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Turning Out the Base or Appealing to the Periphery? An Analysis of County-Level Candidate Appearances in the 2008 Presidential Campaign

Lanhee J. Chen¹ and Andrew Reeves²

Abstract

We examine county-level campaign appearances by the Republican and Democratic tickets during the 2008 general election. Our analysis reveals that the McCain-Palin ticket campaigned in a way that was quite different from the Obama-Biden ticket. McCain-Palin pursued a "base" strategy that was focused on counties where Bush-Cheney performed well in 2004. They also stayed away from counties that showed vote swings from 2000 to 2004 or population growth. On the other hand, the performance of the Kerry-Edwards ticket in 2004 was a very weak predictor of where Obama-Biden campaigned in 2008. They pursued a "peripheral" strategy that targeted counties that had experienced significant population growth. Their efforts to target peripheral, rather than base constituencies, have significant implications for our understanding of presidential campaign strategy.

Keywords

campaigns, elections, presidential candidates, campaign strategy

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American Politics Research 39(3) 534–556 © The Author(s) 2011 Reprints and permission: http://www. sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav DOI: 10.1177/1532673X10385286 http://apr.sagepub.com It comes as no surprise to anyone who follows presidential politics that the major-party candidates during the 2008 presidential election spent a disproportionate amount of time in swing states like Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. In fact, visits to these four states accounted for nearly half of *all* the campaign appearances made by the candidates for President and Vice President of the United States combined.¹ Both the political science literature and popular writings on recent presidential elections are replete with accounts of how presidential campaigns disproportionately devote their resources—in terms of both time and money—to the handful of swing states that generally decide the outcome of the election (e.g., Shaw, 1999c; Todd & Gawiser, 2009). Although the identity of the swing states may change from election to election, the fact that campaigns train their attention on these crucial states does not.

States, however, can be big and varied places. A candidate appearance in the panhandle of Florida reaches a very different audience—and results from different political and strategic motivations—than an appearance in Miami. Scholars measuring the impact of candidate appearances have, almost without exception, based their analyses on data that examine these appearances at the state level (Herr, 2002; Shaw, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; West, 1983).² As a result, we have an excellent understanding of which states candidates visit and why, but we know less about where *within* swing states presidential candidates choose to go.

Strategists and scholars alike suggest two competing strategies for where, within electorally important states, candidates and campaigns might spend their time in an effort to maximize vote share. First is a "base" strategy where candidates (and incumbent officeholders) target their core constituencies in an effort to turnout known supporters. In this framework, candidates avoid uncertainty and target those areas that have provided electoral reward in the past. In contrast, a "peripheral" strategy suggests that politicians will do best by targeting constituencies beyond their electoral base in an effort to win over swing and new voters. Indeed, boosters of this strategy argue that what matters most is finding new constituencies that can provide the necessary support to win an election. We seek to test these competing hypotheses to determine where, within swing states, candidates made appearances during the 2008 presidential general election campaign.

We find that the Republican and Democratic tickets pursued divergent strategies. John McCain and Sarah Palin pursued a base strategy by targeting core partisan counties where the Bush–Cheney ticket performed well in 2004. Barack Obama and Joseph Biden, in contrast, pursued a peripheral strategy. Indeed, high levels of Kerry–Edwards support in 2004 were not associated with more campaign visits by Obama and Biden in 2008. Instead, the Obama–Biden campaign pursued a peripheral strategy by targeting counties that had seen substantial population growth.

This article proceeds in five subsequent sections. We first review the pertinent literature and discuss the theoretical underpinning of our analysis. Next, we provide a general overview of candidate appearances during the 2008 presidential general election. We then present our empirical model and results, as well as a discussion of our findings. Our final section concludes.

The Places They Go: Theoretical Underpinnings

Presidential campaigns devote significant time (and therefore resources) to sending their candidates to rallies, town hall meetings, fundraisers, and other events across the country.³ Substantially, more ink has been spilled on other topics related to presidential campaigns, including the efficacy of campaign advertising (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Jamieson, 1996) or on news media coverage of the candidates (e.g., Kerbel, 1995; Lichter & Noyes, 1996; Patterson, 1993). The lack of attention is also notable given that campaign appearances also generate "free media" that has the potential to change electoral outcomes by reaching voters beyond merely those present at the event itself (Althaus, Nardulli, & Shaw, 2002; Herr, 2002). Where presidential candidates decide to make appearances also gives us an eye into party realignment trends and a party's attempts to broaden its voter base or coalition of support (Sundquist, 1973; West, 1983).

Scholarship on candidate appearances tends to either focus on how appearances influence electoral outcomes⁴ or develop explanations for how campaigns decide where to send their candidates for appearances. Recent scholarship suggests that candidate appearances can produce positive electoral outcomes for presidential campaigns (Herr, 2002; Shaw, 1999a). The studies are not, however, unequivocal in their conclusions. In Shaw's words, "Too much should not be made of the campaign effects discovered [in this analysis]" (p. 357). Hillygus and Jackman (2003) rightly suggest that viewing an electoral outcome as the *sine qua non* of dependent variables in studies on campaign effects may oversimplify the otherwise complex process of voter contact and response that takes place during the course of a general election campaign.

But where do candidates actually choose to spend their time and make public appearances? There is broad agreement regarding the states—or at least the characteristics of the states—that presidential candidates visit during the general election campaign. Scholars agree that presidential candidates tend to disproportionately allocate their resources and time to states that have the potential to yield the greatest reward in the electoral college (e.g., Bartels, 1985; Brams & Davis, 1974). Kelley (1961) and Colantoni, Levesque, and Ordeshook (1975) concluded that a state's competitiveness, in addition to its importance in the electoral college, determined the targeting of campaign resources. More recently, Shaw (1999b) asserted that a predictable electoral college strategy, which is formed by campaigns before the start of the fall campaign, generally dictates where campaign resources, including candidate appearances, are allocated.⁵ These studies provide insights into the allocation of resources on the state level but tell us little about the strategy within those states.

