**Impact of Negative Campaign Ads on Favorability Ratings of Parties**

One way to estimate the impact of exposure to negative campaign advertising affect partisan affect would be to simply regress partisan affect on self reports of campaign advertising. However the estimates are likely biased because – 1) Self-reports about campaign advertising are error prone (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999; Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson 2004 and Goldstein and Ridout 2004), with errors likely positively correlated with partisan affect; 2) There is ‘confounded’ self-selection in who sees campaign ads, for instance, strong partisans likely see more political ads and also likely hold larger partisan affect, perhaps causally so. Given the concerns about endogeneity in self-reported recall of advertising and affect towards parties, and other confounders, we rely on exogenous variation in the volume of campaign ads run on television to estimate the effect.

Some regions receive less campaign advertisement, and canvassing efforts, during an election cycle than others. Electoral College considerations (some combination of number of seats in play, and potential to win a state), price of buying ads in Designated Market Areas (DMAs), etc., all dictate where campaign resources go. So otherwise identical voters are exposed to different number of campaign ads depending on what area they live in. Since geography itself doesn’t exert an effect on partisan affect of its own, exogenous (geographical) variation in ads can be used to identify impact of ads on partisan sentiment.

We start by comparing voters living in battleground and non-battleground states. Each presidential election cycle some states are anointed ‘battleground states’ based on the perception that states are competitive and the Electoral College seats in play. These battleground states are sites of far more intense campaigning – ads, canvassing, visits by candidates, etc. (one presumes the three are heavily correlated) – than the non-battleground states. Residents living in these battleground states are expected to have larger negative partisan affect than those in non-battleground states. To test the causal pathway more rigorously, we estimate a two stage model unconditionally, as well as controlling for some individual level factors that may possibly correlate with partisan affect – political interest (in January), gender, strength of partisanship, race (indicators for White, Black, and Hispanic respondents), gender, age, and education. We use an indicator variable to identify voters who live in one of the battleground states. List of battleground States in 2008: Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. For 2004, we add Missouri, Colorado, and Hawaii to the 2008 list (see XXX for rationale). There is one worry about our strategy. The essentially national nature of the media and media campaigns depresses the difference between ‘treatment’ received by residents in battleground and non-battleground states. This is essentially conservative so we ignore it.

Some media markets span both battleground states and non-battleground states. For instance, northeast New Jersey is part of New York media market while southwest New Jersey is part of Pennsylvania media market. In addition the New York media market is more expensive than the New Jersey media market. So, residents of the same state can be exposed to different amount of television ads. This serves as the second identification strategy.

During presidential election years, some gubernatorial and all congressional campaigns are also being fought. Hence, we can utilize heterogeneity in gubernatorial and congressional campaigning as well. Since our theory is about net exposure to campaign ads, where possible, we pool data from all political campaigns. We then proceed as above – first regressing net partisan affect on total negative ads run in a district controlling for potential individual level confounders, and follow it by a two stage instrumental variable model.

Data

We use data from two different large national surveys. For ad data we rely upon Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG) data coded by the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project.

Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project (CCAP)

A nationally representative sample of registered voters, stratified by battleground ((FL, IA, MN, NV, WI, NH, NM, OH, PA) and non-battleground states, was surveyed online over the course of 2008 election campaign. About as many respondents in battleground states were sampled as in non-battleground states. Over six-waves, starting December 2007 and culminating with a post-election survey in November, 20,000 respondents were surveyed at least thrice. For a more detailed account of sampling and survey procedures see Jackman and Vavreck (2009).

Political Issue Survey

We use data from survey commissioned by Hillygus and Shields (see Hillygus and Shields 2008) right after the 2004 presidential campaign. A stratified sample of 2800 adults from across the nation was interviewed between November 5, 2004 and November 16, 2004. The data were weighted to match CPS benchmarks. For more on sampling and survey administration see Hillygus and Shields (2008).

