

# Political Science 17.20

## Introduction to American Politics

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### **Campaigns and Elections**

Lecture 16 (April 9, 2013)

# An Anecdote Relevant to the Paper

From a friend in the Dept. of Health & Human Services:

- Bureaucrats are most likely to “fill in the details” when **Congress doesn't have the time/expertise** to do so.
- Section 4302 of the **ACA requires HHS to collect demographic data** relevant to health disparities (“as deemed appropriate by the Secretary”)
- The Office of Minority Health within HHS interprets this as requiring collection of data on **LGBT population** (not mentioned in ACA) → eligible for extra funding as “at risk”
- Controversial within HHS b/c other groups were ignored.
- [Consistent with Obama's desire for LGBT support.]

**1** The Puzzle of Predictability

**2** Campaign Effects

## 1 The Puzzle of Predictability

## 2 Campaign Effects

# The Predictability of Elections

Elections are predictable on the basis of “fundamentals”:

- Internal (e.g., party ID)
- External (e.g., economy)

# Structural Forecasts: The “Bread and Peace” Model

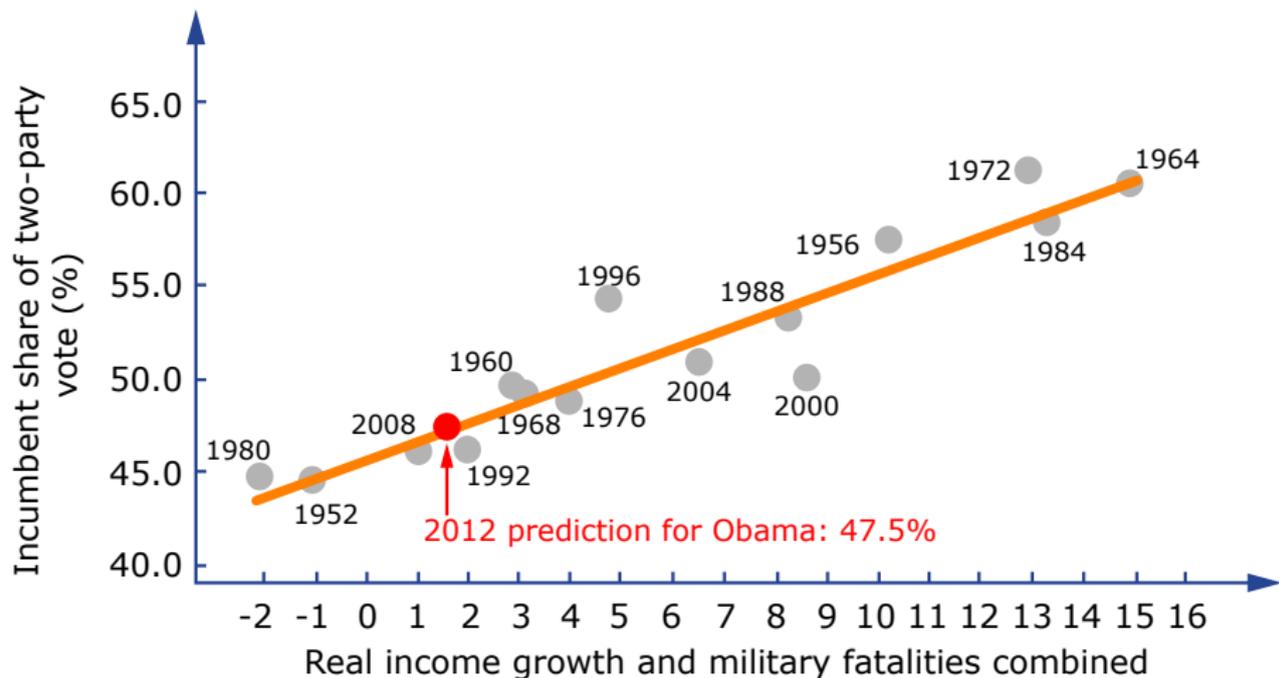


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# If Elections Are Predictable, Why Are Polls Unstable?

- Why are polls so variable?
- Do campaigns matter at all?

1 The Puzzle of Predictability

2 Campaign Effects

# How Campaigns Still Could Matter

Even if elections were completely predictable, campaigns could still matter if they:

- **Inform** voters about the fundamentals (“enlightening”)
- Have large but **counterbalancing** effects
  - Assumes optimal campaign and balanced resources

But elections are **not** entirely predictable. . .

# Campaign Effects

Campaigns can affect outcomes in the following ways:

- **Reinforcement** (bringing partisans back to the fold)
- **Persuasion** (issues, attributes)
- **Priming** (criteria of evaluation)
- **Mobilization** (convince supporters to vote)

# Presidential Campaign Strategies

- **Clarifying Campaign:** Candidate advantaged by fundamentals (prosperity, peace) emphasizes (primes) those issues and clarifies his connection to them
  - Examples: Johnson in 1964, Reagan in 1984
  - Counterexample: Gore in 2000
- **Insurgent Campaign:** Disadvantaged candidate emphasizes issue on which they have an advantage and which their opponent's position is unpopular
  - Winners: Kennedy (1960), Carter (1976), Bush (2000)
  - Losers: Stevenson, Goldwater (1964), Dole (1996),...

# Dynamics of Presidential Campaigns

- Early polls not very accurate
- Over time, polls become
  - less variable (fewer swing voters)
  - more even
  - more accurate and closer to forecast (informing)
- Some campaign effects persist (“bump”) but most effects dissipate quickly (“bounce”)
- Short-term campaign effects can still matter if occur late  
→ deluge of late ads

# Do Campaigns Matter?

- Affect outcomes, esp. if candidates not well known (e.g., primaries, open seats) or resources are unequal
- We don't observe “non-optimal” behavior very often
- Campaigns affect candidates  
→ Learn from voters, challengers

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