

Voter Decisions in 2014 and 2016:  
Campaign Effects in National Elections

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The influence of election campaigns on issue positions, turnout, attitudes about politics, and evaluations of candidates in the mass public has been shown to be conditional on citizens' attentiveness to politics, partisanship, and pre-campaign familiarity with the candidates. The nature of the campaigns matters, too. Campaigns vary widely in media coverage, competitiveness, candidate, party, third-party spending and effort, in the occurrence of newsworthy events, and so vary in their potential to change citizens' views of issues and the candidates.

We take new steps in the study of campaign effects by comparing their strength and dimensionality in House and Senate races and compare them with campaign effects in a recent presidential race. Understandably, previous observational studies have focused on presidential contests, but, consequently, have been biased by a context in which voters exhibit great familiarity with the candidates before the general election campaign begins. In contrast, previous experimental studies have focused on local elections in which initial familiarity with the candidates is very limited. In this observational study, we examine the effects of these differences on campaign effects in contests that vary widely in the visibility and contestedness of the races.

We ask three questions about campaign effects in House, Senate, and presidential races. First, do campaigns change attitudes about candidates among voters in House, Senate, and presidential races? Second, does the visibility and contestedness of the race condition change in attitudes about candidates? Third, what role do learning and issue proximity play in shaping campaign effects in House, Senate, and presidential races?

For the first time, this study compares campaign effects in all three types of U.S. federal election in a panel design. We exploit a panel design from the 2014 and 2016 election cycles that captures candidate evaluations and vote before and after the general election campaign. This allows comparisons across the three types of campaigns and gives us a view of congressional races

with and without a presidential contest. We demonstrate systematic differences in campaign effects between House, Senate, and presidential races for the first time. We also confirm that campaign effects in congressional contests are conditioned by information about the race, which is influenced by the contestedness of the race and by individuals' partisanship and sophistication. These results lead us to caution against the one-size-fits-all approaches to studying campaign effects.

### **The Campaign Effects Consensus**

A consensus about the presence of campaign effects emerged from observational studies of presidential campaigns in the late 1990s and 2000s. These studies overturned what they treated as a conventional view that partisanship, incumbency, and political fundamentals (the state of economy, presidential popularity) left campaigns to have only minimal effects on candidate evaluations.<sup>1</sup> At least partly motivated by the observation of weakening partisanship, studies of the 1990s and 2000s reconsidered campaign effects and often found factors that condition campaign effects. This early shift has been reinforced by studies that demonstrate some of the political and cognitive processes by which campaigns affect candidate evaluations, including the effects of elite cues, conventions and debates, candidate appearances, field operations, advertising and news exposure, reducing uncertainty about the candidates, improving the accessibility of party

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<sup>1</sup> The “minimal effects” literature is large (Wlezien and Erikson 2001). It usually includes Bartels (1993); Bartels and Zaller (2001); Berelson et al. (1954); Campbell et al. (1960); Finkel (1993); Gelman and King (1993); Levitt (1994); Lewis-Beck and Rice (1992). There were important exceptions, such as Goldenberg and Traugott (1987), which showed campaign effects in congressional campaigns.

identifications, and adopting the issue positions of preferred candidates.<sup>2</sup> Presidential campaigns also have been shown to affect turnout, which may have important asymmetric partisan effects.<sup>3</sup>

The most notable study in support of the campaign effects in presidential races is offered by the Hillygus and Jackman (2003) analysis of the 2000 presidential contest. With a large sample (about 2,600 in the individual-level analysis) and a modal and mean number interviews per panelist at 3 and about 5, respectively, the analysis permitted the investigation of individual-level change in candidate preference associated with two intervening events, the national party conventions and presidential debates. The central theme of the Hillygus-Jackman study is that voters vary in their responses to campaign events. Campaigns, in this account, may activate partisans to recognize the partisan implication of their choice, thus motivating undecided partisans to commit to the candidate of their party. Campaigns also may persuade independents to support a major party candidate or even persuade partisans to support the candidate of the opposite party. The study found evidence for activation and persuasion in the 2000 campaign. The voters found to be most likely to change candidate preference by changing candidate preferences were partisans who initially preferred the opposite-party candidate, independents, and the initially undecideds. The vast majority of changes were undecided voters choosing a candidate by election day. The study confirmed that campaign effects involve multiple processes and exhibit substantial but systematic variation across voters.

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<sup>2</sup> These include Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2009; Campbell et al. 1992; Claassen 2011; Dilliplane 2014; Fridkin et al. 2007; Geer 1988; Grant et al. 2010; Hill et al. 2010; Holbrook 1996; Lenz 2009; Masket 2009; Shaw 1999a, 1999b; Vavreck 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Brady, Johnson, and Sides 2006; Cox and Munger 1989; Gilliam 1985; Gimpel et al. 2007; Hillygus 2005; Holbrook and McClurg 2005; McGhee and Sides 2011; Peterson 2009; Stimson 2004; Masket 2009.

Three features of the Hillygus-Jackman study deserve notice. First, while the paper refers to “voters” throughout the discussion, the data appear to include both voters and nonvoters; no screen for eventual voters is described. Because voters and nonvoters are known to respond to campaigns in different ways, inclusion of nonvoters may affect inferences about the frequency of campaign effects and surely influences estimates of the effects of covariates of campaign effects. Second, as in this study, the number of candidate-to-candidate transitions is very small even with the study’s large sample size. For example, 37 panelists switched from Bush to Gore pre-to-post debate and serve as the basis for evaluating arguments about the effects of a dozen covariates. Thus, the most useful findings in the study involve respondents who were initially undecided and later favored one of the two major party candidates. Third, the analysis is limited to candidate preferences. No analysis of campaign effects on knowledge about the candidates or evaluations of the candidates is provided.

Studies of congressional campaign outcomes more consistently show campaign effects than presidential studies. Although not exclusively focused on campaign spending, congressional election studies have exploited the fact that competitiveness, campaign spending, and campaign visibility varies widely across candidates, districts, and states (Franklin 1991; Herrnson 1989, 1995; Jacobson 1989, 2006; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Lau and Pomper 2004). A seemingly contrary perspective is the view that the quality of the candidates is fixed after congressional primary elections and the quality of the candidates determines the outcomes of general election campaigns (Jacobson and Kernell 1983), but even that perspective is consistent with the view that quality candidates mount quality campaigns that generate campaign effects that advantage them.

Contrary to the consensus among observational studies of campaign effects, field experiments that examine the effects of campaign advertising and contact with campaigners show

small or no campaign effects. In their meta-analysis of field experiments, Kalla and Broockman (2018) conclude that campaigns can be shown to have an effect under unusual circumstances (candidates take very unpopular positions and there is unusually heavy investment in identifying persuadable voters). In their own field experiments, Kalla and Broockman report some effect of early campaign contact with voters by canvassers, but they find that the effect decays rapidly.

Although field experiments provide indispensable insight into the effects of singular campaign tactics and strategies, they may be limited in their ability to explain individual-level change across multiple contexts in a general election. Most obviously, while many kinds of campaigns are included in the field experiments, prominent campaigns like U.S. Senate and presidential campaigns are not. Furthermore, the forms of campaign contact manipulated in the experiments are very limited. They do not test the effects of the wider array of campaign strategies, media coverage, social networking, or incumbents' activities during a campaign that may generate campaign effects and do not capture the effects of repetition in messaging. Moreover, campaign effects are gauged in most field experiments by comparing candidate preferences of individuals who were contacted with the preferences of individuals who were not (and often not measured). The studies largely ignore the form of individual-level change that may be generated by campaigns, which is the focus of the observational studies using panel designs. It also is noteworthy that most experimental studies ignore the behavior of the initially undecided and yet we know from observational studies that most campaign effects take the form of undecided-to-candidate change.

For these reasons, we tentatively accept the consensus of observational studies that campaign effects are conditional on the characteristics of voters and campaign contests. Creative research designs and a wide range of positive findings leave little doubt that, under some

conditions, individuals' candidate preferences can be moved over the months of a campaign. The experimental studies question the influence of many kinds of contact, but they do not undermine the evidence from panel studies of changes in candidate preferences over the course of campaigns.

We elaborate on past observational studies by comparing the effects of House, Senate, and presidential campaigns. Moreover, we extend the analysis beyond candidate preferences to knowledge of and attitudes about the candidates. We examine, for the first time, whether the changes in knowledge about candidates and evaluations of issue positions vary across House, Senate, and presidential campaigns. If campaigns inform and crystallize opinion, then, over the course of a campaign, the number of people unable to express a view about a candidates' policy views should increase and their evaluations of candidates should evolve. By examining these dimensions of campaign effects, we gain a more nuanced view of variation in campaign effects across individuals and campaign contexts.

