

## ISSUE CONVERGENCE IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

David F. Damore

This effort seeks to expand our understanding of the supply-side of the campaign process by investigating how candidate competition for agenda control affects occurrences of issue convergence (the discussion of the same issues by competing candidates) in campaigns for the presidency. More specifically, I integrate hypotheses suggested by extant literature into a framework that captures the factors that motivate presidential candidates' selection of issues and the factors that affect their decisions to address issues also discussed by their opponents. These hypotheses are tested with duration analysis and data gathered from all available campaign advertisements produced by candidates competing in the 1976 through 1996 presidential elections. The results indicate that occurrences of issue convergences are quite frequent in presidential campaigns and that candidates' decisions to address the same issues are affected by an issue's saliency and partisan ownership, as well by changes in the campaign environment.

**Key words:** presidential campaigns; agenda setting; candidate strategy; campaign communication; campaign issues.

Traditionally, the study of campaigns and elections has focused on the effects that campaigns have on voters (e.g., voting behavior and information processing). While this approach has resulted in a robust understanding of the decision making of voters, with some exceptions (e.g., Franklin, 1991; Jacobs and Shapiro, 1994; Petrocik, Benoit, and Honsen, 2003–2004), it has offered minimal insight into the behavior of candidates. As a consequence, we know little about what candidates do, particularly in terms of the information they communicate to voters.

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Against this backdrop, this effort seeks to move our understanding of the supply-side of the campaign process forward by assessing how presidential candidates compete for control of campaign agendas. Specifically, I use prior work to examine when the messages of competing presidential candidates will converge on the same issues and when they will diverge. The paper's argument contends that occurrences of issue convergence in presidential campaigns are a function of issue attributes, changes in the campaign environment, and the inter-candidate dynamics that emerge over time. As such, this effort has implications for the study of campaign strategy and political communication.

The paper begins with a review of past research and the presentation of data taken from all available campaign advertisements created by major party presidential candidates competing in the 1976–1996 general elections that indicate substantial issue convergence in these campaigns. After further discussion of the motivations that underlie candidates' issue selections, I develop a set of hypotheses that account for the decision making that structures candidates' selection of campaign issues. Duration analysis and the campaign advertisement data are then used to test these hypotheses. After presenting the results, I conclude by discussing the implications this effort has for the literature.

## AGENDA COMPETITION AND CANDIDATE BEHAVIOR

“Agendas foreshadow outcomes: the shape of an agenda influences the choices made from it. Today we are intensely aware of this fact, but our knowledge about it is relatively new” (Riker, 1993, p. 1).

Although the linkage between agendas and outcomes is well established in the policy literature (e.g., Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 1984; Shepsle and Weingast, 1995), the implications of Riker's axiom for the study of campaign politics have only recently come under investigation.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, while, as Aldrich and Griffin (2003, p. 240) note, the “strategies the candidates chose in an election campaign—what they emphasize and what they ignore—have important effects on voter choices and therefore on outcomes,” research examining how candidates compete to define campaign agendas is in its infancy.

The research that does address this concern largely suggests that candidates seek to shape campaign agendas by discussing issues that either accent their strengths or highlight their opponents' weaknesses and avoid issues that are indicative of weakness or which provide the opposition with an advantage—a strategy that Riker (1993) labels the Dominance Principle. From this perspective, the purpose of campaign messages is not to engage the opposition

in debate or dialogue, but to increase the saliency of issues over which candidates are perceived as credible.<sup>2</sup> That is, because no issue can work to the advantage of opposing candidates, there is little incentive for candidates to discuss the same issues. As a consequence, issue divergence (the discussion of different issues by competing candidates), as opposed to issue convergence (the discussion of the same issue by opposing candidates) should be the norm. Riker (1993, p. 4) succinctly captures this point by noting that in campaigns debate “is orthogonal. Parties talk past each other in several dimensions.”

Prior work assessing the utility of the Dominance Principle in the campaign arena suggests mixed support. In his analysis of party platforms and newspaper reports of campaign issues in 23 democracies, Budge (1993) finds that parties seek to monopolize issues as a means to differentiate themselves and as a consequence, avoid trespassing on the issue territories of opposing parties. Specific to the American case, Spiliotes and Vavreck (2002) find in their analysis of television ads produced by candidates competing in a sample of House, Senate, and gubernatorial races that the messages of candidates from competing parties diverge, while those of candidates of the same party tend to converge on the same issues.

Research relevant to the theory of issue ownership in presidential campaigns, however, suggests behavior that is less consistent with the Dominance Principle.<sup>3</sup> In their analyses of television ads produced by presidential candidates, Damore (2004) and Petrocik et al. (2003–2004) find that both Republican and Democratic candidates tend to emphasize issues associated with the GOP.<sup>4</sup> Aldrich and Griffin (2003) also find evidence of convergence in their analysis of speeches made by the presidential candidates in 2000. In light of this, they suggest that the issue ownership approach to agenda setting may be problematic because it assumes that candidates’ selection of issues are made irrespective of the priorities of voters. Moreover, candidates who focus on party owned issues might be unable to attract undecided voters.

Simon (2002) perhaps makes the strongest case for issue convergence in his analysis of campaign dialogue (which occurs when competing candidates discuss the same concerns) in senatorial campaigns. Simon (2002, p. 3) argues that despite prescriptions against dialogue, “dialogue of some kind appears in almost every election.” Although his analysis of newspaper coverage of campaigns uncovers low levels of issue convergence in the 1988–1992 senate elections, Simon argues that these occurrences are normatively beneficial because they provide a route to meaningful campaign communication.

The data presented in Table 1 offers additional evidence in support of the politics of issue convergence. These data capture the level of issue convergence in the 1976–1996 presidential campaigns gleaned from candidates’

**TABLE 1. Issue Convergence and Divergence in Presidential Campaigns, 1976–1996**

Year (# of issues)	Divergence (%)	Convergence (%)
1976 (36)	64	36
1980 (32)	53	47
1984 (30)	65	35
1988 (26)	65	35
1992 (21)	33	67
1996 (30)	53	47
1976–1996 (175)	57	43

*Note:* Data taken from major party candidates' campaign advertisements. Appendix A provides an overview of these data.

campaign advertisements (see Appendix A for an overview of these data). Collectively, these data indicate convergence on over 40% of the issues discussed by presidential candidates in these campaigns (substantive interpretation of these data is provided in the Results section of the paper). As such, the discrepancy between these data and the Dominance Principle may seem surprising given that the axiom provides a parsimonious and logical prescription for candidate behavior. However, in so doing, the Dominance Principle over simplifies a multi-faceted process. Indeed, inspection of prior research suggests that candidates' discussions of issues may be shaped by a variety of factors.