Wisconsin Advertising Project Data

The data catalogs ads broadcast on the national broadcast and cable television networks in the top 100 media markets. We have gubernatorial ad data from 2004 and 2008, while we have presidential ad data from 2004 only. The advertising data are coded for a variety of characteristics including negativity.

Measures

Partisan Affect

There are two measures of partisan affect. In Political Issues Survey data, we measure favorability of party via a 100 point scale. We rescale the favorability ratings to lie between 0 and 1. For self-identified partisans, we create a further variable, a proxy of net partisan affect, by subtracting out party ratings from in party ratings. For CCAP, favorability towards parties was measures on a five point scale. We rescale the ratings to lie between 0 and 1 and once again create a variable that is the difference between in party and out party favorability ratings.

Ad Exposure

There is considerable self-selection in who is exposed to political ads run in a market.

Results

Battleground Vs. Non-Battleground

Hillygus Data

1. No significant differences between ratings of parties in battleground and non-battleground. Control variables don’t improve situation.

CCAP

1. We start by reporting results from residence in battleground and non-battleground states.
2. In 2008, self-reported advertising exposure is nearly X% greater for battleground-state residents (See Table 1). Next raw comparison of affect between residents of battleground and non-battleground states reveals that battleground residents hold less negative affect than non-battleground residents (see Table 2). Controlling for potentially post-treatment variables –political interest, and strength of partisan identification – makes the difference in affect across battleground and non-battleground states non-significant.

DMA Exposure

Hillygus

1. No survey variables of media exposure, which would have allowed one to estimate a 2SLS model. Battleground → Media Exposure (self-reports) → Partisan Feelings
2. DMA and relevant weight variable missing. Simulations accounting for weight suggest is unlikely to matter and may even make the situation worse.

CCAP

In 2008, where we only have advertisement data from just gubernatorial campaigns, we just utilize heterogeneity in intensity of gubernatorial campaigns. While in 2004, where we have data for both gubernatorial and presidential campaign ads, we pool the data. We start by merely predicting negative partisan affect utilizing total number of negative campaign ads shown. Next we control for some potential confounding individual level variables. Number of negative attack ads run in a DMA has a positive impact on out-partisan affect…This is robust to specifications.

Instrumental Variable

Our ability to run a two stage model with 2008 is compromised because the 2008 ad data are from gubernatorial elections, while the ad recall question explicitly asks respondents about presidential ads.

Inadvertent Exposure

Discussion

References

Freedman, Paul and Kenneth Goldstein. 1999. Measuring Media Exposure and the Effects of Negative Campaign Ads. *American Journal of Political Science* 4:1189-1208.

Freedman, Paul, Michael Franz and Kenneth Goldstein. 2004. Campaign Advertising and Democratic Citizenship. *American Journal of Political Science* 48:723-741.

Hillygus, D. Sunshine and Todd G. Shields. 2008. The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Huber, Gregory A. and Kevin Arceneaux. 2007. Identifying the Persuasive Effects of Presidential Advertising. *American Journal of Political Science* 51:957-977

Jackman, Simon and Lynn Vavreck. 2009. The Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project

2007-8. Release 1.5. Palo Alto and Los Angeles, CA.

Table 1: Mean self-reported exposure to campaigns by residence in battleground or non-battleground states in 2008

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Measure | Battleground | Non-Battleground |
| Ads |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Table 2: Mean partisan affect by residence in battleground or non-battleground states

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2004 | |  |  | 2008 | |  |
|  | Battleground | Non-Battleground | Diff. |  | Battleground | Non-Battleground | Diff. |
| In-Partisan | .724 | .723 |  |  | .741 | .741 |  |
| Out-Partisan | .340 | .337 |  |  | .152 | .125 |  |
| In – Out Partisan | .384 | .386 |  |  | .589 | .616 | -.028\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| N | 519 | 1757 |  |  | 6928 | 7544 |  |