### **The Sources and Limits of Campaign Effects**

No single “theory of campaign effects” has emerged. Rather, political science offers multiple theories about about the nature of campaigns and candidate behavior in presidential, state, and district races and about how individuals respond to the political environment. These factors—campaign context and individuals' characteristics—interact to produce variation in campaign effects. Campaigns vary in competitiveness and visibility, while individuals vary in their attentiveness to and sophistication about politics, their partisan dispositions, and experience. For individuals, context and personal characteristics influence responses to campaigns. In the aggregate, context and voter responses determine outcomes.

## *Campaign Context*

Electoral campaigns vary in several ways that may shape campaign effects. Campaigns vary in the perceived importance of the office at stake, in their competitiveness, and in the information generated by the media, candidates' campaigns, and other political actors. These factors affect citizens' responses to campaigns in a variety of ways: the probability of voting, familiarity with the candidates, the relevance of partisan dispositions, and candidate evaluations and preferences.<sup>4</sup>

While we expect campaign effects on candidate evaluations and preferences in many House, Senate, and presidential races, we expect systematic differences in average campaign effects between the three types of races. The three levels differ from each other in the perceived importance of the offices at stake, the average competitiveness of the races, and the visibility of the candidates and contests (Fenno 1982; Abramowitz and Segal 1993; Clarke and Evans 1983).

The implication of these differences for the strength of campaign effects is not straightforward. The simple expectation is that the potential campaign effects are greater when more voters are exposed to information about the campaign and candidates. Thus, presidential races have greater potential campaign effects than Senate or House races, and Senate races generally have greater potential campaign effects than House races. That potential is limited by the presence of strong dispositions among voters at the start of a campaign. Congressional races

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<sup>4</sup> See footnotes 2 and 3. On competitiveness and turnout, also see Blais (2006), Coleman and Manna (2000), Cox and Munger (1989), Gershtenson (2009), Goldstein and Freedman (2002), Highton (2010), Lachat (2011), Timpone (1998), Westlye (1991), and Wolak (2006). On competitiveness and candidate familiarity, see Huckfeldt et al. (2007) and Niemi et al. (1986). On media coverage of congressional campaigns, see Freedman, Franz, and Goldstein (2004), Goldenberg and Traugott (1987), Prinz (1995), and Stewart and Reynolds (1990). On issues, campaigns, and voting, see Abbe, et al. (2003), Ansolabehere et al. (2008), Erikson and Wright (1989), Herrnson and Curry (2011), and Page and Jones (1979).



with incumbents running, like presidential general election campaigns, may begin with a high level of familiarity with one or both candidates. If voters' familiarity and candidate evaluations are formed before a general election campaign begins, the potential campaign effect is reduced accordingly (Jacobson 1978). Thus, it is reasonable to expect initial preferences to be more durable in higher salience elections, such as presidential contests, and greater preference switching and initial lack of preferences in down-ballot races such as House elections.

At the same time, we expect variations in the magnitude of campaign effects to be a function of the level of the election and characteristics of the voter. That is, less sophisticated voters pay less attention to politics, have weaker partisan attachments, and less durable preferences on average. Over the course of the campaign, it is these less politically attuned citizens who should be more likely to switch their preferences. The magnitude of these effects should increase as the visibility of the election decreases.

### *Citizen Characteristics*

Previous observational research has emphasized two sets of factors—political attentiveness and partisanship—that may shape individuals' responsiveness to campaigns. Most findings support the argument that partisanship interacts with political interest or sophistication to shape the timing and stability of attitudes about candidates. Attentive partisans have early and stable candidate preferences and should exhibit weak campaign effects. Attentive independents are affected by new information but commit early support less often. They should demonstrate the greatest campaign effects. Between interested partisans and interested non-partisans are less informed partisans and non-partisans (Zaller 1992; Hillygus and Jackman 2003). Experience with politics—or simply age—also has been shown to be more strongly associated with stable political preferences (Bartels et al. 2011; Green and Yoon 2002; Shively 1979).

As Hirano, et al., (2015) note, most observational studies investigating the effects of citizens' learning about candidates' positions on vote choice limit their study to presidential elections. While presidential campaigns typically include two well-known candidates with sharp differences on salient issues, down ballot races include candidates with policy positions that are either less developed or less well-known to the public. In such elections, it is quite possible that the phenomenon of issue learning is much more relevant to the decision to support a candidate. In presidential contests, we may witness ceiling campaign effects due to the inability of candidates to newly advertise their positions, particularly following a publicized primary, or in the case of an incumbent, four years of daily press coverage as president.

Learning is an important element of campaign dynamics. Many citizens' awareness of policy nuance is limited and their ability to correctly identify the positions of the major party candidates is similarly hindered (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Campaigns serve the role of informing the electorate of positions. The process of learning over a campaign is not free from the partisan screens that mark most of American political behavior (Bartels 2002). Partisans receiving policy and issue messages from campaigns will typically adopt the positions of their aligned candidate (Lenz 2009, 2011). At the same time, campaigns serve as information vendors to voters who are less attached to the parties (Aldrich 1993). Independents and weak partisans also use the cues from an election to determine their preferred candidate or update their preferences based on new information.

Uncertainty exists in electoral contexts for multiple reasons. Citizens may simply lack the resources to obtain or process adequate information or candidates may intentionally obfuscate or demure on their positions because they expect a penalty due to an ideological gap (Enelow and Hinich 1984). Focusing on endogenous perceptions of uncertainty at the individual level, Alvarez

(1998) theorizes that when voters are uncertain of a candidate's positions on the issues, their expected utility decreases. They are less certain regarding how the prospective official would vote should she be elected. All else equal, voters will prefer the candidate for whom they hold a higher level of certainty regarding their positions.

Recent scholarship is divided on the role of uncertainty in elections. Experimental work demonstrates that candidates who intentionally provide unclear policy statements increase their support (Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). In a comparative context, adopting positions that have the broadest appeal may increase vote totals (Somer-Topcu 2015). Still, minor parties succeed by taking more extreme positions, reducing uncertainty of their location in the policy space (Ezrow et al. 2014). At the presidential level, greater uncertainty about candidate positions is negatively related to vote choice (Bartels 1996, Alvarez 1998). In the congressional context, Rogowski and Tucker (2018) and Cahill and Stone (2018) find that candidates whose positions display greater variance are expected to receive lower vote shares. Over the course of a campaign, when voters reduce their level of uncertainty about a candidate's positions, they are more likely to support. While these studies demonstrate such findings, they do so in the cross-section. We adapt these theories with our data to test the hypothesis that relative reductions in uncertainty will lead to a greater likelihood of support.

Additionally, cross-sectional studies of voting often demonstrate a strong relationship between issue preference alignment and candidate support. When voters perceive their own preferences are more aligned with one candidate's positions, they are more likely to support that candidate (Downs 1957, Carson et al. 2010, Canes-Wrone et al. 2002, Jessee 2009, 2010, 2012). Hirano et al. (2015) find strong evidence that in primary elections voter-candidate dyads that share ideological preferences become stronger when policy positions of the candidate are learned.

Within general elections, there is also strong evidence that partisans improve their perceptions of ideological congruence as campaigns progress (Gelman and King 1993, Henderson 2014, Henderson 2015).

While these findings provide an important framework, they do not test the dynamics of how changes in learning over the course of a general election campaign influence a voter's decision to stick with or change support to another candidate. Furthermore, previously identified learning effects rarely identify how changes in *directional* learning are related to changes in candidate support over the course of a campaign. That is, we hypothesize that changes in the perception of ideological proximity between the voter and the candidates are related to vote choice. Thus, we test the following two hypotheses regarding campaign effects and voter learning:

***General Learning Hypothesis:*** Voters will be more likely to transition their support to the candidate about whom they learn more during the campaign.

***Directional Learning Hypothesis:*** Voters will be more likely to transition their support to the candidate they perceive to be closer to their ideal ideological location.

### **Data and Methods**

The best observational studies of campaign effects exploit panel surveys (Bartels 1993, 2006; Hillygus and Jackman 2003; Lenz 2009) that allow the observation of differential campaign effects among individuals. This is accomplished by observing responses to the same or similar survey questions about the candidates from the same individuals before and after (and sometimes during) a campaign. Change in those responses, controlling for measurement error, is an indication that the intervening campaign altered perceptions of the candidates. There have been excellent campaign effects panel studies, as we have reported, but the studies have been limited to presidential elections.

