopticon or Netroots Mobilization?" *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7.2-3: 143-62.
- Kenna, Kathleen. February 21, 2000. "GOP Rivals Vow Knockdown Primary Fights." *The Toronto Star*.
- Kohut, Andrew. October 10, 2000. "Presidential Debate Clouds Voters' Choice." *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*.
- Kurtz, Howard. September 25, 2008. "Palin Pushes McCain as Market Reformer; In Rare Interview, Cloistered Nominee Stumbles Trying to Provide Examples." *The Washington Post*.
- "Lazio's Cheap Stunt." September 25, 2000. *The Observer*.
- Lawrence, Jill, Judy Keen, Susan Page, and Richard Benedetto. January 24, 2000. "Candidates Scramble Before Caucuses Tonight." *USA Today*.
- Lawrence, Jill and Susan Page. October 4, 2000. "Bush, Gore Remain True to Styles." *USA Today*.
- Lazarus, Jeffrey. 2005. "Unintended Consequences: Anticipation of General Election Outcomes and Primary Election Divisiveness." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 30.3: 435-461.
- MacGillis, Alec. October 1, 2008. "Palin Gives Beliefs, Demurs on Policies; Couric Queries Nominee on Social Issues." *The Washington Post*.
- Mak, Tim. April 2, 2012. "Five Best Couric-Palin 2008 Moments." *Politico*.
- Matthews, Dylan. September 27, 2016. "3 Winners and 2 Losers from the First Presidential Debate." *Vox*.
- McDermott, Kevin. August 26, 2012. "Poll Shows Akin Now Trails McCaskill in Missouri Senate Race."
- Milbank, Dana. February 15, 2000. "Candidate McCain's Front-Seat Driver; John Weaver's Been This Way Before." *The Washington Post*.
- Milbank, Dana. May 5, 2000. "What's on W's Mind? Hard to Say." *The Washington Post*.
- "Missouri Results." September 16, 2012. *Gravis Marketing*.

- Moody, Chris. July 19, 2015. "O'Malley Apologizes for Saying 'All Lives Matter' at Liberal Conference." *CNN*.
- Moore, Martha T. October 5, 2000. "Pundits declare a draw; voters are real judge." *USA Today*.
- Murphy, Dean E. September 19, 2000. "Mrs. Clinton Portrays Lazio as Bully and Derides his Tax Plan." *The New York Times*.
- Nagourney, Adam. September 14, 2000. "The Senate Debate: The Overview; Lazio and Hillary Clinton Clash on Donation, Taxes, and Trust." *The New York Times*.
- Neal, Terry M. and Lois Romano. April 2, 2000. "Bush's Style as Issue of Substance; Voters' View of Personality Traits Worries Some Supporters." *The Washington Post*.
- Norpoth, Helmut. 2004. "From Primary to General Election: A Forecast of the Presidential Vote." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(4): 737-40.
- Nyhan, Brendan. 2012. "Do Campaign Gaffes Matter? Not to Voters." *Columbia Journalism Review*.
- Parker, Kathleen. 28 September, 2008. "The Palin Problem." *The Washington Post*.
- Peterson, Geoff and J. Mark Wrighton. 1998. "Expressions of Distrust: Third-Party Voting and Cynicism in Government." *Political Behavior*. 20.1: 17-34.
- Pfiffner, James. 2004. *The Character Factor: How We Judge America's Presidents*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Polner, Rob. 27 November 2007. "When Rudy Met Hillary." *Salon*.
- Popkin, Samuel L. 2012. *The Candidate: What it Takes to Win—and Hold—The White House*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- "Race Preview." 2012. *RealClearPolitics*.
- Robinson, Eugene. February 8, 2016. "What Marco Rubio's Robotic Debate Performance Reveals." *The Washington Post*.
- Rottinghaus, Brandon. 2014. "Monkey Business: The Effect of Scandals on Presidential Primary Nominations." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47.02: 379-85.