Our study examines whether, within states, candidates make appearances based on a "base" or "peripheral" strategy of electoral mobilization. Whereas scholarship in this area has focused on states, there is at least one exception (the only such study we were able to find) that addressed the question of where candidates make appearances within electorally crucial states. Althaus et al. (2002) concluded that candidates tend to visit larger media markets with greater concentrations of likely voters. They show that these appearances do not diverge substantially according to candidate partisanship and that counties in competitive states, as compared to those in secure states, draw the greatest number of candidate appearances.⁶ These are all useful findings, but they fail to move us toward a better explanation of *why* candidates choose to visit certain counties or areas within pivotal states.

The existing literature on campaign effects and related areas begins to lead us toward an explanation of the types of voters—and therefore the specific places within swing states—that candidates visit during presidential campaigns.⁷ There are two divergent schools of thought on the places within states where candidates might focus their campaign appearances. Our article aims to ascertain which of these two strategies, which we have termed the *base and peripheral strategies*, was employed in the 2008 presidential general election campaign.

Because candidate appearances have a mobilizing effect, some studies suggest that a candidate chooses where to appear based on a desire to shore up support from his electoral base (Althaus et al., 2002; Holbrook & McClurg, 2005) or to build coalitions out of a candidate's base constituencies (West, 1983). Therefore, campaign strategists concentrate on base voters because, although appearances may increase levels of political participation, electoral mobilization rarely changes preferences (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). One might

also expect that because core partisans are more likely to understand and process political information and messaging, campaigns would spend more time targeting the base (Zaller, 1992). The notion that a candidate will target her core supporters within a battleground state also finds validation in the formal literature. For example, Cox and McCubbins (1986) argue that votemaximizing politicians adopt strategies where they invest most heavily in their core constituencies, and somewhat less heavily in swing voters. This view is consistent with Fenno's (1978) classic exposition on members of Congress and his conclusion that they will devote a disproportionate amount of attention to their supporters during reelection campaigns.

The 2004 election saw the Democratic and Republican parties declaring that they would target core partisan voters over independent swing voters (Nagourney, 2003). By targeting resources toward core partisan voters, campaigns can be relatively assured of who a voter will vote for if she makes it to her polling place. Both literature examining campaign resource allocation (Kramer, 1970; for an overview, see Hillygus & Shields, 2008, p. 149) as well as other resources, including the distribution of policy benefits, (Cox & McCubbins, 1986; Larcinese, Rizzo, & Testa, 2006; Larcinese, Snyder, & Testa, 2008) argue that candidates should target their most ardent partisan supporters if they wish to maximize their votes. By making appearances in friendly partisan counties, candidates should see the best return on their investment of time (Cox & McCubbins, 1986).

On the other hand, there is literature suggesting that candidates should pursue strategies that target voters who are peripheral to their electoral bases (Hillygus & Shields, 2008). These voters are peripheral in the sense that they are so-called swing voters in areas with substantial electoral uncertainty (Shaw & Janowitz, 2003) or, alternatively, they are "new" voters who reside in areas with substantial population growth. Under this peripheral theory of campaigning, candidates pursue voters who, for one reason or another, are persuadable and, therefore, stand to confer a significant electoral benefit (Hillygus & Shields, 2008). A strand of the formal literature that examines the distribution of material benefits by political actors (although primarily outside of the United States) suggests that swing voters might actually be the more attractive target for a candidate (e.g., Case, 2001; Dahlberg & Johansson, 2002; Stokes, 2005). The formal literature also exhibits a distinction between risk-averse and risk-seeking candidates; whereas risk-averse candidates invest the greatest amount of time and resources in their core constituencies, riskseeking candidates might be more willing to devote time and resources to attract support from peripheral constituencies (Cox & McCubbins, 1986).

Candidate Appearances in the 2008 Presidential General Election

No resource in a presidential campaign is more valuable than the candidate's time. However, there exists an unsettled, but fundamental, question regarding resource allocation in a presidential campaign. Do campaigns pursue a peripheral strategy where they target resources toward cultivating new support, or do they pursue a base strategy where they target known supporters? This question is especially salient in the context of a presidential election, where campaigns must choose where they send their principals carefully because the amount of time they have to convince voters between the major party nominating conventions and Election Day is scarce.

In this section, we describe the data we use in our analysis and present a basic picture of the counties that were visited by the major contenders for the presidency in 2008. Our dependent variable throughout the analysis is county-level campaign appearances by the McCain–Palin and Obama–Biden tickets during the general election campaign. We gather this county-level data on campaign appearances from published accounts reported in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and verified them through NEXIS searches of major newspapers in swing states.⁸ We define the general election campaign as the period beginning with the day following the end of the 2008 Republican National Convention (September 5, 2008) and ending on Election Day, November 4, 2008.

The data set used to support our analysis includes: (a) county-level data on voting from the 2008 presidential election, gathered from publicly available sources by political geographer David Leip, and (b) a wide array of county-level socioeconomic and demographic data from the Census Bureau. Summary statistics for the key variables in the data set may be found in the appendix.

We begin with a basic inquiry: Where did the campaigns send their principals during the 2008 general election campaign? Table 1 lists the nine counties that received more than three visits from the Republican and Democratic candidates for president and vice president combined.

All of the counties in Table 1 were in states classified by either Real Clear Politics or the *The New York Times* as "battleground" states. It stands to reason that the campaigns did not wish to waste their candidates' precious time in states like California or New York, where an appearance in even a competitive county would not have yielded much electoral fruit in the winnertake-all scheme of the electoral college. This seems to run counter to the prediction that the most populous states will be the recipients of the greatest

County	State	Total appearances	Obama–Biden appearances	McCain–Palin appearances
Hillsborough	Florida	6	3	3
Clark	Nevada	5	3	2
Allegheny	Pennsylvania	5	I	4
Miami-Dade	Florida	4	I	3
Bernalillo	New Mexico	4	I	3
Cuyahoga	Ohio	4	I	3
Lucas	Ohio	4	3	I
Montgomery	Ohio	4	3	I
Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	4	2	2

Table 1. Nine Most Visited Counties in the 2008 General Election Campaign

number of campaign appearances (Bartels, 1985; Brams & Davis, 1974). Thus, we define our population of interest as these "battleground" states that were the targets of both the McCain and Obama campaigns.⁹

Florida's Hillsborough County, which includes the city of Tampa, was the most visited county during the 2 months of the 2008 general election campaign. It received a combined total of six candidate visits—three by Republican candidates (two by McCain and one by Palin) and three by Democratic candidates (two by Obama and one by Biden). Of the nine most visited counties, six had populations of over 1 million residents in 2006; in fact, the mean population of the 9 most frequently visited counties was just over 1.2 million people. The three smallest of these frequently visited counties each featured a recognizable (if not major) city within them—Albuquerque (Bernalillo County, New Mexico), Toledo (Lucas County, Ohio), and Dayton (Montgomery County, Ohio).

