

Supplemental Data for “The Dynamics of Agenda Convergence and the Paradox of Competitiveness in Presidential Campaigns”

Appendix A: Data and Sources

Table A-1. Newspapers and Story Counts in Media Content Analysis, 1992

	N of stories	% of stories
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	987	10.96
<i>Washington Post</i>	960	10.66
<i>New York Times</i>	911	10.12
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	437	4.85
<i>Raleigh News & Observer</i>	388	4.31
<i>Kansas City Star</i>	381	4.23
<i>Baton Rouge Advocate</i>	331	3.68
<i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i>	300	3.33
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	242	2.69
<i>Louisville Courier Journal</i>	238	2.64
<i>Cleveland Plain Dealer</i>	236	2.62
<i>Houston Chronicle</i>	209	2.32
<i>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	197	2.19
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	191	2.12
<i>San Diego Union-Tribune</i>	168	1.87
<i>Seattle Times</i>	165	1.83
<i>Ft. Worth Star-Telegram</i>	161	1.79
<i>Wilmington Journal</i>	156	1.73
<i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i>	142	1.58
<i>Austin American-Statesman</i>	141	1.57
<i>The Bergen Record</i>	139	1.54
<i>Lexington Herald Ledger</i>	133	1.48
<i>Charlotte Observer</i>	127	1.41
<i>Detroit News</i>	119	1.32
<i>Sacramento Bee</i>	115	1.28
<i>Dayton Daily News</i>	111	1.23
<i>Newark Star-Ledger</i>	110	1.22
<i>Times-Picayune</i>	106	1.18
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	106	1.18
<i>Hartford Courant</i>	104	1.16
<i>Portland Herald</i>	100	1.11
<i>Cincinnati Enquirer</i>	92	1.02
<i>Wisconsin State Journal</i>	90	1.00
<i>San Antonio Light</i>	85	0.94
<i>Peoria Journal Star</i>	83	0.92
<i>Columbia State</i>	74	0.82
<i>Orange County Register</i>	68	0.76
<i>Columbus Dispatch</i>	65	0.72
<i>Jackson Clarion-Ledger</i>	62	0.69
<i>Birmingham News</i>	54	0.60
<i>Burlington Free Press</i>	49	0.54
<i>Rock Hill Evening Herald</i>	30	0.33
<i>Milwaukee Journal</i>	29	0.32
<i>Grand Rapids Press</i>	8	0.09
Total	9,000	100.00

Table A-2. Network News Outlets and Story Counts in Media Content Analysis, 1992

	N of stories	% of stories
ABC	208	34.44
NBC	208	34.44
CBS	188	31.13
Total	604	100.00

Table A-3. Newspapers and Story Counts in Media Content Analysis, 1996

	N of stories	% of stories
<i>USA Today</i>	402	48.55
<i>New York Times</i>	121	14.61
<i>Wall St. Journal</i>	108	13.04
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	86	10.39
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	75	9.06
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	36	4.35
Total	828	100.00

Table A-4. Network News Outlets and Story Counts in Media Content Analysis, 1992

	N of stories	% of stories
CBS	41	35.04
NBC	22	28.95
ABC	16	21.05
Total	76	100.00

Table A-5. Summary of Candidate Speeches and Issue Appeals, 1992-1996

	1992			1996	
	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Dole</u>		<u>Clinton</u>
Speeches	122	75	76		109
Words	268,227	225,996	183,561		335,991
Issue appeals	9,342	7,041	5,055		9,097

Appendix B: Content Analysis

Media Content Analysis

Coders were instructed to identify the primary focus of each news story after reading the headline and text. In 1996, coders also recorded the secondary and tertiary focus of the stories, on which I draw in the analysis for that year. These codes ranged from “horse race” focus, such as poll results, to domestic events, such as a Florida hurricane, to policy issues, such as taxes or Medicare. As stated in the text, the analyses focus only on issue news.

Candidate Speech Content Analysis

The following instructions were produced to guide my own and a research assistant’s coding of the candidate speeches.

Issue Appeals

In coding these speeches and ads, I am interested in identifying instances in which presidential candidates raise particular policy issues. For that reason, the texts are coded at the “appeal” level, similar to the strategy employed by Geer (1998) and Vavreck (2006).

You are to code every mention of a policy issue—an “issue appeal”—that appears in the speech. For my purposes, issue appeals are defined this way—any time a candidate raises a substantive issue that is more than a simple appeal to “hope,” “vision,” “freedom,” “peace,” and so forth. Vague statements such as these do not refer to specific issues, and thus should not be coded. Also, statements that simply repeat what the candidate has just said should not be coded.

Coding Sentences

There are two things to keep in mind. First, many sentences in a speech will not receive an issue code. Candidates sometimes speak at length without addressing any substantive issues at all. An example of this is when the candidate thanks his hosts or other politicians in the audience at the beginning of each speech. Another case of “issueless” statements is generic mentions of “the future” or “the bridge to the 21st century” or “hope” that have no mentions of specific issues. For example, if the candidate says, “Our future is bright,” he has not made an issue appeal. But if he says “Our future is bright because of the reduction in unemployment over the last year,” that should be coded as a jobs issue appeal.

Second, some sentences will have multiple issue codes. If a candidate says something like “My administration has put 50,000 new police on the street, improved water quality, and provided health insurance for every child,” that sentence should get three issue codes: one for law enforcement, one for environment, and one for health care.

Ambiguous Mentions

If a candidate makes reference to an issue without using the specific issue term, you should determine whether a person hearing the speech would know what issue the candidate is talking about. If a reasonable person would understand what the candidate is referring to, you should code the statement as an issue appeal. Here’s an example: “By the end of my term, every third-grader in this country will be able to read at a third-grade level.” A reasonable person would understand that this is an education appeal and the statement should be coded as such. In all of this, just use your best judgment.

Coding Examples

The following is an example of the coding of candidate speeches from the 1996 presidential campaign. The bolded words in brackets are the issue codes.

The paragraph is taken from a speech delivered by Bill Clinton in St. Louis, Missouri on October 28:

“...We have had four years of declining crime rates. [**CRIME**] We've funded nearly half of those 100,000 police in our crime bill. [**LAW ENFORCEMENT**] The Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban didn't cost a single hunter a weapon, but 60,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers could not get handguns because of the Brady Bill. [**GUN**”

CONTROL] And now the law says if you beat up your spouse or your child you can't get a gun either.**[DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, GUN CONTROL]** That's what the law says..."

In this example, four of the five sentences have at least one issue code (the final sentence is simply a repeat of what Clinton has just said), and the fourth sentence has two.

Here's a second example, from an October 2 Dole speech in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania:

"...Our economic--we can sum up our economic program in three simple words: security and opportunity and choice.**[ECONOMY]** The security of good jobs with rising real wages and a growing economy.**[JOBS, WAGES, ECONOMY]** It's not growing now. It's about half the growth it was when you inherited it from President Bush.**[ECONOMY]** The opportunity for better jobs and higher-paying jobs in a growing private sector.**[JOBS, WAGES, ECONOMY]** And choice. The choice of parents to send their children to the best schools available.**[EDUCATION]** Public schools, private schools, other schools, the best schools available. Because children are important..."

Note here how the sentences that do nothing but repeat what the candidate has just said or do not add anything substantive are not given issue codes. For example, the final sentence the excerpt—"Because children are important"—does not receive an issue code because it does not clearly raise a specific issue. On the other hand, the sentence that begins "The opportunity..." receives three codes because it raises three separate issues, although all are related to the economy.