We exploit *The American Panel Study* (TAPS). TAPS is a monthly online panel that was recruited as a national probability sample with an address-based sampling frame in the fall of 2011 by GfK-Knowledge Networks. Post-stratification weights for this analysis were constructed based on the Current Population Survey population parameters. We treat 2014 and 2016 separately to maximize the number of panelists included for each. In both 2014 and 2016, TAPS panelists were asked questions about their local Senate and House candidates at two points in time.<sup>5</sup> The first questions were asked in the month immediately following each respondents' congressional primary. The dates of congressional primaries varied from March to September so the battery of congressional candidate questions was presented to the corresponding panelists between April and October. Campaign effects are measured as the change in candidate preference expressed immediately after the primary to November following the election. For the 2016 presidential contest, campaign effects are measured as the change in candidate preference expressed in May 2016 after the nominees were known, to November following the election.

We investigate familiarity with the candidates at the start of the general election campaign for all three levels, evaluate the effect of the campaign on changes in citizens' preferences, and consider the relationship between the change in familiarity with the candidates and vote preference. Moreover, we do this, where possible, for House and Senate races in both 2014, a midterm election year, and 2016, a presidential election year. We also estimate the effect of race contestedness on campaign effects in House and Senate contests. Variable specifications are provided in Table 1.

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<sup>5</sup> Panelists were asked the same battery of questions in October of each campaign year, too. For ease of analysis, we set aside the October responses to focus on the difference between responses at the start of the general election campaign and responses after a vote choice has been made.

**Table 1: Summary Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Note
Vote for Democrat: House 2014	0.53	0	1	1= Vote for the Democratic Candidate, 0=Vote for the Republican candidate
Vote for Democrat: Senate 2014	0.52	0	1	
Vote for Democrat: House 2016	0.51	0	1	
Vote for Democrat: Senate 2016	0.48	0	1	
Vote for Democrat: President 2016	0.54	0	1	
Democrat	0.40	0	0	Mutually exclusive dummy variables. Independent is baseline in multivariate models
Republican	0.28	0	0	
Independent	0.32	0	0	
Obama Approval 11/14	-0.34	-2	2	-2=Strongly Disapprove +2=Strongly Approve
Obama Approval 11/16	-0.09	-2	2	
Sophistication	0.33	-4.50	2.57	Values are the first-dimension factor scores of a 10-item political knowledge battery, education level, and interest in politics. Higher values represent greater sophistication.
District Margin: House 2014	37.52	0.07	100	Electoral margin of the two-party vote share. Higher values indicate less competitive races.
State Margin: Senate 2014	18.17	0.83	100	
District Margin: House 2016	34.52	0.52	100	
State Margin: Senate 2016	16.07	0.20	100	
State Margin: President 2016	14.94	0.24	91.39	
$\Delta$ Democratic Knowledge Advantage: House 2016	0.77	-10	16	The change in the relative difference of don't knows between the Republican and the Democratic candidates from primary to general. Higher values indicate learning more about the Democrat's positions relative to the Republican
$\Delta$ Democratic Knowledge Advantage: Senate 2016	0.47	-10	19	
$\Delta$ Democratic Knowledge Advantage: President 2016	-0.09	-10	12	
$\Delta$ Democratic Proximity Advantage: House 2016	-0.31	-10	9	The change in the relative difference of policy agreement in a 10-item ideological space between the panelist and the Republican and Democratic candidates from the primary to the general election. Higher values indicate moving closer to the Democrat.
$\Delta$ Democratic Proximity Advantage: Senate 2016	0.00	-12	12	
$\Delta$ Democratic Proximity Advantage: President 2016	0.39	-14	18	

Our primary interest is the effect of the covariates listed in Table 1 on transitions from one state of preference to another. Limiting the analysis to the two major party candidates for an office, change may take four forms: from undecided to candidate A, from undecided to candidate B, from candidate A to candidate B, and from candidate B to candidate A. For each office and initial preference, we use a transition models to estimate the effect of the context and individual characteristics. This allows us to observe the relative importance of the covariates for change and no change in the three major contexts and two election years.

The transition model resembles those of Diggle, Liang, and Zeger (2000) and used by Hillygus and Jackman (2003) and other studies of political change at the individual level (e.g., Hillygus 2005, Baker, *et al.*, 2016). The dependent variable is vote choice (i.e. Democrat ( $y_i = 1$ ) and Republican ( $y_i = 0$ )), and the logit transformation is  $h(p_i)$  and  $p_i$  is the probability that the  $i$ th respondent votes for the Democrat. The model is:

$$h(p_i) = \sum_{j=1}^J \mathbf{x}_i \beta_j \cdot D_{ij}$$

The coefficients ( $\beta_j$ ) for the vector of covariates allows us to evaluate the effect of the covariates in the three contexts and two election years.

We also examine how information about the candidates influences vote choice. Our interest is whether changes in “don’t know” (DK) responses to questions about candidates’ issue positions are related to preferences. Panelists identified the candidates’ issue positions on ten issues.<sup>67</sup> In addition to the aggregate number of DKs reported, we measure the *relative* knowledge of candidate issue positions. Since we test the hypothesis that learning more about one candidate increases the likelihood of supporting that candidate over her opponent, we create a measure of relative

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<sup>6</sup> These questions were only fielded in the 2016 wave of the survey.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix for issues.

knowledge change in which we subtract the difference in DKs between candidates at the beginning of the general election campaign from the same figure in November. For simplicity, we measure this variable as the Democratic candidate’s relative advantage to the Republican:

$$\Delta \textit{Democratic Knowledge Advantage} = (\textit{Republican DK}_{S\textit{Nov}} - \textit{Democrat DK}_{S\textit{Nov}}) - (\textit{Republican DK}_{S\textit{Prim}} - \textit{Democrat DK}_{S\textit{Prim}})$$

Higher values indicate an increase in knowing more about the Democratic candidate’s issue positions relative to the Republican.

We measure the relative change in policy proximity using the same issue battery. First, we construct an ideological scale for the panelists by scoring each liberal preference as +1, each conservative response as -1, and each “don’t know” as 0. We then sum the scores to create a measure of operational liberalism where higher values represent more liberal ideologies. Second, we convert the panelists’ responses about the two major party candidates in each race into an ideology score in the same way. This choice allows us to place panelists in the same policy space as their perceptions of elites (Jessee 2012). Third, for both the initial and November wave, we construct relative proximity scores between the panelist and the two candidates by differencing the absolute difference from each candidate. Once again, we measure this as the Democratic candidate’s advantage for consistency:

$$\textit{Democratic Proximity Advantage}_t = |\textit{Republican Location}_t - \textit{Panelist Location}_t| - |\textit{Democrat Location}_t - \textit{Panelist Location}_t|$$

In the cross section, positive values indicate the Democrat is closer to the panelist in wave  $t$ , while negative values suggest the Republican is closer. We subtract the primary score from the November score for a measure of change:

$$\Delta \textit{Democratic Proximity Advantage} = \textit{Democratic Proximity Advantage}_{\textit{Nov}} - \textit{Democratic Proximity Advantage}_{\textit{Prim}}$$



Positive values indicate that the panelist moved closer to the Democratic candidate over the campaign, while negative values indicate that she moved closer to the Republican.

### Findings: Aggregate Patterns

A necessary condition for a campaign effect is the candidate preference change between the pre- and post-campaign interviews. We limit our analysis to panelists who were undecided or supported either the Democratic and Republican general election candidate in the first interview. We report the aggregate frequency of change for 2014 and 2016 presidential, Senate, and House campaigns in Table 2.