Pfau and Kenski (1990), for instance, suggest that candidates may discuss an issue that they might not be expected to in order to neutralize a potential attack. Candidates may not ignore issues discussed by their opponents if doing so allows the opposition to position itself however it wants. In this case, a more prudent strategy might be to challenge the opposition's depiction of the issue. Similarly, candidates may discuss unexpected issues if their purpose is to reframe how an issue is understood. For instance, in 2000 George Bush made education, a Democratic issue, a central component of his campaign message, but framed the issue to accent Republican themes such as accountability and market-based reforms. More generally, Downs (1957) suggests that in a two-party system candidates should move into the opposition party's issue territory as a means to expand their support. Concerns related to affective responses (e.g., Edelman, 1964; Sears, 1993) to political information also may affect candidates' selection of issues. For instance, Sears (1993, p. 145) suggests that symbolic considerations that are used to communicate candidates' issue discussions are "politically consequential both in influencing overall public opinion for the object and in influencing which predispositions the object evokes."

In sum, candidates' discussions of issues may stem from a number of factors. However, the literature largely has treated these concerns in a disparate manner. As a consequence, these considerations have not been synthesized so as to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding when the campaign messages of presidential candidates will converge and when they will diverge. Such is the intent of this effort and the task to which I move next. Before doing so, however, there are three limitations to this effort that merit attention.

First, the paper's hypotheses are developed in the context of presidential campaigns; races that are atypical in terms of their competitiveness, the level of attention they command, and the relative equality in resources their combatants possess. As a consequence, the behavior of presidential candidates may not be applicable to candidates competing in other electoral contexts. Second, the data used to test the paper's hypotheses are taken from candidates' campaign ads. Although candidates at all levels use television advertisements to disseminate their campaign messages, advertisements are one of many mediums through which campaign messages are communicated. Thus, any divergence in content between candidates' advertisements and other campaign activities limits the generalizability of the paper's analysis. Third, I only examine the decision making that underlies candidates' selection of issues and do not address candidates' position taking or issue framing. While, as is discussed in the conclusion, these considerations are important aspects of campaign communication, they are beyond the scope of this effort.

## THE POLITICS OF ISSUE CONVERGENCE

As suggested by the above review of literature, candidates' decisions about what issues to discuss and what issues to avoid may be shaped by strategic and non-strategic considerations. Consequently, candidates' selection of issues may result from decision making that is either interdependent (e.g., candidates' likelihood of discussing an issue changes depending upon if the opposition has or has not discussed the issue) or independent (e.g., candidates' likelihood of discussing an issue is unaffected by the behavior of the opposition). Because of the difficulty in untangling these motivations, in the discussion that follows, the dependent variable is conceptualized as a dichotomous measure of issue convergence or issue divergence: convergence occurs if more than one candidate discusses an issue and divergence occurs if only one candidate addresses an issue over the course of a campaign.<sup>5</sup> Consistent with Simon (2002), I argue that the decision to converge is driven by candidates' assessments of the perceived costs and benefits that either responding to or ignoring issues discussed by the opposition will have on their likelihood of winning the election.<sup>6</sup> However, because of the dynamic nature

of the campaign process, I anticipate that candidates' evaluations of these costs and benefits will vary in response to attributes of an issue, changes in the campaign environment, and candidates' prior behavior.

### Issue Attributes

Central to the above literature is the contention that the introduction of issues is the primary means by which candidates gain leverage over campaign agendas. Yet, this research offers diverging predictions regarding the affect that issue attributes may have on occurrences of issue convergence. On the one hand, if presidential candidates embrace the Dominance Principle, then issue divergence should be the norm. Using the theory of issue ownership as a proxy for the Dominance Principle (see note three) yields the expectation that candidates will be less likely to discuss issues associated with their opponents' parties because it will be difficult to establish credibility over these issues. Candidates, however, may be more likely to converge if the opposition discusses an issue associated with their party in order to reestablish their partisan connection with the issue and limit any benefit the opposition may gain by issue trespassing.

Other research, however, predicts fewer adherences to the Dominance Principle. Downs (1957, p. 135), for instance, notes that candidates in a two-party system should cast "some policies into the other's territory in order to convince voters that their net position is near them;" suggesting that some degree of issue convergence should be the norm rather than the exception. In a somewhat different vein, Jacobson (1990) finds that the electorate expects presidents to pursue collective goods (e.g., balancing the budget and lowering taxes) and evaluates presidential candidates in terms of their ability to handle national problems. Because these expectations correlate with perceived GOP strengths (e.g., Petrocik, 1996), presidential candidates may be more likely to discuss Republican owned issues (e.g., Damore, 2004; Petrocik et al., 2003–2004). Also, if, as Aldrich and Griffin (2003) posit, presidential candidates structure their messages in response to the priorities of voters, then the Dominance Principle should be less of a constraint on candidates' behavior. Instead, candidates should be more likely to converge on issues that are important to the electorate irrespective of the partisan associations of these issues.

### Contextual Factors

Factors stemming from the campaign environment also may affect occurrences of issue convergence. Foremost here are candidates' levels of support. Past research suggests a good deal of variation in candidates' behavior such as their propensity to attack (Damore, 2002), the specificity of their messages

(Kahn and Kenney, 1999), and their allocation of resources (Shaw, 1999b) are a function of their competitive standing. Candidates' levels of support also may influence occurrences of issue convergence. Specifically, I anticipate that as the gap between candidates' poll numbers increase, the likelihood of issue convergence will decrease. For trailing candidates, convergence may provide minimal benefit given that the lead of their opponents may be due to voters' receptiveness to the issues discussed by the opposition. Moreover, candidates who are trailing in the polls may be better served by using use attacks to undermine the opposition (e.g., Damore, 2002; Skaperdas and Grofman, 1995). In contrast, if the support gap between candidates is narrow, there may be incentive for candidates to focus on the same considerations in order to avoid relinquishing a potentially critical issue to the opposition.

A second environmental factor that may affect patterns of issue convergence is the level of media coverage an issue receives. Due to the media's priming capabilities (i.e., Iyengar and Kinder, 1987), candidates may be more likely to discuss issues that receive high levels of media attention. Indeed, if the opposition and the media are both focusing on an issue, this may increase the likelihood that the issue may factor into the vote choice. By converging, candidates may avoid abandoning a potentially important issue to the opposition.