To begin, we examine the correlation between the counties visited by the Republicans and those visited by the Democrats in 2008. It is useful to compare these results to the similar designated market area (DMA)–level correlations among candidate appearances during the 2000 election presented in Althaus et al. (2002).¹⁰ We find that there was substantially less correlation between the counties visited by the Democrats and Republicans in 2008 than in 2000. As an example, the correlation between the DMAs visited by Bush and those visited by Gore in 2000 was .83. In contrast, the correlation between the counties visited by McCain and those visited by Obama was only .30.¹¹ Moreover, there was substantially less overlap between the counties visited by running mates in 2008, as compared to in 2000. The correlation

between the counties visited by McCain and those visited by Palin was just .26, whereas the correlation between counties visited by Obama and those visited by Biden was .2. These figures are substantially lower than the 2000 election DMA-level correlations between Gore and Lieberman (.55) and between Bush and Cheney (.66).

These differences suggest the existence of strategic divergence based on political party. It is well known that Republicans and Democrats were making appearances in largely the same states, but we find that within those states, they were visiting different counties. This analysis of the data allows us to begin to sketch out a basic theorem. That is, even within swing states, campaigns make systematic decisions about where (and, specifically, within which counties) they choose to spend their time. Perhaps more importantly, there are factors that can predict why candidates decide to go where they go. We posit that, at least in 2008, the two parties employed different strategies in determining which counties to visit. This is a hypothesis to which we turn in the next section of our article.

Empirical Model

This section models county-level candidate appearances by the Republican and Democratic tickets in the 2008 general election campaign. We examine where, within swing states, candidates decide to spend one of their most precious resources: time. Specifically, we determine whether each ticket pursued a base strategy by appealing to their core constituencies or whether they pursued a peripheral strategy that targeted counties with large electoral variability or major influxes of new residents.

Our dependent variable is the number of times either McCain or Palin (in the Republican specification) and Obama or Biden (in the Democratic specification) visited a county in a given swing state. We aggregate the appearances data for each of the campaigns, so the dependent variable includes visits by both the presidential and vice presidential candidates.

Because our goal is to gain an understanding of where candidates make appearances *within* swing states, the county is a particularly convenient and effective level of analysis. As other scholars note, a wide range of economic, demographic, and contextual variables are readily available at the county level (Cho & Gimpel, 2009). Following Shaw (1999a, 1999b), we also exclude visits to the candidates' home states. In addition to Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, and Arizona, we exclude Hawaii since Senator Obama was born there.¹² Including or excluding visits to these states does not change the substantive results of the analysis.

Our independent variables include measures that operationalize the candidates' base and peripheral strategies, as well as other demographic measures of county-level characteristics. To examine whether the 2008 campaigns pursued a base strategy, we measure the county-level partisan support received by each respective ticket in the 2004 election. This is included as the twoparty vote for Kerry and Edwards (in the case of Obama and Biden) or Bush and Cheney (in the case of McCain and Palin). If the McCain campaign allocated visits in accordance with the base strategy, then they should have visited places where the Bush campaign had high levels of success.

We include two variables that operationalize the peripheral strategy. First, we include a measure of electoral uncertainty of the county. If candidates engage in a peripheral strategy, then swing counties in swing states would be an appealing electoral prize. We follow Shaw and Janowitz (2003) and base the measure on the absolute swing in the two-party vote from 2000 to 2004. If candidates want a large potential payoff, they might visit counties with substantial electoral variability to convert opposed or undecided voters into supporters. Second, we include a measure to capture the influx of new residents (and hence new voters) into the county. As others have noted, growing population centers provide incentives for politicians to garner support among new voters who may not have solidified partisan affiliations (Barrilleaux, 1986; Dyer, Vedlitz, & Hill, 1988; Phillips, 1969). We include a measure of the percentage change in a county's population between 2000 and 2006. If candidates pursue a peripheral strategy, then those locales that have seen population growth are appealing.

In addition to measures of core and peripheral status, we also include a measure of the total population of the county. Hunters go where the ducks are, bank robbers go where the money is, and candidates go where the voters are. A county where 70% of its 10,000 residents are partisans is less attractive than a county where 65% of its one million residents are partisans.

In the all-or-nothing allocation of electoral votes, all states are not equal. States that are noncompetitive have a very low chance of ever receiving a visit from a candidate. Despite the enormous size and importance of a state like California to the national and world economy, it was largely ignored by the candidates during the general election campaign. In the meantime, the 1.3 million residents of New Hampshire saw one visit from Senator Obama, in addition to two visits from Senator McCain and Senator Biden each, and three visits from Governor Palin. Thus, state electoral characteristics make it highly unlikely that counties in certain states will be visited. Because of this, we define our population of interest as those counties located in states considered competitive in the presidential election. Accordingly, we only include states in our analysis that were classified as "battleground" or "leaning" states by *The New York Times* or Real Clear Politics.¹³ In different specifications of the empirical model, we take more and less conservative approaches; these alternate specifications do not affect the substance of our findings.

We also take into account the potentially reciprocal nature of campaign appearances. Candidates may follow each other to a particular county, although this is likely less of a problem on the county level than on the state level. Although the media tends to focus on a particular state as being pivotal, it is much less common to see attention being paid to a particular county. Of the 142 counties from battleground states that were visited during the 2008 general election campaign, 51 (36%) saw appearances by both tickets. The counties visited by both tickets tended to include major cities.¹⁴ We include models that both account and do not account for visits by the other ticket.