**Table 2: Stability and Change in House, Senate, and Presidential Candidate Preferences, 2014 and 2016 (Cells Representing Change are Shaded, in Percent)**

Primary Preference		November Vote					
		House		Senate		President	
		Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep
2014	Dem	94.8 (326)	<b>5.7</b> <b>(19)</b>	95.7 (179)	<b>4.3</b> <b>(8)</b>	--	--
	Rep	<b>5.2</b> <b>(18)</b>	94.3 (314)	<b>3.7</b> <b>(6)</b>	96.3 (157)	--	--
	Undecided	<b>56.3</b> <b>(182)</b>	<b>43.7</b> <b>(141)</b>	<b>49.0</b> <b>(101)</b>	<b>51.0</b> <b>(105)</b>	--	--
2016	Dem	96.7 (326)	<b>3.3</b> <b>(11)</b>	81.6 (199)	<b>18.4</b> <b>(45)</b>	98.2 (549)	<b>1.8</b> <b>(10)</b>
	Rep	<b>5.9</b> <b>(20)</b>	94.1 (317)	<b>12.2</b> <b>(25)</b>	87.8 (180)	<b>1.3</b> <b>(6)</b>	98.7 (463)
	Undecided	<b>50.9</b> <b>(194)</b>	<b>49.1</b> <b>(187)</b>	<b>44.3</b> <b>(104)</b>	<b>55.7</b> <b>(131)</b>	<b>43.2</b> <b>(67)</b>	<b>56.8</b> <b>(88)</b>

Table 2 demonstrates that House and Senate races much more change from both one candidate to another and from undecided to a candidate than the 2016 presidential contest. the 2016 presidential campaign effect, like the 2000 effect for Hillygus and Jackman, is primarily changing undecideds to one of the two major party candidates. In 2016, this campaign effect helped

Trump disproportionately. House and Senate races exhibit similar patterns, but the volume of is much larger in congressional races. Moreover, the number of undecideds increases as we move from presidential to Senate to House contests. Thus, the expectation that stronger pre-campaign candidate preferences yield a smaller campaign effect in the presidential contest than in congressional races is confirmed for the first time in a single study, and the expected difference between House and Senate races in the number of undecideds who then choose a candidate is confirmed.<sup>8</sup>

We find a substantial number of panelists switching from one candidate to another in 2016 Senate contests. Overall, about 15 percent of panelists who initially expressed a Senate candidate preference switched to the other majority party candidate on election day. This is much higher than for Senate contests in 2014, and higher than observed in presidential and House contests in either year.

A possible explanation lies in the great variation in the salience and contestedness of Senate contests from one election cycle to the next. On occasion, less-well known Senate candidates can mount effective campaigns. Scandals and other campaign events in the more salient Senate contests can generate switches. In Indiana's 2016 Senate race, for example, Democrat Evan Bayh started with a large lead over Republican Todd Young, but Bayh's inability to counter Young's argument that Bayh had become a Washingtonian and his missteps during the campaign, appear to have been reflected in a dramatic change in the polls by election time. In the 2016 Arizona Senate contest, a serious primary challenge from the right and his endorsement of presidential

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<sup>8</sup> While not the main issue of interest in this project, we note the high prevalence of undecideds at the beginning of campaigns. As an ancillary analysis, we investigate what predicts an undecided voter at the beginning of the general election. The results and a brief discussion may be found in Appendix Section SI-2.

candidate Trump may have held back Republican John McCain in head-to-head polls with Democrat Ann Kirkpatrick. McCain won his August 30 primary and pulled ahead by a substantial margin in the polls. Indiana and Arizona panelists are greatly overrepresented among the 2016 switchers shown for the Senate contests in Table 2.<sup>9</sup>

Going beyond preference for candidates, we asked panelists about candidates' issue positions. At the aggregate level, we want to determine whether the campaign experience changes (a) the frequency of DK responses to questions about candidates' issue positions and (b) perceptions of the candidates' ideology. If campaigns inform and crystallize opinion, then we should find that the number of DK responses should fall over the campaign. If campaigns send clear signals regarding the positioning of candidates, the distance between the two parties should widen with time.

In Figures 1 and 2 we display the mean number of “don't know” (DK) responses to ten questions about candidate positions and the proportion of panelists identifying unable to place the candidate on a liberal-conservative scale in both the primary and general elections. The mean number of DK responses is high, particularly for congressional candidates. The average DKs for issues is between six and seven for pre-campaign House and Senate candidates. This figure is higher for House candidates, while slight or near majorities cannot identify the location of the average candidate in House races. Over the campaign, the mean number of DKs falls by about a

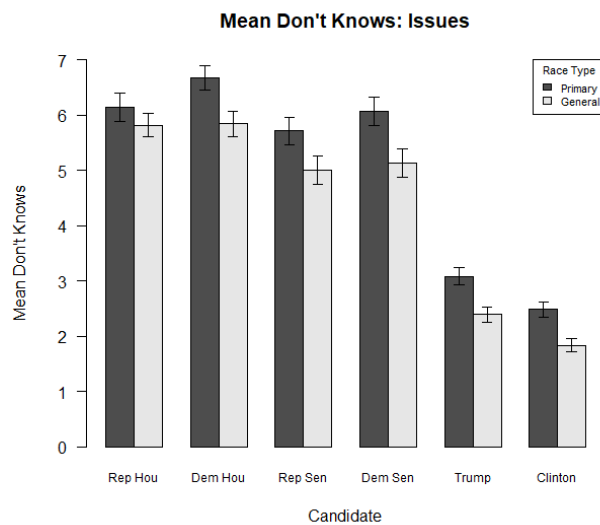
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<sup>9</sup> 2016 political peculiarities may have created many late-switching voters. See Richard Cowan, “Democrats See FBI Controversy Hurting Chances in U.S. Congress Races,” Reuters, November 7, 2016 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-elections-congress/democrats-see-fbi-controversy-hurting-chances-in-u-s-congress-races-idUSKBN13218S>), and Alex Seitz-Wald, “Democrats Fear Senate Majority Quest May Be Killed by Comey,” NBC News, November 1, 2016 (<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/democrats-fear-path-senate-majority-getting-sidetracked-comey-s-email-n675981>).

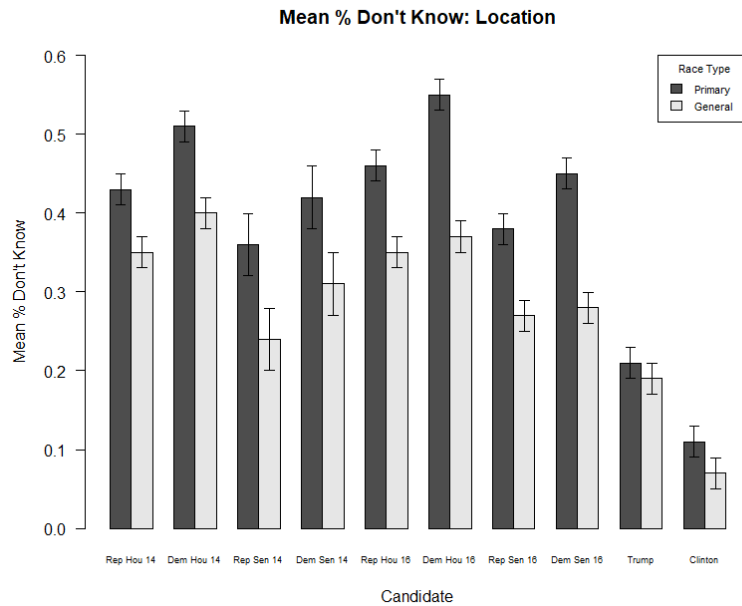
full question on average for both House and Senate candidates. Likewise, we find significant decreases in the percentage of subjects unable to place candidates on the left-right scale. Thus, modest campaign effects are shown for both races and, as expected, panelists show less familiarity with House candidates than Senate candidates.

The figure also shows much more familiarity with the 2016 presidential candidates. Even for presidential candidates, there is an increase in familiarity over the months of the general election campaign. The drop in the DKs is more modest than for the congressional candidates, indicating a somewhat greater campaign effect in the congressional campaigns.

**Figure 1: Average Reported Don't Knows, 2016**



**Figure 2: Percent Reporting “Don’t Know” Candidate’s Ideological Location**



### **Findings: Individual-Level Patterns**

We are interested in what individual-level and contextual level variables predict preference transitions during a campaign. Tables 3 and 4 show multivariate estimates for covariates of change in candidate preference for the 2014 and 2016 election cycles. The dependent variable in each set of estimates is November vote (1 = Democrat, 0 = Republican). Thus, a positive coefficient for presidential approval and the dependent indicates that a move from undecided or Republican to the Democrat is associated with approval/disapproval of Obama. The estimates are based on a logit link function identical to the Hillygus-Jackman analysis to facilitate comparisons.

Several of the patterns in Tables 3 and 4 are consistent with the activation hypothesis—a campaign informs voters which candidate represents their political or partisan interest and they vote accordingly. In both years and all types of races, undecided voters’ attitudes about Obama’s job performance is strongly related to their choice of candidate. For switchers from one candidate to another, in most cases, the switch was consistent with their attitude about Obama.

Party identifiers also show the predicted pro-Democrat or pro-Republican campaign effect for the initially undecided in House contests in 2014 and 2016 and Senate contests in 2016. In other cases, signs are always in the predicted direction but small Ns make effects difficult to find.