### Candidates' Prior Behavior

Finally, occurrences of issue convergence may be affected by the interdependent nature of the campaign process. Specifically, I anticipate that the level of attention the opposition devotes to an issue should have a positive influence on candidates' decision making. If the opposition gives passing attention to an issue, candidates may be less apt to converge. However, as the opposition increases its attention to an issue and thus, increases the issue's saliency in the campaign environment, candidates may converge in order to neutralize the opposition's hold over the issue. At the same time, if an issue has been used as the basis of an attack, candidates should be less likely to converge because if the attacks have any veracity, convergence on these issues may draw more attention to a perceived weakness. Moreover, the cardinal rule of attack politics is that once attacked a candidate should counter-attack instead of attempt to refute the opposition's salvo (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Damore, 2002; Lau, Sigelman, Heldmon, and Babbitt, 1999).

## MODEL SPECIFICATION

### Data and Methods

The data used to test the above hypotheses was collected and pooled from all available campaign advertisements produced by candidates competing in

the 1976–1996 presidential elections.<sup>7</sup> The appendix provides a detailed overview of the collection, reliability, validity, and limitations of these data (also see Damore, 2003). Operationalizing these data to examine the hypotheses specified above requires attention to three inter-related considerations: defining the model's risk set; determining the motivations that underlie candidates' behavior; and selecting an appropriate estimation strategy that allows these considerations to be accounted for in the statistical analysis. Determination of the risk set entails selection of the issues that candidates could discuss during a campaign. The risk set here is all issues that were discussed at least once during a campaign. Determinations of issues follow Smith (1985) and are summarized in Table A.1.

Second, as discussed above, in some cases candidates' decisions to discuss an issue may be motivated by the actions of their opponents, resulting in behavior that is interdependent. In other cases, these decisions may be unaffected by the opposition. The consequence of this distinction rests in how the probabilities for candidates' likelihoods of discussing an issue are conceptualized. If interdependency is assumed, then the probability that a candidate will address an issue differs depending if the opposition has or has not already done so. Alternatively, if candidates' decision making is independent, then the probability that a candidate will address an issue is unaffected by the opposition's decision making. Accounting for this in the analysis requires a match between the data generating process and model specification.

To this end, because of the dynamic nature of the theory and data under investigation, the paper's hypotheses are tested using a Cox proportional regression model, a form of duration analysis. The Cox is appropriate here because unlike parametric models it does not require *a priori* specification of the hazard function. The distinguishing feature of duration models is the manner in which the dependent variable is conceptualized. Whereas time typically is accounted for on the right-hand side of a model, duration analysis incorporates information about the temporal dynamics into the dependent variable via a hazard rate. Here, the hazard rate represents the risk that candidates will discuss an issue at time  $t$  given that they have not done so prior to time  $t$ . When an issue is discussed, failure occurs. The model's covariates either increase or decrease the risk of failure.

Use of the standard Cox model, however, is problematic because for many issues in the risk set multiple failures occur (e.g., candidates discuss the same issue on multiple occasions, resulting in repeated events of the same phenomena). Data of this type raise two problems: over time dependency (akin to autocorrelation) and selection bias (see Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn, 2002). More specifically, because the Cox treats each event as independent, it fails to recognize the dependency in the data and exaggerates the amount of new information that each event is providing the analysis. This tends to result in biased standard error estimates. Also, the Cox's inability to differentiate

between events does not allow it to account for the conditional nature of higher order events, resulting in estimates that fail to consider the selection process inherent to repeated events data.

To overcome these problems, the Cox is estimated using a conditional risk set-up; a type of variance-correction model developed by Prentice, Williams, and Peterson (1981) (PWP here after) and summarized by Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2002). The key concern with models of this type is the match between the model's conditioning assumption and the data generating process. On this front, the PWP is attractive because it recognizes the contingent influence of the independent variables on higher order events. This, in turn, allows the model to account for differences in the hazard rate across events while controlling for the selection process that underlies higher order events.<sup>8</sup> Robust standard errors (clustering on each issue) are used to control for dependency across events within each case and estimates are stratified by year.

### Variables and Measures

The dependent variable consists of a time counter, which begins the first day of a campaign (operationalized as the day on which the first advertisement for a campaign was produced), increases by one each day the issue is in the data set, and stops when failure occurs (when a candidate discusses the issue), and a dummy variable, which is coded zero for days that failure does not occur and one for days on which failure occurs. For higher order events, the analysis clock restarts until a subsequent failure occurs. Because the analysis models the total duration for each issue both candidates are at risk of failure for the first event. For a second event, only the candidate who has not discussed the issue is at risk. If that candidate then addresses the issue, then the candidate who first discussed the issue is again at risk for a third event and remains so until the candidate produces a new advertisement addressing the issue, and so on for subsequent events. Thus, convergence occurs after an issue fails twice.

As discussed above, because the probabilities associated with candidates' issue discussions may differ depending upon if the opposition has or has not addressed the issue, the model's covariates (independent variables) are operationalized so as to differentiate between factors that motivate candidates' issue discussions independent of the actions of the opposition and factors that cause candidates to respond to their opponents. Specifically, two sets of covariates are specified: main effects, which capture the former type of behavior, and convergence effects, which account for the latter type of decisions. If the covariates capturing the convergence effects differ significantly from the main effects, then this indicates that strategic considerations significantly affect occurrences of convergence. Alternatively, if the interaction

terms are insignificant, then this suggests that candidates' issue discussions result from independent processes that happen to overlap.

Five covariates are included to capture the model's main effects. Two dummy variables, *Democratic Issue* and *Republican Issue*, are included to examine the partisan dynamics associated with agenda competition in presidential campaigns. The variables are coded one for issues owned by either the Democratic or Republican Party, respectively, and zero otherwise. Data used to generate these measures are taken from Petrocik (1996) and are summarized in Table A.1. As discussed above, I expect that presidential candidates will be more likely to discuss issues associated with the GOP and less likely to discuss Democratic owned issues. Thus, the sign for *Democratic Issue* should be negative and the sign for *Republican Issue* should be positive. *Salient* is included to examine if presidential candidates are more likely to discuss issues that are perceived as important to the electorate. The variable is measured as the percent of respondents identifying an issue as being the most important problem in pre-campaign Gallup polls. Consistent with Aldrich and Griffin (2003), the variable's effect should be positive.