We include a number of county-specific demographic variables in the model. First, we include the percentages of a county's population who are Black and Hispanic. Second, we include the percentages of a county's population who are college educated, between the ages of 18 and 24, and older than 65 years of age, as well as the county's median household income.¹⁵ Because the dependent variable is count data, we use a Poisson regression to arrive at our empirical findings (Ramsey & Schafer, 2002). In the online appendix, we include alternative empirical specifications, which do not change the substantive findings of the results presented here.¹⁶

Results

Table 2 presents the model of county-level campaign appearances for the Republican (Column 1) and Democratic (Column 2) tickets in the 2008 general election campaign. The models show that the McCain–Palin ticket pursued a base strategy by visiting counties that supported Bush and Cheney in 2004. Counties that were strongholds of Democratic support were no more likely to see candidate appearances than other counties. As shown in Column 1, the level of partisan support in a county was a statistically significant predictor of whether the Republican ticket made an appearance but not a statistically significant predictor of whether the Democratic ticket made an appearance. Obama and Biden's strategy was more representative of a peripheral strategy, focusing on counties that saw high levels of population growth—places that McCain and Palin avoided. There is little evidence that either ticket pursued swing counties. Our findings show that McCain and Palin actively avoided these electorally volatile counties. Both tickets focused on counties with large populations and were likely to go where the other campaign had

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican vote 2004	3.367*	_
	(1.053)	
Democratic vote 2004		0.838
		(1.169)
Change in population	-0.037*	0.038*
	(0.014)	(0.013)
Swing 2000 to 2004	-I2.40I*	-6.486
	(6.064)	(6.387)
Population (logged)	1.269*	1.045*
	(0.115)	(0.130)
Percent Hispanic	0.002	-0.005
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Percent Black	-0.036*	-0.00 I
	(0.011)	(0.009)
Percent college degree	0.022	0.017
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Percent 18 to 24	0.017	0.045
	(0.037)	(0.035)
Percent seniors	0.032	-0.019
	(0.023)	(0.027)
Median household income (1000s of dollars)	-0.012	-0.042
	(0.019)	(0.023)
Democratic visits	0.471*	_
	(0.118)	
Republican visits	—	0.363*
		(0.112)
Intercept	-18.782*	-14.045*
	(1.853)	(1.654)
Ν	1482	1482
AIC	627.398	521.518
BIC	881.853	775.973
Log likelihood	-265.699	-212.759

Table 2. A Model of County-Level 2008 Democratic Campaign Appearances

Notes: Results are from Poisson regression. Dependent variable is number of visits by McCain and Palin (Column 1) and Obama and Biden (Column 2) to counties in battleground and leaning states from September to November 2008. Standard errors in parentheses. *p < .05.

also gone.¹⁷ Demographic characteristics offer little in the way of predictive power. Only the percent Black population in a county offers any statistically significant influence on where the Republicans campaigned. Predictably, the McCain–Palin ticket was less likely to campaign in communities that had a high proportion of African Americans. The number of people in a county who were seniors, Hispanics, college-educated, or younger than 25 years of age did not predict candidate appearances.¹⁸

Figure 1 graphically presents the findings with respect to the base strategy. Using the model presented in Table 2, we generate the expected number of county-level candidate appearances for the Republican and Democratic tickets. The comparison we draw is between the expected number of appearances in counties with high, as opposed to low, levels of partisan support.¹⁹ For the Democratic ticket, the difference is miniscule. The support that a county gave Kerry and Edwards in 2004 is a small and statistically insignificant predictor of Obama-Biden visits to that county in 2008. For instance, given a county in the 75th percentile of support for Kerry and Edwards in 2004, the expected value of Democratic ticket visits is 0.40. The expected value of Democratic ticket visits to a county in the 25th percentile of support for Kerry and Edwards in 2004 is just 0.36. Accounting for the confidence intervals, the difference between these two expected values is essentially zero. This is graphically illustrated in the left panel of Figure 1. In contrast, a county's level of support for the Bush-Cheney campaign in 2004 is a strong and statistically significant predictor of candidate appearances for the McCain-Palin ticket. For the GOP ticket, moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of support for Bush and Cheney in 2004 almost doubles, ceteris paribus, the expectation that a county will receive a visit (from 0.73 to 1.33). Whereas McCain and Palin pursued a base strategy, Obama and Biden pursued other geographic constituencies as they campaigned.

The data show that there was a stark difference between the behavior of the two campaigns with respect to the peripheral strategy. Figure 2 explores the relationship between population change and candidate appearances. As shown in Figure 2, places that had experienced population growth were more likely to be visited by Obama and Biden. The opposite is the case for McCain and Palin. For the Republican ticket, population growth in a given county was associated with a lower chance of being visited. Figure 2 shows the expected appearances for each ticket based on high and low levels of population change.²⁰ The magnitude of the effect is about the same for each ticket but of the opposite sign. For the Democratic ticket, the expected number of appearances increases from 0.30 to 0.42. The expected number of appearances decreases from 1.14 to 0.84 for the Republican ticket. These effects can



Figure 1. Effect of partisan strength of county on expected number of candidate appearances

Notes: The left panel models Democratic visits, and the right panel models Republican visits. In each panel, the dashed curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the lowest quartile of partisan support in 2004. The solid curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the lowest quartile of partisan support in 2004. The solid curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the highest quartile of partisan support in 2004. The level of partisan support in the county made no difference in the probability that the Democrats would visit, but a substantial difference in the probability that the Republicans would visit. Simulations are based on counties with a population of 450,000 with one visit from the other ticket. Aside from the quantity of interest (partisan strength), all other variables are set to their mean.

possibly be the difference in whether a county see the nominees during the general election. They also reflect the independent effects of population change while holding other more powerful predictors constant.

Also noteworthy is the extent to which the change in the Republican share of the vote between 2000 and 2004 negatively predicted visits by the McCain– Palin campaign in 2008. Figure 3 presents this analysis graphically. The Republicans avoided electorally variable counties, whereas no such effect was present for the Democratic ticket. The expected value for those counties in the lowest quartile of electoral swing is more than twice as large than those counties in the highest quartile, with expected values going from 1.09 to 0.72. Taken together, the model provides evidence that the Republicans engaged in a base strategy and not only avoided a peripheral strategy but also did the opposite of what this strategy would predict. Meanwhile, Democrats notably did not target Democratic strongholds but instead visited counties that had seen an influx of new residents.