More tightly contested races are expected to exhibit stronger campaign effects than less contested races. The two tables report the results for contestedness measured as the closeness of the outcome. We find no evidence that such effects influenced undecideds. We find some evidence that in 2016 competitiveness was inversely related to transitioning for House races. We checked two other specifications: (a) The difference between races in which the difference in vote totals for the two major party candidates was five percent or less versus others and (b) the *Cook Report* pre-election classification of races.<sup>10</sup> Neither specification altered the finding that contested races did not generate stronger campaign effects.

**Table 3. 2014 Election Transition Models**

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>House</i>			<i>Senate</i>		
	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep
Rep	<b>-1.30*</b> (0.49)	<b>-2.22*</b> (0.82)	-1.98 (1.13)	-0.73 (0.60)	0.25 (1.36)	-0.53 (1.55)
Dem	<b>1.44*</b> (0.43)	0.65 (0.71)	0.77 (0.70)	0.65 (0.58)	1.34 (1.23)	3.05 (2.04)
Approval	<b>0.85*</b> (0.14)	0.29 (0.24)	0.62* (0.23)	<b>1.24*</b> (0.19)	<b>1.04*</b> (0.41)	0.77 (0.47)
Sophistication	0.19 (0.15)	0.13 (0.26)	<b>-0.52*</b> (0.25)	0.20 (0.19)	0.44 (0.40)	0.32 (0.58)
Competitiveness	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.06)	0.02 (0.03)
Constant	0.81* (0.40)	2.70* (0.66)	-1.03 (0.75)	0.64 (0.50)	2.04 (1.12)	-3.41* (1.37)
N	841			465		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.67			0.72		
LR	781.9			465.2		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. \* p<0.05

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix Tables A1-A3.

Political sophistication is not consistently related to campaign effects for either undecideds who choose a candidates or switchers. Greater sophistication tends to produce less candidate switching and never produces more switching, but the strength of the effect is uneven. In the 2016 congressional contests, we find moderate evidence that more sophisticated voters were less likely to switch support for their initial candidate. For example, among voters who initially indicated support for the Democratic candidate in either the House or Senate race, the sign on the estimate is positive and significant. This finding can be interpreted as suggesting that less sophisticated initial Democratic supporters are significantly more likely to switch their support to the Republican relative to their more sophisticated Democratic supporting counterparts. Similarly, in the 2016 presidential election, we find a strong and positive effect. In contrast, we find little evidence that sophistication was related to support movement among initial undecideds in congressional races.

**Table 4.** 2016 Election Transition Models

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>House</i>			<i>Senate</i>			<i>Presidential</i>		
	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	HRC	DJT
Rep	<b>-0.70*</b> (0.33)	-2.64 (1.56)	0.59 (0.85)	-1.17 (0.63)	-0.28 (0.87)	-0.46 (0.62)	<b>-1.75*</b> (0.76)	<b>-3.26*</b> (1.63)	0.14 (1.35)
Dem	<b>0.88*</b> (0.31)	0.06 (0.88)	-0.13 (0.89)	0.45 (0.52)	0.35 (0.50)	0.79 (0.85)	1.04 (0.51)	-0.56 (1.26)	-0.32 (1.80)
Approval	<b>0.61*</b> (0.09)	-0.28 (0.36)	<b>1.05*</b> (0.27)	0.32 (0.17)	<b>0.94*</b> (0.16)	0.19 (0.25)	<b>1.11*</b> (0.18)	0.11 (0.54)	<b>1.07*</b> (0.30)
Sophistication	0.18 (0.12)	<b>1.52*</b> (0.39)	<b>-0.59*</b> (0.29)	-0.01 (0.22)	<b>0.61*</b> (0.21)	<b>-0.45*</b> (0.22)	<b>0.90*</b> (0.27)	<b>0.72*</b> (0.35)	0.14 (0.19)
Competitiveness	-0.00 (0.01)	<b>0.10*</b> (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.04 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	<b>0.03*</b> (0.02)
Constant	0.08 (0.28)	2.18 (1.11)	-1.32* (0.58)	-0.51 (0.46)	-0.23 (0.41)	-1.23* (0.61)	0.60 (0.45)	4.28* (1.44)	-4.30* (1.30)
N	1,012			659			1,139		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.56			0.46			0.82		
LR	162.72			126.1			342.75		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. HRC = initial preference for Clinton; DJT = initial preference for Trump; Dem = initial preference for Democratic candidate; Rep = initial preference for Republican candidate. \* p<0.05.

## **Findings: The Effects of Changes in Knowledge and Perceived Candidate Policy Positions of Candidate Choice**

Finally, we examine the information campaign effects on vote transitions at the individual level. To test these hypotheses, we once again estimate transition models where the outcome variable is a vote for the Democratic candidate, but we include our directional learning variables where positive values represent learning more about the Democratic candidate and negative values learn more about the Republican candidate over the course of the campaign. Similarly, positive values relate to perceptions that the Democrat moved closer to the panelist than the Republican did over the course of the campaign.<sup>11</sup>

We realize that the relative knowledge and policy proximity effects estimated here greatly understate the actual effect. In this analysis, we are unable to examine large samples of voters in individual House or Senate races, some of which had campaigns that were uncontested or lacked much visibility. By aggregating over all races, we greatly dampen the estimated effects we would likely observe in the more visible, contested races. Moreover, the largest knowledge and proximity effects should occur among the initially undecided voters who constitute a small part of the electorate, but the low precision with which we can estimate effects for such a small group undermines our ability to have confidence in even large effects.

With these caveats in mind, we show estimated probabilities of voting for the Democratic candidate in House, Senate, and presidential races for different patterns of change in relative knowledge and policy proximity to the Democratic and Republican candidate in Figures 2 and 3. Figure 3 presents the predicted probabilities that the panelist will support the Democratic candidate

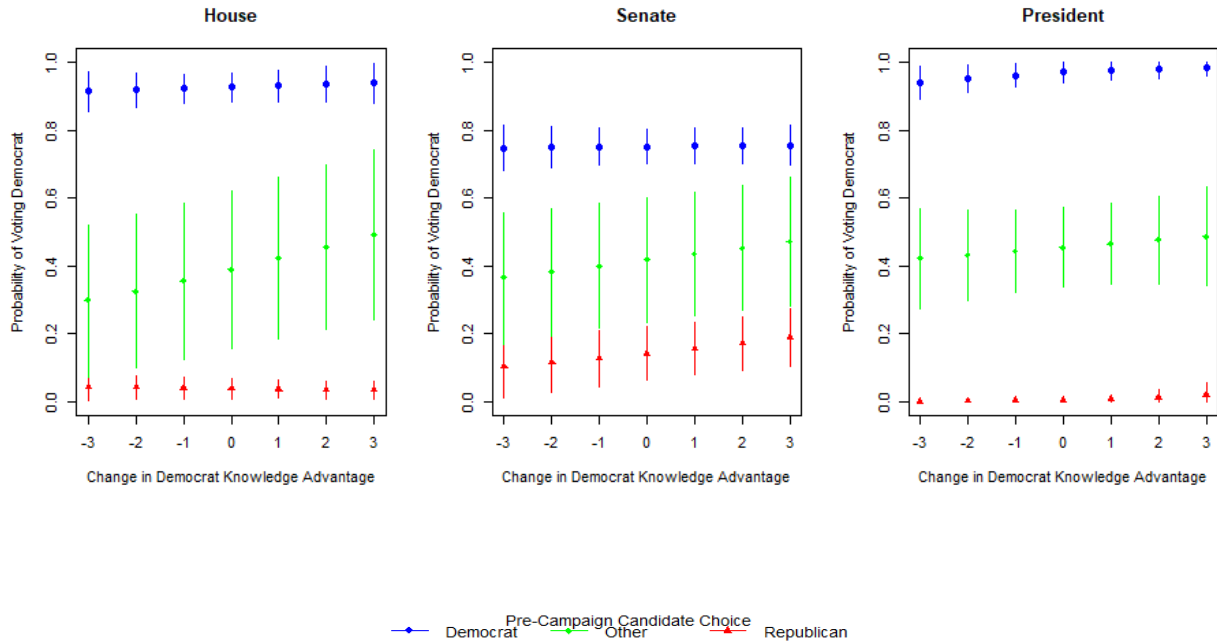
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<sup>11</sup> For brevity, we present the predicted probabilities of the estimations in the main text. The estimated tables may be found in the Appendix Tables A6-A7.



in response to shifts in relative learning about the candidates in 2016. If changes in relative knowledge of the candidates affects candidate choice, the slope of a line connecting the levels of advantage should rise from left to right. For some types of races and voters, they do so, but the effects are in the predicted direction and usually are small and not statistically significant. For example, in the 2016 presidential contest (left panel), change in relative knowledge has only tiny effects on candidate choice, has larger for early undecided voters but the difference is not significant due to the large standard error, and is statistically significant but tiny for initial Trump supporters. Similarly, we find change in the predicted direction but little evidence that learning is significantly related to transitioning in a Senate campaign. The relative knowledge effect is greatest on average for initially undecided voters in House races but the standard errors are too large for that group, as expected. Substantively, we can consider average effects. Our model predicts that an initially undecided voter who learns three more issue positions of the Democratic candidate relative to the Republican candidate from the primary to the general has a probability of voting Democratic is 0.49. In contrast, an initially undecided voter who learns three more issue positions of the Republican candidate relative to the Democratic candidate has a probability of voting for the Democrat is 0.30.