Two time varying covariates are included to assess the influence that factors stemming from the campaign environment exert on candidates' decision making. *Support Difference* is measured as the difference in candidates' poll standings (moving over time).<sup>9</sup> For the main effects, this variable is included as a control because I have no theoretical basis to expect candidates who are ahead or behind to be more or less likely to discuss an issue. However, for higher order events, I expect that as the support difference between the candidates' grows, the likelihood that candidates will discuss the same issue will decrease. *Media Attention* is included to test if issue specific media coverage influences candidates' probabilities of discussing an issue. Values for the variable move over time and are measured as the number of stories devoted to an issue by the ABC Evening News using collected from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive daily abstracts between July 1 and Election Day. I anticipate the covariate to sign positively.

To examine the strategic aspects of the issue convergence process eight covariates are specified.<sup>10</sup> The first two, *Democratic Respondent* and *Republican Respondent*, are included to control for partisan differences that may affect the decision to discuss an issue given that the opposition has already done so. The variables are coded one if a Democratic or Republican candidate respectively is in position to discuss an issue that has failed at least once, zero otherwise. I have no *a priori* expectations about the effects of these variables. Rather, the influence of these variables should come through their interaction with the issue ownership variables defined above: if candidates systematically avoid responding to issues that are associated with the opposition party, then *Republican Respondent*  $\times$  *Democratic Issue* and *Democrat Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue* should sign negatively. Conversely, if candidates seek to

reestablish the partisan issue associations after the opposition has filched an issue associated with their party, then *Democrat Respondent*  $\times$  *Democratic Issue* and *Republican Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue* should sign positively.

Two additional time varying covariates are included in the model to examine if the tone and level of attention that the opposition devotes to an issue influences the opposition's decision making. *Level of Attack* is measured as the percent (moving over time) of the opposition's issue specific appeals that are negative in tone. I expect the covariate to sign negatively. *Opposition Attention*, which should have positive influence on occurrences of failure, is measured as the percent (moving over time) of the opposition's total appeals devoted to an issue.

Diagnostics indicate that *Media Attention*, *Democratic Respondent*, and *Democratic Issue* violate the Cox's proportionality assumption. Proportionality assumes that the effects of the covariates are constant over time. If these effects vary over time, then biased and inefficient estimates may result.<sup>11</sup> To correct for this, each of these covariates is interacted with  $\ln(\text{Time})$ , where  $\ln(\text{Time})$  is the natural log for analysis time. When these terms are included in the model, the Cox's proportionality assumption is met.

## RESULTS

Table 2 presents the results for the analysis examining the politics of issue convergence in presidential campaigns. The second column presents the estimates for the main effects only, which uses data for the time until the first failure, and the fourth column presents the results for the full model (e.g., both main and convergence effects using data for all failures). Both models use robust standard errors and are stratified by year. The third and fifth columns summarize the percent change in the hazard rate for the coefficients for the respective model specification. Duration coefficients assess if particular covariates enhance or diminish the risk of an event occurring relative to the baseline hazard rate and the percent change in the hazard rate indicates the change in the risk of failure resulting from a one-unit change in a covariate.

Turning first to the results in column two and inspection of the estimates for the factors accounting for candidates' initial issue discussions. Again, this model uses data for the time until the first failure and as such, offers a comparison to the full model presented in column four. The significance of the Wald test suggests that the overall fit of the model is strong and the coefficients suggest mixed support for the paper's hypotheses. Consistent with Damore (2004) and Petrocik et al. (2003–2004), the sign and significance of *Democratic Issue* suggests that all else equal presidential candidates are less likely to discuss issues associated with the Democratic Party. The change in hazard rate for the covariate also indicates that the coefficient is substantively

TABLE 2. Pwp Cox Regression Analysis of Issue Convergence in Presidential Campaigns, 1976–1996

Variable	Time to First Failure		All Failures	
	Coefficient (robust se)	Change in Hazard Rate (%)	Coefficient (robust se)	Change in Hazard Rate (%)
Democratic Issue	-.324*(.175)	-28	-1.63***(.413)	-81
Republican Issue	.027(.194)	2	.095(.172)	10
Media Attention	.001(.001)	1	-.011**(.003)	-1
Support Difference	.104(.122)	10	-.055**(.022)	-5
Salient	1.96**(.737)	613	2.09***(.627)	711
Democratic Respondent	-	-	-.833**(.346)	-57
Democratic Respondent × Democratic Issue	-	-	1.91***(.432)	578
Democratic Respondent × Republican Issue	-	-	.897***(.332)	145
Republican Respondent	-	-	-1.09*(.280)	-67
Republican Respondent × Democratic Issue	-	-	.067(.395)	7
Republican Respondent × Republican Issue	-	-	.742*(.349)	109
Level of Attack	-	-	-.064(.235)	-6
Opposition Attention	-	-	1.29(.896)	262
Democratic Respondent × ln(Time)	-	-	-.128(.086)	-12
Democratic Issue × ln(Time)	-	-	.451***(.114)	57
Media Attention × ln(Time)	-	-	.004***(.001)	1
Wald Test	15.76**		105.47***	
Days at Risk	5633		14065	
Number of Cases/Failures	175/175		509/334	

Note: Analyses are stratified by year; robust standard cluster on each issue; and \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , one tailed test.

significant. Surprisingly, *Republican Issue*, fails to obtain statistical significance.

The results also indicate that candidates' initial issue selections are affected by the importance that the electorate attaches to an issue; a finding that is consistent with Aldrich and Griffin's (2003) contention that preferences of the voters exert a significant influence on candidates' issue selections. Specifically, the sign and significance of *Salient*, as well as the change in the hazard rate for the covariate, indicate that as the importance of an issue to the electorate increases, so does the likelihood that candidates will discuss the issue.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, although *Media Attention* is in the predicted direction, it is statistically insignificant; suggesting that the level of media attention an issue receives does not affect candidates' initial issue selections (*Support Difference* is included as a control for this model).

Column four of Table 2 presents the results for the full model. Again, the significance of the Wald tests suggests that the overall model fit of is strong. Turning first to the main effects, *Democratic Issue* and *Republican Issue* perform in the same manner as for the analysis examining candidates' initial issue selections. Substantively, the performance of these covariates suggests that candidates are no more or less likely to discuss issues associated with the GOP if their opponents already have discussed such issues. The sign, coefficient, and change in the hazard rate for *Democratic Issue* suggest that candidates are less likely to converge on issues associated with the Democratic Party. However, this effect does not appear to be constant over time. Rather, as the coefficient for *Democratic Issue*  $\times$   $\ln(\text{Time})$  indicates, while initially candidates are less likely to converge on Democratically owned issue, as time passes the likelihood of failure for these issues increases.