Figure 2. Effect of county population change on expected number of candidate appearances

Notes: The left panel models Democratic visits, and the right panel models Republican visits. In each panel, the dashed curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the lowest quartile of population change. The solid curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the highest quartile of population change. Obama and Biden were more likely to visit counties that saw population increases, whereas McCain and Palin avoided these high growth constituencies. Simulations are based on counties with a population of 450,000 with one visit from the other ticket. Aside from the quantity of interest (population change), all other variables are set to their mean.

Discussion

Just like other recent presidential elections, candidates spent much of their time in the all-important battleground states. Within these states, both tickets visited counties with many voters. But our analysis reveals that within these states, candidates engaged in markedly different behaviors. The Republicans pursued a base strategy. They went where they had gotten support and votes before. The Democrats pursued a peripheral strategy by targeting counties that saw an influx of new residents. Obama and Biden did so while ignoring a county's previous level of partisan support. This is consistent with West's (1983) finding that a candidate may make visits in an attempt to satisfy constituency interests or to grow support for his party. In deciding where to go, Republicans privileged past partisan support and avoided geographic constituencies that had either experienced growth or seen electoral variability. For the Democrats, visits were targeted to counties that



Figure 3. Effect of county swing on expected number of candidate appearances Notes: The left panel models Democratic visits, and the right panel models Republican visits. In each panel, the dashed curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the lowest quartile levels of swing (i.e. the absolute shift in two-party vote from 2000 to 2004). The solid curve represents the distribution of expected values of candidate appearances in counties within the highest quartile of swing. McCain and Palin were less likely to visit counties that saw large fluctuations in the voter between 2000 and 2004. Simulations are based on counties with a population of 450,000 with one visit from the other ticket. Aside from the quantity of interest (swing), all other variables are set to their mean.

had seen population change, and therefore, places with the potential for new supporters.

What does one learn from these observations? First, the Republicans campaigned in a way that fit the condemnations of many of their critics. Every indication in the analysis here shows that Republicans ran away from geographic constituencies not already in the bag. They continued to rely on their base to win the election, and this base had shrunk since the victories of George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004. In a broader context, it draws into question the continued electoral viability of the Republican party in future elections if the McCain–Palin campaign strategy is consistent with the larger strategy being pursued by the Republicans. In 2012, Republicans would be well advised—as a party that does not control the White House and only one house of Congress—to pursue the peripheral strategy employed by Obama and Biden in 2008. That is, Republicans should tailor their mobilization efforts to growing geographic constituencies that may not have necessarily demonstrated high levels of support for GOP candidates in recent elections. Republicans should also begin targeting new groups as the demographics of ground states, such as Florida, New Mexico, and Nevada. In contrast, the Democrats campaigned in an untraditional way that reflected their status as challengers for the White House. Although there technically was not an incumbent candidate in the 2008 general election, people generally saw the McCain–Palin ticket (despite their efforts to argue otherwise) as a continuation of the policies and personnel of the Bush Administration. It stands to reason, therefore, that the Obama–Biden campaign sought to pursue an aggressive (or less risk-averse) campaign strategy (Cox & McCubbins, 1986). The unconventional strategy the Obama–Biden campaign pursued may also have come from the lack of success that a more traditional strategy produced for the Kerry–Edwards team in 2004. These considerations are potential explanations of the Obama campaign's focus on factors other than the party's past success in a county.

Conclusion

The outcomes of 50 state elections determine who becomes president. Yet *county-level* appearances provide a glimpse into the strategic choices of the standard bearers of the two major political parties. The counties visited by candidates give us a glimpse into the overall strategy that campaigns are employing to win an election. These decisions may also give us an indication of the kinds of constituencies that will be favored once the winner is elected. We find that these decisions are animated by particular factors such as population growth or partisan strength in a county. These factors, in turn, shed light on the type of strategy—a base or peripheral strategy—the presidential campaigns pursued.

Political scientists and political commentators alike have repeated the truism that candidates for the highest offices in the land pay a disproportionate amount of attention to swing states in their campaigns. We examine where, within these crucial states, candidates choose to spend their time. We use these data to inform the greater question of what strategic framework candidates and campaigns are using to make decisions about where they go. We analyze county-level data from the 2008 general election campaign and find that the two-major-party campaigns pursued different strategies in their quests for the White House. The McCain–Palin campaign pursued a base strategy and visited their core partisans. On the other hand, the level of partisan support Democrats previously received in a given county was not a statistically significant predictor of where the Obama–Biden campaign made its appearances. Instead, the Democrats pursued a peripheral strategy and targeted voters in counties that had experienced significant population growth, and therefore, an influx of new voters.

The findings in this article must be qualified because of the limitations of the study. Most notably, our conclusions address the data from just one election—and a historic one at that. Turnout in many counties set alltime highs, the amount of media attention paid was unprecedented, and the election featured the first-ever viable African American candidate for the presidency.

Future elections bring fresh opportunities for scholars to test the conclusions here. And it remains to be seen whether the factors animating the Republican and Democratic strategies were particular to the campaigns in 2008 or whether they are demonstrative of general differences in how the two parties now approach campaigns. Regardless, this article provides insight into a strategy that actually worked for an out-of-power political party seeking to take back the White House—and may hint at a successful strategy for similarly positioned campaigns in future elections.