**Figure 3: Predicted Probability of Switching to Democratic Support in 2016, Conditional on Pre-Campaign Support and Change in Awareness of Policy Positions**

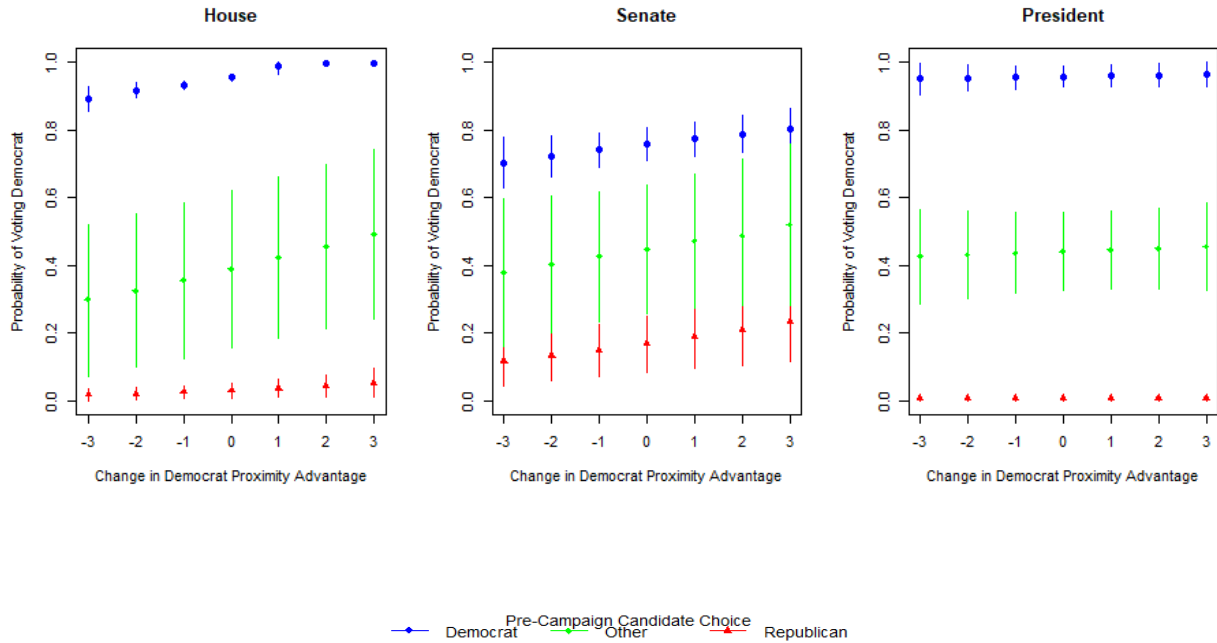


The figure presents the predicted probability that a voter will change her preference from the end of the primary campaign to election day while varying the relative difference in known policy positions of the two major party candidates across all federal elections in 2016. The y-axis represents the probability of voting for the Democrat in November, while the x-axis represents the Democratic candidate’s advantage in identifiable issues over the Republican candidate to the individual panelist. Positive values reflect an increase in knowledge of the Democrat relative to the Republican over the campaign. The three sets of points reflect the party supported at the beginning of the campaign. Models estimated with a logit link function.

With respect to directional issue position learning, we find somewhat different effects. We find in Figure 3 that there is little evidence that changes in the perceptions of the candidates’ relative location influenced transitioning in the presidential election. When examining congressional elections, however, we find that those panelists who initially indicated their support for a candidate were significantly more likely to stick with their support for that candidate when

they perceived the candidate moved closer to their own ideal point. We find larger changes (that are not statistically significant) for those panelists who were undecided when the election began.

**Figure 4: Predicted Probability of Switching to Democratic Support in 2016, Conditional on Pre-Campaign Support and Change in Policy Proximity**



The figure presents the predicted probability that a vote will change her preference from the end of the primary campaign to election day while varying the relative difference policy proximity of the two major party candidates across all federal elections in 2016. The y-axis represents the probability of voting for the Democrat in November, while the x-axis represents the Democratic candidate’s advantage in identifiable relative issue proximity over the Republican candidate to the individual panelist. Positive values reflect “moving closer” to the Democrat relative to the Republican over the campaign. The three sets of points reflect the party supported at the beginning of the campaign. Models estimated with a logit link function.

As expected, the small sub-samples and large standard errors for the initially undecided voters reduce the confidence of our inferences about that group. Moreover, aggregating over all states and districts surely camouflages the effects that would likely be observed in House and Senate races that are contested and visible. Our sample is nationally representative, but we lack

representative samples within the many different types of congressional campaigns. Due to our inability to fully encompass the wide-ranging electoral contexts from the 2016 election, we should expect large standard errors and in this way, we encounter a great obstacle to identify a significant effect of learning over the course of the campaign. Nevertheless, we do find some significant effects, and the measured effects are in the expected direction and should motivate future studies with appropriate samples in individual states and districts to measure these effects.

### **Conclusion**

With a novel dataset, we address three key issues about the dynamics of campaigns. First, we demonstrate that across campaigns, initial preferences are very stable among those voters who express preferences at the beginning of the general election campaign. Nonetheless, these stable preferences only demonstrate a portion of the campaign narrative. Large proportions of the electorate do not support a candidate at the beginning of the campaign. Thus, there exists a great deal of fluidity in congressional and presidential elections alike.

Second, we find evidence that voters learn over the course of congressional and presidential campaigns. In House, Senate, and presidential contests in 2016, panelists responded with significantly more confidence in their identification of candidate policy positions and their general ideological location at the end of the general election than at the beginning. These changes are found to have a modest effect on candidate preferences. Among undecideds in House races, simply learning about issue positions and showing changes in policy proximity are associated with candidate choice, although subgroup sample sizes require that we keep an open mind about these effects. These results suggest that campaigns can produce significant returns for candidates among undecided voters in low-salience contests. Still, our findings demand a nuanced interpretation. The

modest effects of changes in issue proximity suggest that learning a candidate is farther away than initially considered is associated with preference switching. Thus, candidates should be strategic when and how they display their positions.

Third, our data allow us to examine differences in preference switching across a wide array of elections that vary in competitiveness and salience. As lower salience races, House campaigns begin with the highest level of uncertainty. We also uncover conditional patterns based upon the salience of the race. Our estimates for partisan effects among initial undecideds are of a much greater magnitude in House races than Senate races. Furthermore, in the context of 2016, we find much stronger sophistication effects in House races than Senate races. In contrast, voters showed far less uncertainty about the candidates at the start of the campaign and exhibited higher stability in the 2016 presidential race than in congressional races. These findings suggest that campaign salience conditions the effect of voter sophistication: Salience is required for a significant number of low-sophistication voters to change candidate preferences during a campaign.

We have improved upon the approach of observational studies of campaign effects by providing panel data for all three types of American federal elections and confirmed the presence of campaigns effects that are related to the salience of the campaigns. Of course, we cannot attribute the campaign effects to any particular campaign event, strategy, or media coverage, as experimental studies attempt to do, but we have, for the first time, captured candidate evaluations at the beginning and end of House, Senate, and presidential general election campaigns. We have confirmed the important differences between these elections and demonstrated the conditionality of partisan and sophistication effects on change in voters' candidate evaluations during campaigns.