- Rottinghaus, Brandon. 2014. "Political Scandal in American Politics: Introduction." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47.02: 358-350.
- Saul, Stephanie. September 29, 2000. "Poll Gives Mrs. Clinton a Clear Lead Over Lazio." *Chicago Tribune*.
- Savransky, Rebecca. March 7, 2016. "Sanders Responds to Questions on 'Ghetto' Comment." *The Hill*.
- Shear, Michael D. and Jonathan Weisman. August 22, 2012. "Akin Remarks Push Gender Issues to Center Stage." *The New York Times Blogs*.
- Shepard, Scott. January 20, 2000. "Kerry a Surprise Winner in Iowa; Future of Gephardt Campaign in Doubt as Democrats Begin Candidate Selection Process." *Cox News Service*.
- Sheppard, Kate. July 27, 2016. "Tim Kaine Was Not the Governor of New Jersey." *The Huffington Post*.
- Sides, John, and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Princeton UP.
- Silver, Nate. 2014. "A Gaffe Can Matter When It Motivates the Base." *FiveThirtyEight*.
- Squiteri, Tom. September 13, 2000. "Clinton heads list of vote winners N.Y. Democrats support first lady in Senate primary." *USA Today*.
- Stanley, Alessandra. September 25, 2008. "A Question Reprised, but the Words Come None Too Easily for Palin." *The New York Times*.
- Sullivan, Sean. August 31, 2012. "Karl Rove jokes, 'We should sink Todd Akin' report says; Former Bush aide wants congressman out of the Senate race." *The Washington Post*.
- Tapper, Jake. October 12, 2000. "Paging Mr. Gore." *Salon*.
- "The 'Misunderestimated' President?" January 7, 2009. *BBC News*.
- Tomasky, Michael. October 14, 2015. "Who Will Win the Post-Debate Spin?" *The Daily Beast*.
- Tesler, Michael. 2012. "Do Presidential Gaffes Matter for People Paying Attention?" *YouGov*.

Vavreck, Lynn. 2014. "Want a Better Forecast? Measure the Campaign Not Just the Economy." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47.02: 345-347.

Vavreck, Lynn. 2015. "The Scrutiny Phase: Hillary Clinton's Negativity Challenge." *The New York Times*.

Wang, Yanan. December 4, 2015. "Ben Carson Pronounces ' Hamas ' Like ' hummus ' at Event Hosted by Republican Jewish Group." *The Washington Post*.

White, Joanne. October 4, 2000. "Bush vs. Gore, Round 1: Now the People Debate; The Body Language" (Letter to the Editor). *The New York Times*.

Wilgoren, Jodi. January 26, 2004. "The 2004 Campaign: The Candidates; Hitting the Streets, the Road and the Bricks on the Eve of the First Primary." *The New York Times*.

Wolff, Michael. "Candidate.com." *New York Magazine*.

Worland, Justin. September 29, 2016. "Gary Johnson Struggles to Name a Foreign Leader in Interview." *Time*.

Yardley, William. August 30, 2008. "An Outsider Who Charms." *The New York Times*.

Yesner, Stephen. September 20, 2000. "Lazio Calls Debate Criticism 'Sexist'." *ABC News*.

Zorthian, Julia. September 8, 2016. "Presidential Candidate Gary Johnson Asks 'And What is Aleppo?'" *Time*.

Academic Vita of Thadeus Abramowich

(412) 559-1682

tad.abramowich@comcast.net | tsa5084@psu.edu

EDUCATION

- The Pennsylvania State University:

- *B.A. in Political Science*

August 2017

- *Minors in Chinese, French, Business in the Liberal Arts, and History*

HONORS

- Schreyer Honors College Scholar

- *Thesis Topic: Campaign Gaffes: An Analysis of When and Why the Mistakes of Politicians Matter*

- Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society

- Paterno Fellows Program

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- *Constituent Services Intern at the offices of U.S. Senator Bob Casey*

May 2016-May 2017

- Discussed constituents' opinions and recorded them

- Assisted with casework and other interactions related to helping constituents with problems that they faced with the federal government its agencies

- Researched potential events for the Senator to attend in the region

- *Research Intern at Alliance for American Manufacturing*

May 2016-September 2016

- Searched for and interpreted literature related to Alexander Hamilton's manufacturing policy in preparation for a project related to Hamilton's *Report on the Subject of Manufactures* and his other actions related to manufacturing

- *eIntern at United States Department of State*

September 2015-May 2016

- Assisted with research completed by the Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance on the impact of U.S. foreign aid on controlling disease

- Created visuals and graphics, which demonstrated trends in spending and its general effectiveness

- *Summer Intern at Holy Family Academy*

May-August 2014, May 2015-August 2015

- Interacted with major corporations and nonprofits around the Pittsburgh region

- Developed the orientation program for the school's inaugural class

- Planned and organized administrative functions for the school, including scheduling and transportation issues

- *Mentor at Penn State Undergraduate Speaking Center*

September 2014-May 2017

- Tutor students as they prepared to deliver speeches and presentations for their classes.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- *Penn State Lion Scouts Campus Tour Guides*

November 2013-Present

- *Prospective Student Relations Director*

November 2014- May 2015

- Organized events that allowed guides to conduct outreach with prospective Penn State students

- Led the organization's projects related to External Relations

- *Resident Assistant at Penn State Residence Life*

August 2016-May 2017

- Assist residents in developing a meaningful community that supports and promotes the ideals of personal and academic responsibility and engaged citizenship

- Serve as a highly visible campus leader and representative of the Office of Residence Life and Penn State University

- *Paterno Fellows Program Student Advisory Board*

August 2013-Present