Appendix

Variable	М	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Democratic visits	0.07	0.31	0.00	3.00
Republican visits	0.10	0.39	0.00	4.00
Democratic vote 2004	0.41	0.11	0.08	0.83
Republican vote 2004	0.59	0.11	0.17	0.92
Total population (logged)	4.53	0.57	2.65	6.38
Swing from 2000 to 2004	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.13
Percent Hispanic	5.61	9.58	0.20	76.00
Percent Black	10.01	14.78	0.00	74.70
Percent with college degrees	16.83	8.24	5.40	63.70
Percent over age 65	15.61	4.11	2.10	51.30
Change in population	4.27	9.21	-23.30	66.70
Median household income (1000s of dollars)	38.25	9.07	20.44	86.13

Summary Statistics of Key Variables in Data Set

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

- Excluding visits to their home states or the District of Columbia, the major-party candidates for president and vice president in 2008 made a total of 421 campaign appearances between the last day of the Republican National Convention and Election Day. Of these appearances, 72 were in Ohio, 53 were in both Florida and Pennsylvania each, and 31 were in Virginia. A more detailed discussion regarding the data, and the basic trends that emerge from it, may be found in the section "Candidate Appearances in the 2008 Presidential General Election."
- Althaus, Nardulli, and Shaw (2002) is a notable deviation. Their analysis examines trends in campaign appearances at the county, media market, and state levels between 1972 and 2000.
- 3. Personal candidate appearances as a tool for candidates promoting their campaigns became a regular fixture of presidential politics only during the latter half of the 20th century (Althaus et al., 2002). Even despite the increasing importance of candidate appearances, some recent presidential candidates—Ford in 1976 and to a certain degree Reagan in 1984 and Clinton in 1996—pursued a so-called Rose Garden strategy that minimized the amount of travel they did during the Fall campaign.
- 4. We exclude a discussion of the long-raging debate over whether campaigns matter in influencing electoral outcomes. Recent explorations of the subject differ on the accuracy of the "minimal effects" thesis first articulated decades ago (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). A more detailed examination of this literature may be found elsewhere (e.g., Finkel, 1993; Holbrook, 1996).
- 5. But see Reeves, Chen, and Nagano (2004).
- 6. Although it takes the rare step of exploring candidate appearances within states, Althaus et al. (2002) reveals only general trends regarding these appearances and where they occur. It does not identify the specific characteristics of those counties that are visited most frequently, nor does it control for or model the various factors that explain why campaign visits take place where they do.

- 7. Were this inquiry focused on direct-mail contacts, the advent of microtargeting might muddy the waters substantially, because campaigns now have the ability to target specific attractive households within otherwise unattractive counties. However, because candidate appearances are still a relatively coarse form of voter contact, we maintain that studying where these appearances take place—at the county level—remains an informative exercise.
- 8. This may not capture *all* of the appearances made by both campaigns during the general election campaign. Smaller fundraisers or other nonpublic functions are not included in our analysis. These events are less likely to garner public attention, in any case. Nor are they actually intended to directly affect electoral success.
- 9. There are 20 "battleground" states included in our analysis. We discuss these states further in the "Empirical Model" section of our paper.
- 10. Although there are, of course, differences between an analysis of appearances at the DMA, as opposed to county level, we believe the data from Althaus et al. (2002) can provide an informative comparison with the data we collected on the 2008 campaign.
- 11. Interestingly, the correlation between the counties visited by Obama and those visited by Palin was slightly higher, at .36.
- 12. Senator McCain visited Arizona 3 times, Senator Obama visited Hawaii a single time, and Senator Biden visited Delaware 4 times during the campaign.
- 13. A total of 20 states were included in the empirical model. The two measures of swing states were drawn from their respective sources as of early September 2008. There was substantial agreement between the two sources as to those states that were classified as "battleground" states (Colorado, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Ohio). Five additional states were included as "battleground" states by Real Clear Politics, but not by *The New York Times*. Three of those states—Florida, Indiana, and North Carolina—were classified as "leans McCain" by *The New York Times*. Two of the states—Pennsylvania and Virginia—were classified as "leans Obama" by *The New York Times*. Finally, nine states were classified as "leaning" by either source (Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin).
- 14. For example, Denver County in Colorado (Denver), St. Louis County in Missouri (St. Louis), Miami-Dade County in Florida (Miami), and Cuyahoga County in Ohio (Cleveland) saw multiple visits. For a more detailed discussion of the counties frequently visited during the campaign, see the "Candidate Appearances in the 2008 Presidential General Election" section of this article.
- 15. In the online appendix, we include a specification of the model with variables measuring economic conditions, such as changes in gas prices and unemployment rates, as well as foreclosure rates in the months leading up to the November 2008

election. Although these findings show some influence of the local economy on candidate visits, the substantive results do not change with respect to whether the campaigns pursued a core or peripheral strategy.

- 16. These alternative specifications include a negative binomial model, a logistic model with indicator variables for appearances instead of counts, and fixed-effects for states, among other specifications. We also run analyses separately for each candidate. The results are reported in the online appendix.
- 17. As we show in the online appendix, the findings are substantively the same if we omit from the model visits by the opposing ticket.
- 18. In alternative specifications of the model we control for state-level effects by including indicator variables for each state. We also control for the number of states that a county's media market covers. The substantive results from the model presented here remained in both of these specifications. They can be found in the online appendix.
- 19. So, for example, the comparison in the left panel of Figure 1 is the expected number of candidate visits in counties that were in the top quartile of support for Kerry and Edwards in 2004 (dashed line) versus the expected number of candidate visits in counties that were in the bottom quartile of support for Kerry and Edwards in 2004 (solid line). These expected values are estimated based on simulations described in Imai, King, and Lau (2007, 2008). For Figures 1, 2, and 3, simulations are based on counties with a population of 450,000 with one visit from the other ticket. Aside from the quantities of interest (partisan support, population change, and swing), all other variables are set to their means.
- 20. Like Figure 1, Figure 2 simulates expected values based on simulations where all variables in the model are set to their means except for population change. In one scenario, population change is set to the third quartile of observed values, and in the other scenario, it is set to the first quartile value. The reported differences in expected values are based on the effect of population change on the dependent variable.

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Bios

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Supporting Information for "Turning out the Base or Appealing to the Periphery? An analysis of County-level Candidate Appearances in the 2008 Presidential Election"

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	McCain-Palin ('R'), Obama-Biden('D") or both tickets ('B"). Only counties visited in battleground states are plotted 1

Bivariate relationship between selected variables from the model. Points indicate whether county was visited by McCain-Palin ('R'), Obama-Biden('D") or both tickets ('B"). Counties not visited are gray points. Only counties from battleground states are plotted.

ether the candidates visited the county.	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican Vote 04	4 292*	o build Diden
Republican voie of	(1.580)	
Democratic Vote 04	(1.000)	2843
Democratic vote of		(1.665)
Change in Population	-0.050^{*}	0.055^*
	(0.020)	(0.020)
Swing 00 to 04	-12.683	-0.684
	(8.463)	(8.286)
Population (logged)	1.395^{*}	1.220*
	(0.169)	(0.185)
Democratic Visits	2.256^{*}	· · · ·
	(0.334)	
Percent Hispanic	0.004	0.008
	(0.015)	(0.015)
Percent Black	-0.036^{*}	0.000
	(0.015)	(0.012)
Percent college degree	0.020	-0.001
	(0.027)	(0.030)
Percent 18 to 24	0.026	0.071
	(0.047)	(0.045)
Percent Seniors	0.077^{*}	-0.053
	(0.036)	(0.041)
Median Household Income (1000s)	0.013	-0.068^{*}
	(0.029)	(0.033)
Republican Visits		2.358^{*}
		(0.332)
Intercept	-22.691^{*}	-16.167^{*}
	(2.716)	(2.424)
N	1482	1482
AIC	454.811	378.932
BIC	709.266	633.387
$\log L$	-179.405	-141.466

Table 1: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether the candidates visited the county. Results from a logistic regression.

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican Vote 04	3.367^{*}	
	(1.054)	
Democratic Vote 04		0.840
		(1.170)
Change in Population	-0.037^{*}	0.038^{*}
	(0.014)	(0.013)
Swing 00 to 04	-12.401^{*}	-6.480
	(6.068)	(6.391)
Population (logged)	1.269^{*}	1.045^{*}
	(0.116)	(0.130)
Democratic Visits	0.472^{*}	
	(0.119)	
Percent Hispanic	0.002	-0.005
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Percent Black	-0.036^{*}	-0.001
	(0.011)	(0.009)
Percent college degree	0.022	0.017
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Percent 18 to 24	0.017	0.046
	(0.037)	(0.035)
Percent Seniors	0.032	-0.019
	(0.023)	(0.027)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.012	-0.042
	(0.019)	(0.023)
Republican Visits		0.364^{*}
		(0.112)
Intercept	-18.785^{*}	-14.048^{*}
	(1.854)	(1.655)
heta	417.257	353.301
	(2825.482)	(1692.084)
N	1482	1482
AIC	629.404	523.531
BIC	905.063	799.191
$\log L$	-262.702	-209.765

Table 2: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Results from a negative binomial regression.

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican Vote 04	2.990^{*}	
	(1.265)	
Democratic Vote 04		1.074
		(1.509)
Change in Population	-0.003	0.044^{*}
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Swing 00 to 04	-11.839	-11.379
	(6.858)	(7.228)
Population (logged)	1.353^{*}	1.234^{*}
	(0.144)	(0.179)
Democratic Visits	-0.020	
	(0.153)	
Percent Hispanic	0.005	0.004
	(0.011)	(0.013)
Percent Black	-0.027	-0.004
	(0.016)	(0.016)
Percent college degree	0.039	0.019
	(0.024)	(0.025)
Percent 18 to 24	-0.007	0.045
	(0.039)	(0.037)
Percent Seniors	-0.008	-0.022
	(0.031)	(0.033)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.040	-0.057^{*}
	(0.023)	(0.027)
Republican Visits		0.024
		(0.143)
Intercept	-18.150^{*}	-14.941^{*}
	(2.199)	(2.098)
N	1482	1482
AIC	564.921	454.637
BIC	1222.264	1111.980
$\log L$	-158.461	-103.319

 Table 3: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Results from a Poisson regression with indicator variables for state (not reported).

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican Vote 04	3.013^{*}	
	(1.025)	
Democratic Vote 04		0.351
		(1.145)
Change in Population	-0.024	0.032^{*}
	(0.013)	(0.013)
Swing 00 to 04	-14.553^{*}	-7.754
	(6.080)	(6.424)
Population (logged)	1.400^{*}	1.225^{*}
	(0.109)	(0.119)
Percent Hispanic	0.004	0.001
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Percent Black	-0.030^{*}	-0.004
	(0.009)	(0.009)
Percent college degree	0.021	0.020
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Percent 18 to 24	0.014	0.041
	(0.037)	(0.036)
Percent Seniors	0.027	-0.012
	(0.022)	(0.027)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.025	-0.050^{*}
	(0.019)	(0.023)
Intercept	-19.413^{*}	-15.517^{*}
	(1.817)	(1.575)
N	1482	1482
AIC	639.931	529.522
BIC	873.181	762.773
$\log L$	-275.965	-220.761

Table 4: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Results are without controlling for other ticket visits. Results from a Poisson regression.

	McCain	Palin
Republican Vote 04	1.82	4.68^{*}
	(1.54)	(1.48)
Change in Population	-0.06^{*}	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Swing 00 to 04	-23.75^{*}	-8.30
	(9.86)	(7.97)
Population (logged)	1.24^{*}	1.33^{*}
	(0.17)	(0.16)
Democratic Visits	0.38^{*}	0.62^{*}
	(0.17)	(0.16)
Percent Hispanic	0.03^{*}	-0.04^{*}
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Percent Black	-0.04^{*}	-0.04^{*}
	(0.02)	(0.01)
Percent college degree	0.01	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Percent 18 to 24	-0.02	0.04
	(0.07)	(0.04)
Percent Seniors	0.03	0.03
	(0.04)	(0.03)
Median Household Income (1000s)	0.01	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intercept	-18.55^{*}	-20.25^{*}
	(2.68)	(2.60)
N	1482	1482
AIC	364.46	431.17
BIC	618.92	685.62
$\log L$	-134.23	-167.58

Table 5: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Column 1 presentsanalysis of McCain visits, and column 2 presents an analysis of Palin visits. Results from a Poisson regression.

	Obama	Biden
Democratic Vote 04	0.43	1.15
	(1.65)	(1.66)
Change in Population	0.04^{*}	0.04^{*}
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Swing 00 to 04	-9.65	-5.37
	(9.66)	(8.68)
Population (logged)	1.11^{*}	1.06^{*}
	(0.19)	(0.18)
Republican Visits	0.42^{*}	0.29
	(0.15)	(0.18)
Percent Hispanic	0.00	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Percent Black	0.00	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Percent college degree	0.04	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Percent 18 to 24	0.03	0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Percent Seniors	-0.05	-0.00
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.03°	-0.06
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intercept	-15.71^{*}	-14.19^{*}
-	(2.57)	(2.23)
N	1482	1482
AIC	299.76	357.04
BIC	554.22	611.50
$\log L$	-101.88	-130.52

 Table 6: A model of county-level 2008 Campaign Appearances. Column 1 presents analysis of Obama visits, and column 2 presents an analysis of Biden visits. Results from a Poisson regression.

Table 7: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Percent black and percent
hispanic are logged. To deal with zeros, we first add a constant (1) and log the resulting value. Results from a Poisson
regression.

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican Vote 04	3.664^{*}	
	(1.032)	
Democratic Vote 04		0.693
		(1.122)
Change in Population	-0.029^{*}	0.040^{*}
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Swing 00 to 04	-11.213	-6.598
	(6.040)	(6.351)
Population (logged)	1.330^{*}	1.033^{*}
	(0.125)	(0.143)
Democratic Visits	0.456^{*}	
	(0.117)	
Percent Hispanic (logged)	-0.141	-0.143
	(0.127)	(0.143)
Percent Black (logged)	-0.280^{*}	0.111
	(0.112)	(0.117)
Percent college degree	0.020	0.016
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Percent 18 to 24	0.027	0.050
	(0.037)	(0.035)
Percent Seniors	0.040	-0.014
	(0.022)	(0.026)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.009	-0.038
	(0.019)	(0.023)
Republican Visits		0.365^{*}
		(0.109)
Intercept	-19.640^{*}	-14.137^{*}
	(1.877)	(1.671)
N	1482	1482
AIC	634.490	519.581
BIC	888.945	774.036
$\log L$	-269.245	-211.790

Table 8: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Number of states in
the county's designated market area. Results from a Poisson regression. Media Market information obtained from:
Gentzkow, Matthew, and Jesse M. Shapiro. Introduction of Television to the United States Media Market, 1946-1960
[Computer file]. ICPSR22720-v1. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium
for Political and Social Research [distributors], 2008-09-30. doi:10.3886/ICPSR22720

r Kesearen [eisurbators], 2008-09-50.	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Number of States in Media Market	0.642*	0.167
	(0.201)	(0.338)
Republican Vote 04	3.357*	(0.000)
	(1.044)	
Democratic Vote 04	(-)	0.570
		(1.166)
Change in Population	-0.036^{*}	0.027
	(0.015)	(0.014)
Swing 00 to 04	-14.518^{*}	-2.306
	(6.305)	(6.532)
Population (logged)	1.316^{*}	1.057^{*}
	(0.119)	(0.132)
Democratic Visits	0.473^{*}	
	(0.121)	
Percent Hispanic	-0.000	0.008
	(0.011)	(0.010)
Percent Black	-0.037^{*}	0.003
	(0.011)	(0.009)
Percent college degree	0.017	0.010
	(0.019)	(0.020)
Percent 18 to 24	0.025	0.059
	(0.038)	(0.035)
Percent Seniors	0.034	-0.007
	(0.023)	(0.028)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.012	-0.030
	(0.019)	(0.023)
Republican Visits		0.382*
_		(0.111)
Intercept	-20.035^{*}	-15.076^{*}
	(1.976)	(1.801)
N	1480	1480
AIC	618.425	516.765
BIC	894.014	792.354
$\log L$	-257.212	-206.382

Table 9: A model of county-level 2008 Republican and Democratic Campaign Appearances. Results from a Poisson regression. The economic variables are: (1) the county's foreclosure rate, which was calculated by dividing the total number of foreclosures from January to October 2008 by the number of total households (in thousands) in October 2008; (2) the county's percentage change in unemployment, which was calculated by subtracting the number of unemployed persons in October 2008 from the number of unemployed persons in July 2008, and then dividing this figure by the July 2008 number; and (3) the county's percentage change in gas prices, which was the percentage increase (or decrease) in the average price of a gallon of unleaded gas in that county between July 2008 and October 2008. These variables were calculated according to Cho and Gimpel (2009) and were designed to measure specific economic factors at play during the months immediately leading up to and during the 2008 general election campaign.

	McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
Republican Vote 04	3.411*	
	(1.068)	
Democratic Vote 04		0.266
		(1.212)
Change in Population	-0.022	0.033^{*}
	(0.015)	(0.014)
Swing 00 to 04	-10.969	-5.305
	(6.067)	(6.417)
Population (logged)	1.385^{*}	0.947^{*}
	(0.127)	(0.147)
Democratic Visits	0.540^{*}	
	(0.130)	
Percent Hispanic	0.003	-0.004
	(0.008)	(0.010)
Percent Black	-0.030^{*}	0.002
	(0.011)	(0.009)
Percent college degree	0.014	0.041
	(0.020)	(0.022)
Percent 18 to 24	0.014	0.028
	(0.039)	(0.036)
Percent Seniors	0.053^{*}	-0.019
	(0.025)	(0.028)
Median Household Income (1000s)	-0.013	-0.058^{*}
	(0.020)	(0.024)
Foreclosure Rate	-0.008	0.010
	(0.007)	(0.006)
Change in unemployment	-0.021^{*}	-0.003
	(0.008)	(0.009)
Change in gas price	-0.001	-0.062^{*}
	(0.024)	(0.027)
Republican Visits		0.378^{*}
		(0.118)
Intercept	-20.306^{*}	-14.153^{*}
	(2.192)	(2.100)
N	1482	1482
AIC	623.887	518.336
BIC	941.956	836.405
log L	-251.944	-199.168

Standard errors in parentheses



Figure 1: Bivariate relationship between selected variables from the model. Points indicate whether county was visited by McCain-Palin ('R'), Obama-Biden('D") or both tickets ('B"). Only counties visited in battleground states are plotted



Figure 2: Bivariate relationship between selected variables from the model. Points indicate whether county was visited by McCain-Palin ('R'), Obama-Biden('D") or both tickets ('B"). Counties not visited are gray points. Only counties from battleground states are plotted.