The performance of *Media Attention* and *Media Attention*  $\times$   $\ln(\text{Time})$  also suggest non-constant effects. Specifically, the sign and significance for *Media Attention* suggests that the level of media coverage an issue receives initially decreases the likelihood of failure. However, as an issue remains at risk, the influence of media coverage on the likelihood of failure increases. At the same time, the changes in the hazard rate for these covariates suggest weak substantive effects. The results for the multiple failure data also confirm the significant affect of public opinion on candidates' likelihood of discussing an issue. *Salient* is both statistically and substantively significant (see note twelve), suggesting that candidates are more likely to converge on issues that are perceived as important to the electorate.

The results in column four of Table 2 also offer support for the contention that issue convergence in presidential campaigns is shaped by strategic considerations. Specifically, the sign and significance for *Support Difference* indicates that as the support gap between candidates increases, the likelihood that candidates will discuss the same issues decreases. The change in the hazard rate suggests strong substantive effects for the covariate. As discussed

above, this is likely due to the fact that trailing candidates have little incentive to match the front-runner on the issues, and instead these candidates are more likely to use attacks to undermine the support of their rivals (e.g., Damore, 2002; Skaperdas and Grofman, 1995).

Perhaps most importantly, the results provide a number of insights into the issue ownership dynamic and the pervasiveness of the Dominance Principle in presidential campaigns. While the sign and significance of the coefficients for both *Republican Respondent* and *Democratic Respondent* are indicative of the Dominance Principle's prediction of issue divergence, it appears that this behavior is contingent upon the nature of the issue at risk. The significance and positive coefficients for *Democratic Respondent*  $\times$  *Democratic Issue* and *Democratic Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue* suggests that Democratic presidential candidates seek to both reestablish the partisan issue association when their Republican counterparts trespass into Democratic issue territory and compete with their Republican opponents over issue traditionally associated with the GOP. Indeed, the change in the hazard rate for these coefficients suggests strong substantive effects, particularly for *Democratic Respondent*  $\times$  *Democratic Issue*.

The performance of *Republican Respondent*  $\times$  *Democratic Issue* and *Republican Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue* suggest somewhat different patterns of behavior. The sign and significance for *Republican Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue* indicates that Republican candidates are more likely to discuss issue associated with their party if their Democratic opponents have discussed these issues. However, *Republican Respondent*  $\times$  *Democratic Issue* fails to obtain statistical significance, indicating that Republican candidates do not systematically converge on issues associated with the Democratic Party.

Surprisingly, *Opposition Attention*, although in the predicted direction, fails to obtain conventional levels of statistical significance ( $p = .07$ ). As such, it appears that the level of attention that the opposition devotes to an issue does not factor into candidates' decisions to converge on an issue.<sup>13</sup> *Level of Attack* also is in the predicted direction but statistically insignificant, indicating that candidates are no more-or-less likely to discuss or avoid issues that have been used as the basis of attacks by the opposition.

While the results presented in Table 2 offer insight into the process by which agendas develop in presidential campaigns, they do not provide much context for understanding the substantive implications of the analysis. To overcome this limitation of the pooled analysis, Table 3 summarizes the issues from each campaign for which multiple convergences occurred (e.g., events that failed four or more times), as well as the partisan ownership of these issues and the percent of the electorate identifying these issues as the most important problem.

Inspection of Table 3 suggests three key points regarding the process by which presidential campaign agendas develop. First, issues such as taxes,

economic performance, and with the exception of the two campaigns in the 1990s, defense are constants of presidential campaigns. As such, it appears that candidates are cognizant of the electorate's expectation that presidents should focus their attention on collective, as opposed to particularistic policies (e.g., Jacobson, 1990) and structure their campaign messages accordingly.

Second, these data indicate the prevalence of economic performance issues in presidential campaigns. In many cases economic concerns loom large in voters' minds and by addressing these issues presidential candidates simply may be telling voters what they want to hear. At the same time, such rhetoric may heighten expectations about presidents' ability to manage the economy and in the process provide further impetus for the reward/punishment nature of economic voting.

Third, with the exception of campaign staples such as education and social security, there appears to be a greater propensity for issue convergence to occur over issues associated with the GOP. As a consequence, Republican candidates may hold an advantage over their Democratic counterparts in terms of the credibility over issues that are typically discussed in presidential campaigns. From a strategic perspective, this suggests that the Democrats may be best served by putting forth nominees who, through prior service or experience, are perceived as credible over issues traditionally associated with the Republican Party.<sup>14</sup>

To this point, the theory and analysis presented here has concentrated on the competition between major party candidates for leverage over campaign agendas. While certainly it is the messages of these candidates that dominate agendas in presidential campaigns, the presence of a competitive third party candidate may affect the content of these agendas in one of two ways. On the one hand, given that an important function of third parties in the United States is to champion issues that have been ignored by the major parties, major party candidates may be less likely to address issues discussed by third party candidates so as to continue to marginalize the role of third parties in the political process. Alternatively, major party candidates may be more likely to discuss issues as put forth by third party candidates in order to absorb the message of these candidates and reduce their ability to attract undecided voters.

To investigate these hypotheses the full model presented in Table 2 is reestimated including data for Rose Perot from 1992 (see note seven). To assess Perot's affect on the campaign agenda *Issue Initiated by Perot* (coded one for issues originally discussed by Perot, zero otherwise) is added to the model.<sup>15</sup> The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4. Overall, these results are quite similar to those presented in Table 2. The exceptions to this are that *Opposition Emphasis* pops into significance and *Democratic Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue* and *Media Attention* fall out of significance. In terms of Perot's ability to influence the content of the campaign agenda in 1992, the sign, significance, and change in hazard rate for *Issue Initiated by Perot* suggests that Perot's presence significantly affected the campaign

agenda. Indeed, the change in the hazard rate for the covariate suggests strong substantive effects. As such, these results indicate, at least during the 1992 presidential campaign, that major party candidates were more likely to discuss, as opposed to ignore, issues initiated by Perot, presumably in order to neutralize Perot's ability to use these issues to attract undecided voters.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research has sought to expand our understanding of the supply side of the campaign process by assessing the conditions under which the messages of competing presidential candidates will converge on the same set of issues. In so doing, this effort provides insight into the process by which presidential candidates compete to define and control campaign agendas. As noted above, while the affect of agendas on policy outcomes has been well established in the literature, to date, the study of the linkage between agendas and outcomes in the electoral arena has received little attention. By drawing on prior research to develop a framework for understanding the decision calculus that underlies candidates' issue selections and testing the paper's hypotheses against data collected from multiple presidential campaigns, this effort has helped to fill this lacuna in the campaign politics literature.

The analysis presented here suggests that occurrences of issue convergence in presidential campaigns are quite frequent and are a function of the importance of an issue to the electorate, voters' expectations about the type of issues presidential candidates should discuss, candidates' poll standings, and candidates' attempts to reestablish the linkages between their candidacies and issues associated with their parties in the face of their opponent's attempts to issue trespass. Extension of the model to include data for Ross Perot from 1992 indicates that the presence of a competitive third party candidate alters the content of agendas that emerge in presidential campaigns.

**TABLE 3. Issues for which Failure Occurred Four or More Times, 1976–1996 Presidential Campaigns**

Year	Issue	Issue Type	Salient
1976	War and Peace	Performance	.05
	Taxes	Republican	0
	Jobs	Performance	0
	Inflation	Performance	.38
	Farming	Democratic	0
	Government Spending	Republican	0
	Government Management	Republican	.13
	Education	Democratic	0

**TABLE 3. (Continued)**

1980	Defense	Republican	0
	Taxes	Republican	0
	Economics, general	Performance	0
	Unemployment	Performance	.15
	Jobs	Performance	0
	Inflation	Performance	.56
	Government Spending	Republican	0
	Wages	Performance	.08
	Social Security	Democratic	0
1984	Defense	Republican	0
	War and Peace	Republican	.22
	Taxes	Republican	.18
	Jobs	Performance	0
1988	Defense	Republican	0
	Taxes	Republican	0
	Jobs	Performance	0
	Crime	Republican	0
	Social Security	Democratic	0
	Education	Democratic	0
1992	Taxes	Republican	.03
	Economics, general	Performance	.37
	Jobs	Performance	0
	Government Spending	Republican	0
	Crime	Republican	0
	Healthcare	Democratic	.12
	Education	Democratic	.10
	Job Training	Democratic	0
1996	Taxes	Republican	.07
	Wages	Performance	0
	Government Budget	Republican	0
	Drugs	Republican	.08
	Crime	Republican	0
	Domestic Violence	Republican	0
	Medicare	Democratic	.06
	Education	Democratic	.09

*Note:* Data taken from all available campaign advertisement produced by major party candidates competing in the 1976–1996 presidential campaigns; data used to determine Issue Type taken from Petrocik (1996) and Petrocik et al. (2003–2004), and data used to determine the values for Salient taken from pre-campaign Gallup polls asking respondents to identify the most important problem facing the country.

The implications of this effort for the literature are at least three-fold. First, with respect to the nature of campaign strategy in presidential elections, the primary conclusion of this effort is that adherence to the Dominance Principle in presidential campaigns is tempered by strategic considerations. Most

notably, it appears that candidates are cognizant of the concerns that voters expect presidential candidates to pursue and structure their messages accordingly. Because voters' expectations largely correlate with issues associated with the GOP, presidential candidates tend to converge on Republican owned issues. At the same time, the results indicate that candidates attempt to reestablish the connection between their candidacies and their party's issues after these issues have been discussed by the opposition. As such, it appears that candidates realize the value of these partisan-issue reputations and are willing to allocate resources to maintain these associations in response to their opponents' attempts to issue trespass.

With this said, it is important to note that this conclusion simply may underscore the uniqueness of presidential campaigns. To date, the strongest support for the Dominance Principle and the politics of issue divergence comes from analyses of lower level races (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Simon, 2002; Spiliotes and Vavreck, 2002). In contrast, analyses of presidential campaigns find a greater tendency of presidential candidates to converge on the same issues (e.g., Aldrich and Griffin, 2003; Damore, 2004; Petrocik et al., 2003–2004). Thus, the expectations about what presidential candidates should discuss, the relative competitiveness of presidential campaigns, and the national scope of these races may create a context that is less amenable to the Dominance Principle's prediction of issue divergence.

Second, from a normative perspective, the findings presented here are good news on at least two fronts. The evidence indicating substantial issue convergence counters the oft-made criticism that candidates talk past one another. Rather, at least in the case of presidential campaigns, it appears that candidates focus their attention on the same issues; a condition necessary to fulfill the demands for meaningful campaign dialogue (Simon, 2002). The results also suggest that presidential candidates are attentive to issues important to voters, a finding that is consistent with the work of Aldrich and Griffin's (2003) analysis of the 2000 presidential campaign, as well as other research (e.g., Burstein, 2003; Jones, 1994) indicating that elites are more responsive to the public as the saliency of an issue increases. While this behavior is likely shaped by strategic considerations (e.g., candidates discuss such issues to attract undecided voters and avoid abdicating these issues to their opponents), the end result is convergence between the messages of presidential candidates and the priorities of voters.

Finally, the paper's basic premise and its subsequent theoretical development and analysis place it front and center in the debate regarding the impact that campaigns have on election outcomes. The contention that what candidates choose to discuss and what they choose to ignore affects the decisions of voters necessitates a more prominent role for the study of candidate behavior in analyses of election processes. While macro-level variables such as the state of the economy or presidential approval shape the context in which a

**TABLE 4. PWP Cox Regression Analysis of Issue Convergence in Presidential Campaigns (All Failures, with Perot Data), 1976–1996**

Variable	Coefficient (robust se)	Change in Hazard Rate
Democratic Issue	-1.61***(.371)	-80
Republican Issue	.157(.159)	+17
Media Attention	-.001(.001)	-.1
Support Difference	-.096***(.018)	-9
Salient	1.91***(.566)	579
Democratic Respondent	-.518*(.312)	-41
Democratic Respondent × Democratic Issue	1.92***(.403)	+584
Democratic Respondent × Republican Issue	.133(.378)	14
Republican Respondent	-.988***(.244)	-62
Republican Respondent × Democratic Issue	.147(.351)	15
Republican Respondent × Republican Issue	.541*(.310)	71
Level of Attack	-.144(.232)	-13
Opposition Attention	1.88**(.822)	557
Issue Initiated by Perot	1.50***(.320)	348
Democratic Respondent × ln(Time)	-.231*(.122)	-21
Democratic Issue × ln(Time)	.450***(.102)	56
Democratic Respondent × Republican Issue × ln(Time)	.331*(.158)	39
Support Difference × ln(Time)	.019***(.006)	1
Wald TestDays at Risk	90.10***	
Number of Cases/Failures	18910	
	641/415	

Note: Analysis is stratified by year; robust standard cluster on each issue; and \*\*\*p < .001, \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05, one tailed test.

campaign is occurring, these factors do not determine outcomes (Holbrook, 1996). Rather, elections are determined by the interplay between campaign strategy and the receptiveness of undecided voters to candidates' messages. Although the effect of these decisions may be small in the aggregate, this dynamic ultimately determine election's winners and losers. Unfortunately, this is an important, albeit often neglected, point in the literature.

Lastly, given the dearth of attention devoted to the study of candidate behavior, this area is ripe for future research. A most needed area of inquiry is examination of differences in *how* candidates choose to address those issues on which they converge. On this point, Petrocik (1996) suggests that when the same issue is discussed, candidates will accent attributes of the issue that play to their strengths. For instance, whereas a Republican may choose to discuss crime reduction in terms of strengthening law enforcement, a Democrat may address the issue by highlighting investments in education and job training. More broadly, Chong (1996) and others argue that the frames through which issues are presented can have strong effects on how issues are understood by voters. Thus, the competition among candidates over issue frames may be just as important as the competition among candidates for agenda control. Unfortunately, as Simon (2002) notes, to date our investigation into this aspect of campaign communication is sorely understudied.

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## APPENDIX A

### Campaign Advertising Data

The campaign advertisements are the primary data source used here. These data were collected from the Kanter Political Commercial Archives at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. Five hundred unique advertisements were used to generate the data used for the paper's analysis. While the Kanter Archive does not claim to have all advertisements from these six campaigns, the archive believes to have close to a complete set for most (see Geer, 1998 for more detailed discussion of the archive and its holdings). However, all available spots from the 1976–1996 campaigns housed at the archive were not collected. Following the procedures established by Geer (1998), omitted from the data collection were: all Spanish language advertisements; spots aimed at

specific states; advertisements running longer than one minute; advertisements put forth by interest groups or other entities not directly affiliated with candidates or their campaigns, but created on candidates' behalves; advertisements that were either shortened versions of existing advertisements or advertisements that were altered slightly from other ads; and advertisements created well in advance of the general election campaign.

### Coding

Given the purpose for which these data were collected, the focus of the content analysis was on the written and spoken word as opposed to the visual aspects of the spots. The decision to focus on the former as opposed to the latter was based on three considerations. First, interpreting the meaning of visual images can be highly subjective, and hence, creating coding rules that yield acceptable levels of reliability is quite difficult. Second, in most cases the visual aspects of an advertisement serve to reinforce information being put forth either verbally or in writing. Third, my interest in these data is not in assessing how these ads are put together *per se*, but in developing measures that can be incorporated into models of campaign strategy. As a consequence, less attention was given to many of the components of the ads that have been central to prior research (i.e., visual images, sounds, color schemes, and editing).

The unit of analysis used in the content analysis is the appeal, which represents a unique issue mention within an advertisement. Using the appeal instead of the advertisement as the unit of analysis provides a finer measure of candidate behavior given that most ads address multiple issues, may discuss the same issue multiple times, and often juxtapose positive and negative issue discussions. Using the advertisement as the unit of analysis would undercount attention to specific issues and the tone used to convey these appeals.

### Validity and Reliability

Inherent in the use of content analysis are concerns about data reliability and validity. Following the lead of Geer (1998), data reliability was assessed in three ways. First, before traveling to Norman, I received a sample of spots from the 1992 and 1996 campaigns. After establishing the coding rules and procedures, a research assistant and I coded the spots separately. In this sample, our coding agreed 91% of the time. Second, I tested to see if I had taught myself to code as I became immersed in the data. During my stay in Oklahoma, I recoded a set of spots that I had examined three days earlier. The agreement in this case was 96%. Finally, after returning from Oklahoma, I recoded a sample of ads and compared those codings with those done at

Oklahoma. In this case, the agreement was 93%. Based upon the results of these checks, the content analysis resulted in data that is sufficiently reliable.

Unfortunately, there is no statistical method for easily assessing the validity of the data. Instead, alternative criteria must be used. The most appropriate and straightforward is construct validity: do the data measure what they are suppose to, candidates' attempts to use their rhetoric to define and control campaign agendas? Clearly they do, given that campaign advertisements are designed to inform voters about a candidate and/or the opposition and provide voters with reasons why they should support the sponsoring candidate.

The major limitation of these data is that it is unknown where and how often each of the advertisements was aired (the advertisements' production dates are used to measure the dependent variable). Although these data are now becoming available, they do not exist for the elections examined here. However, given that the central concern of this research is assessing changes in candidates' strategies, not in examining the effects of campaign advertisements on voters, the number of times an advertisement aired is less of a concern than knowing that candidates produced an advertisement at a specific point in time addressing a specific issue. Moreover, Shaw's (1999a, b) work indicates that the decision of where to campaign necessitates a different set of calculations from those associated with the decisions about what to talk about. Thus, these data allow changes in strategy to be measured, but not the overall content of candidates' day to day media campaigns.

### Issues by Campaign

Table A.1 provides a summary of the issues discussed in each campaign, as well as their partisan ownership. The coding of issues follows the structure

**TABLE A.1. Issues Addressed in Campaign Advertisements Produced by Presidential Candidates, 1976–1996**

Issue	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>						
<b>Defense</b>	X	X	X	X		
<b>Nuclear Weapons</b>		X	X	X		
War and Peace	X	X	X		X	
Middle East		X				
Foreign Affairs (general)	X	X	X			
<b>Immigration</b>	X					X
Soviet Union	X					
China	X					
Vietnam	X					
World Position	X					
Foreign Aid				X		
<b>Terrorism</b>		X	X	X		

TABLE A.1. (Continued)