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## Appendix

### SI-1: Supplementary Regressions

Table A1. 2014 Election Transition Models, Cook Scores

<i>Primary:</i>	Senate			House		
	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep
Rep	-0.61 (0.61)	0.89 (1.42)	-0.36 (1.55)	<b>-1.19*</b> <b>(0.49)</b>	<b>-2.15*</b> <b>(0.82)</b>	-2.15 (1.13)
Dem	0.63 (0.58)	1.32 (1.23)	16.36 (1716)	<b>1.64*</b> <b>(0.42)</b>	0.60 (0.71)	1.07 (0.65)
Approval	<b>1.36*</b> <b>(0.21)</b>	<b>1.07*</b> <b>(0.41)</b>	0.75 (0.50)	<b>0.79*</b> <b>(0.13)</b>	0.30 (0.24)	0.53* (0.21)
Medium Sophistication	-1.06 (0.61)	-0.22 (1.39)	14.40 (1716)	0.05 (0.44)	-0.62 (0.96)	0.06 (0.67)
High Sophistication	0.03 (0.60)	1.83 (1.62)	14.36 (1716)	0.59 (0.46)	-0.41 (0.89)	-1.59 (0.91)
Cook Score	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.17 (0.17)	-0.01 (0.52)	0.02 (0.22)	0.02 (0.22)	0.42 (0.42)
Constant	1.37* (0.70)	2.41 (1.44)	-17.04 (1716)	0.07 (0.48)	3.21* (1.01)	-2.14* (0.90)
N	471			849		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.73			0.66		
LR	478.7			781.1		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. Robust standard errors in parentheses

\* p<0.05



Table A2. 2016 Election Transition Models, Cook Scores

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>Presidential</i>			<i>Senate</i>			<i>House</i>		
	Und	HRC	DJT	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep
Rep	-0.65 (0.56)	-2.17 (1.33)	0.63 (1.32)	-0.71 (0.45)	0.16 (0.68)	<b>-1.07*</b> <b>(0.51)</b>	<b>-0.75*</b> <b>(0.34)</b>	-0.10 (1.20)	-0.68 (0.67)
Dem	0.80 (0.50)	-0.63 (1.11)	0.57 (1.54)	<b>0.82*</b> <b>(0.38)</b>	0.65 (0.43)	0.21 (0.84)	<b>0.85*</b> <b>(0.31)</b>	-0.18 (0.86)	0.67 (0.66)
Approval	<b>0.96*</b> <b>(0.18)</b>	0.66 (0.35)	<b>1.01*</b> <b>(0.38)</b>	<b>0.60*</b> <b>(0.11)</b>	<b>0.69*</b> <b>(0.16)</b>	0.32 (0.21)	<b>0.63*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>	0.43 (0.27)	<b>0.56*</b> <b>(0.19)</b>
Medium Sophistication	0.68 (0.50)	0.32 (0.92)	1.26 (1.28)	0.16 (0.38)	<b>0.01</b> (0.52)	-1.87* (0.69)	-0.42 (0.31)	1.21 (0.77)	-1.13 (0.67)
High Sophistication	0.79 (0.59)	1.33 (0.99)	- -	0.26 (0.45)	0.90 (0.51)	-1.21* (0.53)	0.61 (0.35)	<b>2.26*</b> <b>(0.88)</b>	-1.18 (0.63)
Cook Score	0.02 (0.19)	-0.35 (0.34)	-0.33 (0.54)	-0.03 (0.12)	0.09 (0.15)	0.09 (0.19)	0.04 (0.17)	-0.68 (0.35)	0.52 (0.27)
Constant	-0.61 (0.59)	4.25* (1.35)	-3.77* (1.72)	-0.31 (0.35)	-0.09 (0.59)	-0.18 (0.81)	0.02 (0.37)	2.86* (0.90)	-2.04* (0.67)
N	948			659			1,012		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.80			0.41			0.61		
LR	1,002.2			376.3			850.7		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. HRC = initial preference for Clinton; DJT = initial preference for Trump; Dem = initial preference for Democratic candidate; Rep = initial preference for Republican candidate. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* p<0.05.

Table A3. 2016 Election Transition Models, Within 5 Points

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>Presidential</i>			<i>Senate</i>			<i>House</i>		
	Und	HRC	DJT	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep
Rep	-0.60 (0.57)	-2.23 (1.32)	1.17 (1.52)	-0.71 (0.45)	0.09 (0.68)	<b>-1.08*</b> <b>(0.51)</b>	<b>-0.76*</b> <b>(0.34)</b>	-0.50 (1.07)	-0.54 (0.66)
Dem	0.81 (0.50)	-0.63 (1.11)	1.26 (1.75)	<b>0.78*</b> <b>(0.38)</b>	0.60 (0.44)	0.12 (0.82)	<b>0.84*</b> <b>(0.31)</b>	0.06 (0.82)	0.65 (0.65)
Approval	<b>0.97*</b> <b>(0.18)</b>	0.66 (0.34)	<b>1.36*</b> <b>(0.50)</b>	<b>0.61*</b> <b>(0.12)</b>	<b>0.71*</b> <b>(0.16)</b>	0.34 (0.21)	<b>0.63*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>	0.42 (0.25)	<b>0.59*</b> <b>(0.18)</b>
Medium Sophistication	0.75 (0.51)	0.26 (0.91)	2.32 (1.20)	0.19 (0.38)	0.02 (0.51)	-1.82* (0.68)	-0.43 (0.31)	1.27 (0.75)	-1.11 (0.66)
High Sophistication	0.82 (0.59)	1.20 (0.97)	- -	0.31 (0.45)	0.91 (0.51)	-1.20* (0.54)	0.61 (0.35)	<b>2.16*</b> <b>(0.85)</b>	-1.14 (0.61)
Within 5 Points	0.51 (0.45)	-0.24 (0.78)	- -	0.27 (0.45)	0.31 (0.51)	0.10 (0.59)	0.15 (0.82)	12.06 (876)	0.70 (1.14)
Constant	-0.79 (0.48)	3.64* (1.17)	-4.96* (1.93)	-0.43 (0.38)	0.10 (0.49)	0.07 (0.61)	0.07 (0.29)	1.82* (0.71)	-1.38* (0.56)
N	884			659			1,012		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.78			0.41			0.60		
LR	871.4			376.4			844.8		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. HRC = initial preference for Clinton; DJT = initial preference for Trump; Dem = initial preference for Democratic candidate; Rep = initial preference for Republican candidate. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* p<0.05.

Table A4. 2014 Election Transition Models, Unweighted

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>Senate</i>			<i>House</i>		
	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep
Rep	-0.73 (0.60)	0.25 (1.36)	-0.53 (1.55)	<b>-1.30*</b> <b>(0.49)</b>	<b>-2.22*</b> <b>(0.82)</b>	-1.98 (1.13)
Dem	0.65 (0.58)	1.34 (1.23)	3.05 (2.04)	<b>1.44*</b> <b>(0.43)</b>	0.65 (0.71)	0.77 (0.70)
Approval	<b>1.24*</b> <b>(0.19)</b>	<b>1.04*</b> <b>(0.41)</b>	0.77 (0.47)	<b>0.85*</b> <b>(0.14)</b>	0.29 (0.24)	0.62* (0.23)
Sophistication	0.20 (0.19)	0.44 (0.40)	0.32 (0.58)	0.19 (0.15)	0.13 (0.26)	<b>-0.52*</b> <b>(0.25)</b>
Competitiveness	-0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.06)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)
Constant	0.64 (0.50)	2.04 (1.12)	-3.41* (1.37)	0.81* (0.40)	2.70* (0.66)	-1.03 (0.75)
N	465			841		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.72			0.67		
LR	465.2			781.9		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. Robust standard errors in parentheses

\* p<0.05

Table A5. 2016 Election Transition Models, Unweighted

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>Presidential</i>			<i>Senate</i>			<i>House</i>		
	Und	HRC	DJT	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep
Rep	-0.70 (0.57)	-2.13 (1.34)	0.41 (1.28)	-0.71 (0.45)	0.05 (0.68)	<b>-1.14*</b> <b>(0.50)</b>	<b>-0.70*</b> <b>(0.33)</b>	-0.81 (1.20)	-0.66 (0.65)
Dem	0.89 (0.51)	-0.60 (1.11)	0.36 (1.52)	<b>0.85*</b> <b>(0.38)</b>	0.73 (0.43)	-0.29 (0.82)	<b>0.88*</b> <b>(0.31)</b>	0.04 (0.83)	0.65 (0.65)
Approval	<b>0.97*</b> <b>(0.19)</b>	0.61 (0.34)	<b>0.96*</b> <b>(0.38)</b>	<b>0.59*</b> <b>(0.11)</b>	<b>0.69*</b> <b>(0.16)</b>	0.37 (0.20)	<b>0.61*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>	0.23 (0.27)	<b>0.57*</b> <b>(0.18)</b>
Sophistication	<b>0.44*</b> <b>(0.21)</b>	0.39 (0.20)	-0.07 (0.46)	0.14 (0.15)	<b>0.33*</b> <b>(0.17)</b>	-0.39 (0.20)	0.18 (0.12)	<b>0.89*</b> <b>(0.27)</b>	<b>-0.47*</b> <b>(0.24)</b>
Competitiveness	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.01)	<b>0.07*</b> <b>(0.03)</b>	-0.02 (0.01)
Constant	0.22 (0.39)	3.87* (1.11)	-4.20* (1.31)	-0.29 (0.35)	-0.01 (0.42)	-0.69 (0.53)	0.08 (0.28)	1.36 (0.83)	-1.32* (0.58)
N	1,139			659			1,012		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.84			0.41			0.61		
LR	1,327.0			371.9			849.6		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. HRC = initial preference for Clinton; DJT = initial preference for Trump; Dem = initial preference for Democratic candidate; Rep = initial preference for Republican candidate. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* p<0.05