<b>Economics</b>						
<b>Taxes</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
Economics (general)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unemployment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wages	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jobs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inflation/Prices	X	X	X	X		
Interest Rates	X	X	X			
Small Businesses					X	
Home Starts		X				
Home Purchases	X	X				
Trade	X			X	X	
<i>Labor</i>	X					
<i>Farming</i>	X	X	X			
<b>Civil Rights</b>						
<i>Women's Rights</i>		X	X			
<i>Abortion</i>			X			X
<i>Religious Freedom</i>						X
<b>Government Management</b>						
<b>Spending</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Size</b>	X	X	X		X°	X
<b>Budget</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
Role of Government	X	X	X	X	X°	
Deficit/Debt	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shut-down						X
Management (general)	X	X		X	X°	
<b>Federalism/State's Rights</b>		X				
Appointments	X		X	X		
Role of Special Interests						X
<b>Deregulation</b>		X		X		
<b>Social Control</b>						
<b>Drugs</b>				X		X
<b>Crime</b>	X		X	X	X	X
<b>Domestic Violence</b>			X			X
<b>Pornography</b>						X
<b>Other Domestic Issues</b>						
<b>Energy</b>	X	X				
<i>Urban Aid</i>	X	X				
<i>Housing</i>				X		
<i>Social Security</i>	X	X	X	X		X
<i>Healthcare</i>	X	X		X	X	X
<i>Medicare</i>		X	X			X
<i>Education/Schools</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Retirement Benefits</i>	X					X
<i>Job Training</i>					X	X

**TABLE A.1. (Continued)**

<i>Environment</i>			X	X	X	X
<i>Family/Medical Leave</i>						X
<i>Smoking/Tobacco</i>						X
<i>Daycare</i>	X			X		X
<i>Welfare</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Elderly Care</i>						X
<i>Infant Mortality</i>					X	
<i>Infrastructure</i>	X				X	
<i>Research and Technology</i>					X	
<i>Working Conditions</i>					X	
<i>Aid to the Disabled</i>			X			
Issue Totals	36	32	30	26	21/24	30

Note: Issue classifications are taken from Smith (1985). Issues in bold are Republican Owned and issues in italics are Democrat Owned. Issue ownership codings taken from Petrocik (1996) and Petrocik et al. (2003–2004). Issues for which there is no partisan association are either neutral or performance based. Asterisks indicate issue that were discussed by Ross Perot in 1992, but not addressed by either of the major party candidates.

developed by Smith (1985). Issue ownership data are taken from Petrocik (1996) and Petrocik et al. (2003–2004).

## NOTES

1. In contrast to agendas in legislative settings, campaign agendas are more fluid in nature. Whereas legislative agendas are fixed sets of proposals that are voted on sequentially, campaign agendas emerge over time and result from the joint choices candidates make about voter receptivity to their issue packages.
2. Credibility is a necessary antecedent to persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998).
3. The theory of issue ownership contends that parties have developed reputations for being able to handle certain issues, and that these issue associations provide candidates with credibility over issues owned by their party. As such, the theory serves as a proxy for the Dominance Principle (see Petrocik, 1996).
4. The results of Damore (2004) and Petrocik et al. (2003–2004) diverge from those of Petrocik (1996) who finds in his examination of candidate-generated stories appearing in the *New York Times* that coverage of presidential candidates accentuates these candidates' attention to party owned issues. Interestingly, this coverage often is uncorrelated with the content of candidates' messages, suggesting that the media may help to perpetuate partisan-issue stereotypes.
5. In the analysis that follows, both strategic and non-strategic factors are explicitly modeled.
6. It is important to remember that presidential campaigns are not designed to gain the support of all voters. Rather, as Shaw (1999a, b) demonstrates, these campaigns use their resources to mobilize their base and target undecided voters. Moreover, as Aldrich and Griffin (2003) suggest, the preferences of undecided voters have a significant influence on the content of candidates' messages.
7. While my primary concern is with the behavior of major party candidates, data also was collected for Ross Perot. Inclusion of a third party candidate, however, complicates the model

because these candidates may be motivated by purposes other than winning. Thus, including Perot with the major party candidates may lead to model misspecification given that the underlying process generating the data for Perot may differ. To overcome this, a separate model is estimated including data for Perot from 1992. Year specific analyses are not presented because the purpose of this effort is to test general hypotheses of candidate behavior instead of capturing the idiosyncrasies of specific campaigns or candidates. Moreover, due to the limited number of observations for each year, the model cannot be estimated in a reliable and efficient manner when the data are disaggregated.

8. Specifically, the PWP model is able to account for differences in baseline hazards across events because the model imposes a sequentially structured risk set (e.g., an observation is not at risk for a higher order event until it has experienced all lower order events). And, because the model assumes that the influence of the independent variables on the likelihood of failure for higher order events is contingent upon the observation having experienced all lower order events (i.e., the probability of a first failure is dependent upon X; the probability of a second failure is dependent upon the first failure and X; the probability of a third failure is dependent upon the first and second failures, as well as X; and so on for all higher order events), the PWP model is able to account for the selection effects across events for an observation. For additional information, see Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2002).
9. With the exception of 1992, data from Gallup are used. For 1992, data collected by Goldman et al. (1994) are used. I use the data presented by Goldman et al. (1994) for 1992 because they provide tracking data for the campaign. Gallup does the same for 1996. However, for the other four campaigns, Gallup reports poll results intermittently. For dates when candidates' poll numbers were not available, these data are estimated assuming monotonic linearity between dates when Gallup did report polling data.
10. Note that these covariates can take on non-zero values only after an issue has failed at least once.
11. Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2001) provide a detailed overview of the proportionality assumption, as well as a discussion of the diagnostics used to determine if the assumption is violated and the appropriate remedies to correct for non-proportionality.
12. Interpretation of the change in hazard rate for *Salient* may be misleading because it suggests a scenario where the entire electorate identifies an issue as the most important problem. A more plausible interpretation would be that if an issue were perceived as important by 10% of the electorate (the sample mean for all issues with a value greater than zero) the likelihood that candidates will discuss an issue increases by just over 60%.
13. In alternative specifications, *Opposition Attention* was interacted with *Salient* and *Media Attention* to assess if the interaction between these variables influenced the probability of failure. However, because the coefficients for the terms were statistically insignificant and their inclusion did not alter the performances of the other covariates in the model, they were dropped to increase the model's efficiency and decrease colinearity among the independent variables.
14. A recent exception to this point is the 2000 presidential campaign: Aldrich and Griffin (2003) find a high degree of convergence between Al Gore and George W. Bush, and in contrast to most recent presidential campaigns, both candidates tended to highlight issues associated with the Democratic Party (e.g., Petrocik et al., 2003–2004).
15. Diagnostics indicate that *Democratic Respondent*, *Democratic Issue*, *Democratic Respondent*  $\times$  *Republican Issue*, and *Support Difference* do not meet Cox's the proportionality assumption for this analysis. To correct for this, these covariates are interacted with  $\ln(\text{Time})$ . For this analysis the data are coded in terms of the candidate dyad.

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