Table A6. 2016 Election Transition Models with Knowledge Advantage

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>House</i>			<i>Senate</i>			<i>Presidential</i>		
	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	HRC	DJT
Rep	-1.13 (0.79)	-2.24 (3.52)	0.57 (1.14)	-0.84 (0.73)	1.14 (0.94)	-0.25 (0.69)	<b>-1.47*</b> <b>(0.79)</b>	-2.69 (1.71)	13.78* (0.51)
Dem	<b>1.25*</b> <b>(0.64)</b>	-0.97 (1.52)	1.47 (1.12)	0.25 (0.59)	0.28 (0.68)	1.20 (1.00)	0.91 (0.67)	0.18 (1.12)	0.18 (1.12)
Approval	<b>0.44*</b> <b>(0.20)</b>	-0.33 (0.53)	<b>0.75*</b> <b>(0.33)</b>	0.35 (0.19)	<b>1.29*</b> <b>(0.16)</b>	-0.11 (0.34)	<b>1.18*</b> <b>(0.22)</b>	0.16 (0.91)	<b>0.60*</b> <b>(0.26)</b>
Sophistication	-0.04 (0.19)	<b>1.41*</b> <b>(0.54)</b>	-0.47 (0.43)	-0.05 (0.25)	<b>0.81*</b> <b>(0.28)</b>	-0.45 (0.26)	<b>0.97*</b> <b>(0.30)</b>	<b>0.69*</b> <b>(0.33)</b>	-0.12 (0.14)
Competitiveness	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.01)
$\Delta$ Dem. Knowledge Advantage	<b>0.15*</b> <b>(0.05)</b>	0.06 (0.12)	-0.00 (0.07)	0.08 (0.05)	0.01 (0.07)	0.14 (0.10)	0.08 (0.11)	0.31 (0.17)	<b>0.44*</b> <b>(0.15)</b>
Constant	0.00 (0.63)	4.70* (2.14)	-3.46* (0.96)	-0.66 (0.53)	0.35 (0.60)	-1.97* (0.87)	0.72 (0.50)	3.69* (1.78)	-18.40* (0.51)
N	488			505			934		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.61			0.36			0.82		
LR	163.06			120.29			2336.12		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. HRC = initial preference for Clinton; DJT = initial preference for Trump; Dem = initial preference for Democratic candidate; Rep = initial preference for Republican candidate. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* p<0.05.

Table A7. 2016 Election Transition Models with Proximity Advantage

<i>Primary:</i>	<i>House</i>			<i>Senate</i>			<i>Presidential</i>		
	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	Dem	Rep	Und	HRC	DJT
Rep	-1.07 (0.75)	9.84* (2.19)	0.58 (1.45)	-0.65 (0.81)	0.91 (1.00)	-0.88 (0.76)	-1.30 (0.77)	<b>-3.25*</b> ( <b>1.63</b> )	13.34* (0.97)
Dem	<b>1.28*</b> ( <b>0.65</b> )	-3.15* (1.36)	1.42 (1.61)	-0.45 (0.70)	0.04 (0.77)	-0.11 (0.96)	0.94 (0.69)	-0.21 (1.15)	-0.21 (1.15)
Approval	<b>0.48*</b> ( <b>0.20</b> )	2.35 (1.76)	<b>0.66</b> ( <b>0.40</b> )	<b>0.55*</b> ( <b>0.22</b> )	<b>1.35*</b> ( <b>0.26</b> )	-0.02 (0.35)	<b>1.17*</b> ( <b>0.22</b> )	-0.02 (0.56)	<b>0.58*</b> ( <b>0.24</b> )
Sophistication	-0.00 (0.19)	8.61 (4.41)	-0.62 (0.54)	-0.37 (0.25)	<b>0.83*</b> ( <b>0.31</b> )	-0.50 (0.28)	<b>0.86*</b> ( <b>0.29</b> )	<b>0.73*</b> ( <b>0.38</b> )	-0.07 (0.11)
Competitiveness	-0.01 (0.02)	0.53* (0.18)	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	<b>0.04*</b> ( <b>0.02</b> )
Δ Dem. Proximity Advantage	0.11 (0.10)	<b>3.51*</b> ( <b>1.73</b> )	0.22 (0.12)	0.12 (0.08)	0.01 (0.04)	<b>0.19*</b> ( <b>0.07</b> )	0.03 (0.08)	0.06 (0.14)	0.01 (0.03)
Constant	0.37 (0.60)	9.73 (7.20)	-3.98* (1.05)	-0.65 (0.67)	0.60 (0.63)	-0.67 (0.79)	0.53 (0.50)	4.03* (1.44)	-17.93* (0.50)
N	471			419			910		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.64			0.41			0.81		
LR	354.59			122.18			2034.44		

Dependent variable: 1= November vote for Democrat, 0=vote for Republican. Models estimated using a logit link function. HRC = initial preference for Clinton; DJT = initial preference for Trump; Dem = initial preference for Democratic candidate; Rep = initial preference for Republican candidate. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* p<0.05.

## SI-2: Predicting Undecideds

To understand who exhibits campaign effects, we focus on a change from undecided to choosing one of the major party candidates. Table A8 reports estimates of the effects of party identification, political sophistication, and race competitiveness on being undecided at the start of the general election campaign (that is, in the month after the primary in each state). Partisans are less likely than Independents to be undecided. The difference between partisans and Independents is larger in House contests than Senate contests, consistent with the expectation that Senate candidates are better known at the start of campaign season. Partisanship had a strong effect on undecidedness at the start of the 2016 presidential contest. Additionally, less sophisticated citizens are more likely to be undecided as a general election campaign begins than more sophisticated citizens. The eventual competitiveness of the contest, contrary to expectations, is not related to being undecided at an early stage in the congressional general election campaigns.

**Table A8.** Covariates of Being Undecided at the Start of the General Election Campaign.

	<i>2014 Campaigns</i>		<i>2016 Campaigns</i>		
	House	Senate	House	Senate	President
Republican	-0.08 (0.28)	-0.39 (0.41)	<b>-0.64*</b> <b>(0.27)</b>	-0.51 (0.33)	-0.53 (0.32)
Democrat	-0.37 (0.27)	-0.22 (0.38)	-0.41 (0.25)	0.47 (0.33)	0.51 (0.37)
Approval	0.05 (0.09)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.10)	0.09 (0.11)
Sophistication	<b>-0.37*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>	<b>-0.33*</b> <b>(0.12)</b>	<b>-0.45*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>	<b>-0.32*</b> <b>(0.11)</b>	<b>0.32*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>
Competitiveness	0.00 (0.00)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Constant	-0.44 (0.23)	-0.30 (0.31)	0.04 (0.23)	-0.14 (0.22)	-1.34* (0.27)
N	841	465	1,012	659	1,139
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.04
LR	18.23	12.41	35.06	13.62	22.12

Dependent variable: 1= Undecided voter at the end of primary, 0=Committed to Republican or Democratic candidate. Models estimated using a logit link function. Sample includes only those voters who identified support for the Republican or Democratic candidate in November. \* p<0.05.

### **SI-3: Issue Position Questions**

*Does [Candidate] generally support or oppose . . .*

- Increasing income taxes on wealthy individuals
- Federal Common Core Standards for Schools
- Allowing illegal immigrants to eventually be eligible for U.S. citizenship
- Gun control legislation
- Same-sex marriage
- A woman's right to an abortion
- Building the Keystone XL oil pipeline
- Repealing the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)
- Federal regulation of greenhouse gas emissions
- Using U.S. ground troops to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria