

THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON
VOTER BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Within existing literature, the vice presidential selection process is considered to be a significant decision for presidential nominees but not much is known about the effects this selection has on voters. Previous studies treat vice presidential candidates in the aggregate and find that vice presidential nominees have a positive influence on voters. This research focuses on presidential elections from 1968 to the most recent election of 2008 and is designed to answer the question, do feelings towards individual vice presidential candidates influence voters' decisions when voting in the general election? Throughout the past forty years, I find that the 1980, 1988, 2000, and 2008 presidential elections were all examples of elections in which one vice presidential candidate was a significant influence on voters while the same was not true for their counterpart. When treated as a combined variable in each of these elections, the vice presidents were both considered influential. I show these former conclusions are misleading. Additionally, I employ post estimation techniques to graphically display the influence of individual candidates from the 1984, 1992, and 2008 elections to show the variability amongst influential candidates. Future studies on the influence of vice presidential candidates should be mindful of the variations amongst candidates and should be cautious to not treat them in the aggregate.

Introduction

The 2008 election serves as a good starting point to begin to study the influence of vice presidential nominees on voters. Following a hard fought primary season, Barack Obama eventually emerged as the Democratic Party's frontrunner, and joined John McCain in the race for the presidency. Soon each campaign began the vetting process to select a vice presidential running mate who could boost the electability of the party's tickets. While Obama settled on long-time Senator Joe Biden to add experience to the Democratic Party ticket, John McCain caught Americans off guard when he selected the little known, albeit popular, Governor from Alaska.

It was at this point that Sarah Palin was catapulted onto the national political scene. Although McCain had won the nomination, many conservative Republicans were not satisfied with the selection. Palin seemed to invigorate the Republican base and add new life to the ticket. She soon joined John McCain on the campaign trail and her attendance at campaign rallies drew far larger crowds than before. She became a household name, blanketed the covers of magazines, swooned Saturday Night Live watchers, and generally brought a new curiosity to the once stagnant Republican ticket. Unfortunately for Republicans, her addition did not only bring positive attention throughout the campaign. After the honeymoon period seemed over, Palin had a string of embarrassing interviews. It soon became evident that her family values rhetoric was contradicted by the reality that her teen daughter was

pregnant. Similarly, Palin's maverick-like reformist persona was challenged when an abuse of power scandal involving the firing of her ex-brother-in-law surfaced.

Regardless of the positive or negative press she received, it was undeniable that she received a great deal of media attention as the Republican vice presidential nominee.

On the other hand, the Democratic Party's vice presidential nominee seemed to be overshadowed by his less experienced presidential running mate and in relation to the attention his Republican counterpart received. Professionally, Biden was one of the Senate's most senior members. His chairmanships on the Senate Foreign Relations and Judiciary Committees garnered respect, and he provided the Democrats with the experience Obama was criticized for lacking. Unfortunately for Democrats many of his accomplishments were overlooked by the media, and he was perhaps best known for his verbal missteps. A record 70 million viewers tuned in to watch the vice presidential debate between the nominees in part to see if Palin could appear informed on the issues and in part to see if Biden could refrain from being condescending, patriarchal, and long-winded.

Considering this modern example of vice presidential selections, it is interesting to discover the office of the vice president is often overlooked within political studies. Within existing literature, the vice presidential selection process is considered to be a significant decision for presidential nominees but not much is known about the effects this selection has on voters (Nelson 1988). Only a few studies exist that show the influence of vice presidential candidates on voters (Wattenberg 1984, 1995; Romero 2001). Wattenberg (1995) examined the combined

influence of vice presidential candidates on voters in the elections spanning from 1968 to 1994, but failed to recognize the potential differences amongst candidates as we see illustrated in the 2008 election. One could argue, then, a suitable model to evaluate the influence of vice presidential candidates has yet to be constructed. I contend that through focusing on a considerably larger scope of time than previous studies, from the 1968 election through the election of 2008, and also treating each vice presidential candidate as a separate unit of analysis, a more appropriate depiction of the influence of vice presidential candidates will arise. Through this demonstration, I show previous evidence was misleadingly supportive of vice presidential influence and in certain cases allowed vice presidential candidates to appear influential when they were insignificant in the eyes of voters.

Historical Context

First, however, it is important to understand the history and evolution of the office of the vice presidency and the selection process by which they are chosen. By Constitutional design, the official role of the vice president is perhaps most accurately described as a waiting game. Once elected, the vice president is granted the duty of presiding over the Senate. Within this responsibility lie two official tasks. First the vice president must wait until there is a tie so he can break it, and secondly he is obligated to announce the Electoral College results for presidential elections every four years. The later role contains the potential to become extremely awkward. This was the case most recently following the 2000 election. Here the sitting vice president and presidential hopeful Al Gore was obligated to declare George W. Bush

as the winner of the hotly contested race for the presidency. In addition to the vice presidential roles within the legislative branch, he also has a very important role within the executive office. If something occurred that left the president unable to fulfill his duties, the vice president would occupy the presidency. Interestingly enough, it was not until the ratification of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment in 1967 that a vacant vice presidential post would be filled if the vice president was required to move into the presidency. Before this passage, the office of the vice presidency was left open for a total of 46 years following various presidential successions.

While the Constitution falls just short of overlooking the vice presidency altogether, the vague description of the position also left room for its role to evolve overtime. This occurred through formal institutional changes, such as the 12th Amendment, and through the power and roles granted in campaigns and once elected. Although the office traditionally garnered very little respect, including more often than not from its inhabitants, within the modern era the role of the vice president grew exponentially.

However what is still unclear is what role vice presidential candidates play in the decisions of voters. As the position begins to play a more crucial role within the Executive Branch, does this translate to attention being drawn to the importance of the vice presidential candidates in the minds of voters? This research focuses on presidential elections from 1968 to the most recent election of 2008 and is designed to answer the question, do feelings towards vice presidential candidates influence voters

when voting in the general election? First I will begin by describing the historical evolution of the vice presidential selection process.

Selection Process

When designing our nation's government, the framers included a plan for the selection of the president and vice president. Originally, the Constitution stated the Electoral College must vote for two people, one which cannot be from the same state as the elector. In order to encourage the electors to not simply vote for their state's favorite son candidate and also cast a vote for a 'throw away' candidate to ensure a win, the framers created the office of the vice president. According to Hamilton's ideas shared in the Federalist Papers #68, this should have produced two strong candidates, one winning the presidency and one competent enough to take over the nation if the president was no longer able to serve the country (Hamilton 1999). This was an effective strategy at first, with John Adams serving during George Washington's terms in office until Adams won the presidency in 1796. Following these events, Thomas Jefferson served under John Adams before gaining the Presidency himself in 1800. (Baumgartner 2006). Soon however, this trend of creating logical tickets ceased.

Shortly after the Constitution was ratified and the new national government began to function, politicians of the day found it necessary to form political parties. Parties allowed them to create coalitions of people with shared policy preferences to help overcome the problem of collective policymaking and allow the government to function more efficiently (Aldrich1995). Hamilton's original intent with regards to

separately electing a qualified vice president to serve soon became obsolete. In the 1796 election, the ideologically incompatible pairing of Democrat-Republican Thomas Jefferson who was elected as the vice president for John Adams -- who was a Federalist, led to an openly divided executive office. Soon political parties saw it in their best interest to ignore the electoral structure outlined in the Constitution. They began endorsing two candidates from their party for the ticket in an effort to avoid outright opposition within the executive branch (Baumgartner 2006).

A second drawback to the original construction of executive selection involved the unusually high probability of a tie vote within the Electoral College. This was made evident in the disastrous 1800 election which led to a showdown between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. According to the Constitution a tie was to be decided by the House of Representatives (Baumgartner 2006). Within the House a heated debate ensued including conniving attacks on Burr from the Federalist Party led by Hamilton. After threats of protests in Washington D.C., a letter writing campaign spearheaded by Hamilton against Burr, and thirty-six House ballots within a weeklong period, Jefferson was eventually granted the presidency. This of course left Aaron Burr to fill the less prestigious vice presidency. The controversies ensued and tensions continued to flare between these men and their respective parties until its climax in 1804. Burr, upon learning he would not be asked by the party to entertain the vice presidency for a second term, and after losing his bid for as governor of New York, was embarrassed and enraged. It was at this point that Vice President Burr

challenged Hamilton, his vocal and unapologetic long-time political opponent to a pistol duel which ultimately led to Hamilton's murder (Witcover 1992).

In order to alleviate these problems, the 12th Amendment was ratified and the office of the vice presidency no longer resembled the original intent of the framers. Instead it called for electors to place two separate votes, one for whom they wanted to serve as president with a separate vote for whom they wanted to serve as vice president (Nelson 1988b). From this point forward, the vice president served at the mercy of the president's ticket, and no longer maintained the autonomy once intended (Light 1984). This also opened the door for political parties to determine whom they would endorse for each office and to ultimately control the selection process (Baumgartner 2006).

From the early 1804 and until the mid-1900s, political party leaders chose their party's vice presidential nominee. During this time, the vice president was believed to be rather unimportant; as a result, parties failed to attract strong candidates for this secondary position (Nelson 1988a, Sigelman & Wahlbeck 1997). A prime example of this was Daniel Webster who was offended the vice presidential slot by the Whig Party in 1848 and responded, "I do not propose to be buried until I am dead" (Nelson 1988b). Webster was not alone in his distaste for the position but two key institutional changes led to major shifts in the role and perception of the vice presidency.

Institutional Changes in Selection Process

The first such change occurred leading into the 1940 presidential election when Franklin Delano Roosevelt altered the established party-led tradition of selecting the vice president. Roosevelt muscled his way into choosing a running mate by cutting out the controlling role of the party. Preceding this election, John “Cactus Jack” Garner was selected by the Democratic Party to serve as FDR’s right hand man for the first two terms of office. Garner played a key role early on in their first term. During this time he used his previously acquired Congressional leadership experience to persuade Congress to pass many of the president’s New Deal policies. However, after an enthusiastic reelection by the American people in 1936, the relationship between Roosevelt and Garner soon turned sour. By their second term, Garner was not shy and publicly challenged the President. They disagreed on several issues including perhaps most famously FDR’s plan to pack the Supreme Court.

By the election of 1940, there was no longer a working relationship between the two men and Garner did not want to serve in the office that he now claimed, “isn’t worth a pitcher of warm piss” (Baumgartner 2006, pg 3). He even went so far as to unsuccessfully attempt to run against FDR in the Democratic Party’s primary elections. In an unprecedented third run for office in 1940, FDR’s own nomination was once again strongly secured within the Democratic Party. At this point, he threatened to pull out of the race if he was not allowed autonomy in the decision-making process for his vice presidential running mate. The party catered to Roosevelt’s demands and Henry Wallace was selected by FDR. This act forever

changed the nomination process, and shifted power from the party into the hands of the presidential candidate. (Baumgartner 2006, Nelson 1988a, and Sigelman & Wahlbeck 1997).

The second more formal institutional change which led to changes in the vice presidency and the selection process took place in 1970. In response to people's frustration with the government's handling of the Vietnam War and the protests that ensued at the Democratic Party's national convention, the McGovern-Fraser Commission was instituted by the Democratic Party. The commission called for a number of changes within the Democratic Party in an effort to shift power towards the people. Hiller and Kriner (2008) argue, two of these changes were particularly influential on the vice presidency. First this resulted in the dramatic growth in primary elections. Elections gave party voters the opportunity to determine presidential candidates, as opposed to waiting until the convention for party delegates to choose. From this point forward, presidential nominees were determined earlier in the election season and candidates soon possessed more time to vet potential running mates and choose a vice presidential candidate. Stemming from these reforms, there was also a clear movement of power away from party leaders to the candidates running for office, or what is now referred to as candidate-centered elections (Hiller & Kriner 2008; Mayer 2003; Patterson 1980; Steger 2000; Wattenberg 1995).

Vice Presidential Eras

Considering its rich and varied history, the office of the vice presidency is most accurately thought of in terms of eras. Within each era it is important to note

that both the process of selection and the role they fulfilled once in office changed. Baumgartner (2006) divided the vice presidency into three eras, the traditional, transitional, and modern. The traditional era began in 1804 following the ratification of the 12th Amendment and ended in 1896. This earlier era formed many of the stereotypes about the office that remain in place to this day. Generally the candidates were chosen less for their intellect and talents and more for their potential electoral benefits. The idea of ticket balancing, which still exists today, sprang from this era. Often selections were attributed to an electoral desire to produce an attractively balanced ticket. For instance during this earliest era, ninety percent of all party tickets featured vice presidential and presidential pairings from different regions (Baumgartner, 2006). Balanced tickets are likely to appeal to a wider array of voters and vice presidents are strategically chosen to boost the presidential ticket's electability (Sigelman & Walhbeck 1997; Baumgartner 2006; Witcover 1992; Light 1984).

Ticket balancing can entail any number of characteristics to balance between the running mates. First, it has been found that presidents may choose to balance their ticket based on region. For example a Southern presidential candidate may choose a nominee from New England as a running mate to spread the ticket's appeal to areas the presidential candidate may normally struggle (Rosenstone 1983). This stems from the idea that people like to vote for their state or regional's 'favorite son'. Parties and Presidents choose to balance tickets on personal qualities including age, gender, religion, ideological alignment, and experiences amongst others. For

example if the presidential hopeful had state level executive experience, but lacked experience in at the federal level government, he may seek a running mate who was a long-term Senator with many connections within Washington (Baumgartner 2006; Nelson 1988b; Siegelman & Wahlbeck 1997).

These ticket balancing strategies encouraged the idea that vice presidential running mates influence voter behavior. As a result, during this era vice presidential officeholders were quite often dropped from the ticket before their second term in order for their party to adapt to the political environment and recruit a running mate that could mobilize the most voters (Baumgartner 2006). This practice furthered the difficulties associated with finding quality candidates as “the prospect of spending four years presiding over the Senate, only to be replaced at the end of the term, dissuaded most talented political leaders from accepting vice presidential nominations in the first place” (Nelson 1988, p. 859).

Vice president’s role in the Senate was weak at best during the traditional era (Baumgartner 2006). While Congress played a powerful role during this era (Cooper, 2008), it was not willing to grant power to the presiding officer of the Senate. According to Stewart (2001, p. 95) this distrust between the Senate and the vice president was justified given that vice presidents “do not face the same electoral imperatives as senators, and there is no guarantee that the vice president will share the same political goals as a majority of the Senate.” Vice presidents were also not necessarily bound to act in the president’s best interests when presiding over the

Senate, because they were not indebted to the president but to the party (Baumgartner 2006).

Vice presidents retained their constitutionally granted roles during this era, although they all had varied opportunities to carry out these roles. While some devoted time and efforts to their role as presiding officer of the Senate, others chose to appear when needed to break a tie. The opportunity to fulfill the referee role varied widely across the terms from twenty-eight tie-breaking votes for John Calhoun to zero for John Tyler, William King, Andrew Johnson, and Thomas Hendricks (Baumgartner 2006). Throughout a majority of the transitional era the vice president was simply deemed irrelevant until a president died.

Following the traditional era, the transitional era started with Theodore Roosevelt in 1900 and ended with Richard Nixon in 1956. In general during this period, a closer relationship between presidents and vice presidents developed and vice presidents' duties within the office grew succinctly with their loyalties to the president. For example, in the election of 1900, Theodore Roosevelt broke the tradition of a vice presidential running mate campaigning solely in his home state or possibly region, to campaigning across the nation (Baumgartner 2006). By the modern era, this practice was already commonplace.

As the president's power over the selection process grew, so too did his level of responsibility and ownership over who filled the second slot. It was no longer common place for vice presidents to be let go after one term. As was mentioned

earlier, Garner was the only instance of a vice president leaving the party's ticket during the transitional era although he already served two terms with FDR before he was removed. Only in this extreme case of insubordination, not to mention confidence in the president, did a president deem it necessary to overcome the potential stigma of appearing weak by dropping his running mate for a second term (Baumgartner 2006).

Although the transitional era vice president was needed less often to break Senate ties than in the traditional era -- they averaged approximately 3.5 tie breaks per vice president compared to 7.5 for the traditional era -- their informal roles grew. While the legislative function of the vice president shrank, his role within the executive increased. For the first time, transitional vice presidents regularly attended cabinet meetings, some were granted policy issues to spearhead, the office of the vice president received its own seal, and presidential successions went far more smoothly than they did during the traditional era. Vice presidents were also used by the president as a policy activist to influence Congress, the public, and other nations. As the position gained new responsibilities, the prestige of the position increased. While the vice presidency of the traditional era was stigmatized as a dead end, this was no longer the case for some transitional vice presidents. Following their terms, transitional era vice presidents became presidents, Senators, Chief Justices, and secretaries (Baumgartner 2006). A more prestigious and respected institution started to emerge during the transitional era, although its established image as a trivial position was not easily disposed.

Modern vice presidents, those who held office from the 1960's to the present day, are now considered key players within the executive branch. They are granted a great number of resources including an office in the White House, an additional office separate from the president along with a bustling staff of approximately seventy, a home in Washington D. C., and a separate budget to help them carry out their various responsibilities and duties. This is in stark contrast to early vice presidents. Earlier vice presidents were often better known for their drunkenness, absent nature, and incompetence than for possessing any shred of power and influence over governmental affairs (Light 1984; Nelson 1988a & b; Baumgartner 2006). Perhaps the most amusing example includes Martin Van Buren's vice president, Richard Johnson, who left Washington D.C. to go back to Kentucky to run a tavern (Baumgartner 2006). Needless to say as the level of prestige within the office of the vice president grew the presidential candidate's were able to entice stronger running mates.

The role of vice presidential candidates expanded significantly to the campaign season as well. During the traditional and transitional eras, vice presidents rarely actively campaigned for their ticket. If they did campaign, it was usually limited to their home state with the exception of Theodore Roosevelt (Baumgartner 2006). Even as recently as the 1980s Goldstein (1982) argued that the vice presidential nominee gained very little media attention. Light (1984) stated that even though at that time the media did not place a lot of attention on the vice presidential candidate, the prospective presidents gave a great deal of attention to their choices.

For example President Nixon kept extensive records of his carefully calculated selection process including poll results of how he would fair in the election if he had each of the shortlisted candidates on his ticket. Baumgartner (2006) claims the media is now catching up with presidential campaigns, placing an increasing amount of focus on the vice presidential selection including who the presidential candidate could have on his shortlist of possible vice presidential picks and when he might strategically announce his choice.

One reason for this growing fascination is that the modern primary season continues to frontload. As states move primary election days earlier in the season, the general election remains unchanged. This produces a large gap between the time when the political parties have decided the ticket and the party's convention. In search of something campaign related to cover this lull, media speculation grows concerning who might be chosen as vice president. Presidential candidates also take advantage by wisely choosing when to make their official announcement so as to maximize the attention they receive for their choice and boost enthusiasm going into their party's convention (Lichert & Lichert 2004; Baumgartner 2006).

Existing Research

There is some literature available on the reasoning behind vice presidential selections from the perspectives of the presidential candidates and their advisors. Presidential campaigns expend significant resources and effort into choosing a running mate. The explanations and details on the process from those directly

involved in the choice are accounted for in historical documentation and presidential biographies (Kearns 1976; Goldstein 1982; Witcover 1992). Additionally Sigelman and Wahlbeck (1997) studied the strategies used to boost the electability of presidential tickets from 1940 to 1996. They found that although balancing age groups, as we witnessed by both tickets in the 2008 election, and selecting a running mate from “a state that can make a difference when the electoral votes are counted” were often practiced, many of the traditional ticket balancing techniques are not implemented (pg 862). This research shows that much of what is still believed to be true concerning the vice presidency is often based on what is known about previous vice presidential eras and is outdated.

Most importantly, these studies fail to address one very key element to the vice presidential choice. While they focus on the electoral strategy behind the choice made by the presidential hopeful, they do not concentrate on whether or not vice presidential candidates are likely to impact the decisions of voters. There is a large amount of speculative information on the effect of certain candidates. This especially applies to those who were more controversial picks such as Vice President Dan Quayle, who was seen as a detriment to the Republican Party ticket in 1988 and 1992 (Witcover 1992). However, these studies fail to empirically address the electoral effectiveness of the strategies used to pick running mates.

In the past, a handful of researchers examined the influence vice presidential candidates' evaluations have on presidential elections. However, these results are not

consistent due to very different modeling approaches, some opting to advance their studies from the individual level (Wattenberg 1984, 1995) and others at the aggregate level (Dudley and Rapoport 1989, Holbrook 1991, Romero 2001). For instance, Dudley and Rapoport (1989) discovered the tactic of adding a vice-presidential candidate to the ticket in order to gain a home state advantage was not an effective strategy. Through studying a one hundred year period from 1884 to 1984, they found that the home state advantage, one of the key points within the ticket balancing approach, hardly exists. For example they estimate that within a vice-presidential candidate's home state one can on average expect to see a modest 0.3 percent increase in voting for their favorite son's ticket; and while slightly higher for small states, it is on average slightly lower for larger more enticing states (Dudley and Rapoport 1989). Considering the ideas shared earlier on vice presidential eras, the differences amongst candidates, and the idea that the vice presidency has gained respect, responsibilities, and exposure overtime, it is unfair to pool one hundred years of elections and treat them all equally. Perhaps a more accurate approach would be to examine each era individually and then compare time period differences.

When examining the influence of vice-presidential candidates on individual voters, the results begin to look more promising; however, they are not entirely agreeable. To begin, Romero (2005) conducted research on the 1976 election examining the influence of presidential and vice presidential candidates on individual voters. He provided a control for the varied familiarity between vice presidential candidates and presidential candidates. He accomplished this by including a measure

that is “related to the voter’s evaluations but independent of his or her vote” by using questions from the 1974 survey, such as one’s approval of Ford’s pardoning of Nixon, and relating those responses to votes cast for president in the 1976 election (Romero 2005, pg 458). While he was able to use this model for the 1976 election, not many panel surveys provide this opportunity. Therefore the applicability of such a model is limited.

In an attempt to move beyond the limitations that case studies provide, Wattenberg (1984, 1995) conducted a study on the influence vice-presidential candidates have on individual voters, the first focused on elections from 1952 to 1980 and the second served to update his findings to include elections from 1968 to 1992. In the latter study, he focused attention on those voters whom do not feel similarly towards both the vice president and president of a given party. As predicted in such cases, a voter’s evaluation towards the vice president takes a back seat to the evaluation of the president either leaving him to abandon a vice presidential candidate he prefers or to vote for a party’s ticket while forced to elect a person to the secondary office he does not support. Perhaps more importantly, he finds when pooling the vice-presidential candidate evaluations from 1968 to 1992, the vice president does play a significant role in the decisions of individual voters. His findings from this research are found in Table 1 and will later serve as the cornerstone for the model used in this research. While he utilizes a new approach towards studying electoral behavior, and in his 1995 study does not fall into the trap of

Table 1: Wattenberg's Logistic Regressions Predicting Two-Party Presidential Votes, 1968-1992, by Year

	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992
VP Ratings	0.041* (0.007)	0.029* (0.006)	0.038* (0.007)	0.030* (0.008)	0.027* (0.004)	0.018* (0.005)	0.032* (0.006)
Presidential Likes/Dislikes	-0.400* (0.044)	-0.470* (0.063)	-0.539* (0.053)	-0.517* (0.060)	-0.520* (0.049)	-0.592* (0.063)	-0.584* (0.063)
Party Identification	0.700* (0.083)	0.423* (0.090)	0.532* (0.068)	0.594* (0.086)	0.492* (0.071)	0.648* (0.079)	0.576* (0.081)
Ideology	0.003 (0.01)	0.025* (0.012)	0.029* (0.010)	0.064* (0.013)	0.037* (0.013)	0.054* (0.014)	0.046* (0.014)
Constant	-1.86* (0.60)	-2.15* (0.70)	-3.42* (0.60)	-5.02* (0.76)	-2.71* (0.66)	-4.83* (0.78)	-4.26 (0.79)
N of Cases	799	652	890	667	1205	855	1161

Source: American National Election Studies. Table adapted from Wattenberg, Martin P. 1995. "The Role of Vice Presidential Candidate Ratings in Presidential Voting Behavior." p.512.

Note: VP Ratings are calculated by taking Republican minus Democratic feeling thermometer scores. Presidential candidate ratings are calculated by taking Republican minus Democratic like/dislike count ranging from -5 (strong preference for Democratic candidate) to +5 (strong preference for Republican candidate). Party identification is measured on a 7 point scale, Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Ideology is measured Conservative minus Liberal feeling thermometer score, ranging from -100 strong liberal orientation to +100 strong conservative orientation. Standard errors are located within parentheses. "*" indicates statistical significance at a 0.05 level or better two-tailed test.

crossing over into different eras by sticking solely to the modern era, one of the shortcomings lies in pooling the data.

Arguably each electoral environment within this period was not created equally and experienced very different circumstances and political actors. For example the election of 1968 was filled with protests, assassinations, and vast uncertainty. On top of these factors, it took place before the McGovern Fraser Commission altered the selection process (Hiller and Kriner 2008). Voters even indicated they preferred the Democratic Party's vice presidential candidate, Sen. Muskie, to Spiro Agnew which perhaps spoke to the American people's foresight as Agnew would later be forced to resign from the office of the vice presidency. Watergate, which greatly damaged the reputation of the office of the presidency, in part led to the 1976 election of a refreshingly unknown team, Governor Carter and Senator Mondale. Mondale later ran for the presidency in 1984. This was the first time a woman, Geraldine Ferraro, was invited to join the ticket. Therefore not only is each election distinctive, but each candidate is also unique within each election. For example Ferraro, who found herself on the losing ticket in the 1984 election, polled higher than the sitting Vice President George H.W. Bush. It is thus not appropriate to pool several elections, treat each vice presidential candidate as equal, and then claim to have an accurate portrayal of vice presidential influence on individual voters. It is for this reason that the current study treats each election and each vice presidential candidate as a unique occurrence. In the end, these empirical results present a richer description of how individual vice presidential candidates influence voting decisions.

Conventional Wisdom

In the past, it was widely accepted that individuals vote for the president and do not place a great deal of weight on the vice presidential running mate. Baumgartner (2006) also raises the point that many believe a vice presidential running mate must be chosen carefully, in order to maximize and not damage the party's appeal. This raises the question, does the vice presidential running mate impact the electoral choices of voters? Although the previous studies discussed earlier argue that vice presidential candidates are influential on voters, I argue that their methodological approach is inappropriate, and it is potentially misleading to treat vice presidential candidates as anything but individual units of analysis. I believe past research combining the influence of vice presidential candidates both across elections and within the same election year could yield deceptive conclusions. Thus the question of whether vice presidents influence voters has not been adequately answered. In an effort to present an alternative methodology, I first establish whether each individual candidate has a significant influence on voters during the given election year. Additionally, I employ post estimation techniques to graphically display the influence individual vice presidential satisfaction rankings have on voters for vice presidential candidates that were especially distinctive.

Research Methodology

Aligned with Wattenberg's (1995) study covering elections between 1968 and 1994, I examine modern presidential elections from these same years but do not aggregate and pool the data. I then update to the 2008 election and examine the

subsequent elections. Again, each election is treated separately, and I measure the influence of an individual's feelings toward vice presidential candidates on the dependent variable, vote choice of the individual. Vote choice is treated as a dichotomous variable, including a vote for the vice presidential nominee's party ticket coded as 0 and a vote for the opposing party coded as 1. Much like in the Wattenberg (1995) study, the key independent variable is one's evaluation of the vice presidential candidates and is measured using a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 to 100. It is also important to control for how the individual rates the presidential candidate independently.

The potential for multicollinearity arises when using presidential and vice presidential candidates within the same party. During the time period studied here, there were vast differences in the correlation values between presidents and their running mates. The lowest correlations existed between G.H.W. Bush and Reagan in 1980 ($r = 0.28$) and Bentsen and Dukakis in 1988 ($r = 0.27$). Correlations seemed to have the potential to grow stronger in the case of presidents and vice presidents running for a second term. This was the case with Dick Cheney and George W. Bush in 2004 ticket that scored the strong correlational value of 0.70 and Al Gore and Bill Clinton's 1996 ticket where $r = 0.68$. In an effort to avoid multicollinearity issues that arise in some but not all elections, it is imperative to find a more acceptable measure for the presidential evaluations. Wattenberg (1995) suggested measuring this variable in terms of affect towards the presidential candidate. This is constructed through the sum of Democratic presidential 'likes' and Republican

presidential candidate 'dislikes' minus the sum of Democratic presidential candidate 'dislikes' and Republican presidential candidate 'likes' when responding to questions such as, "Is there anything in particular about (the presidential candidate) that might make you want to vote against him?" (ANES CDF). Unfortunately, this option is not available for the 2008 election. Instead feelings for both presidential candidates must be substituted for the likes and dislikes variable. However, this should not be a concern as the strength of both correlations, between 2008 vice presidential candidate feelings and likes and dislikes presidential ranking ($r = -0.12$) and presidential feelings ($r = 0.52$), range from very weak to moderate. In addition to controlling for one's ratings of the presidential candidate, it is necessary to also include controls for party identification ranging from strong Democrat to strong Republican and also ideological leanings measured on a scale of 0, most liberal, to 100, most conservative. This ensures that any difference in the vote choice of individuals can be attributed to a person's feelings toward the vice president and not one's enthusiasm, or lack of enthusiasm, towards the top member of the ticket or because of any other variable controlled for in this study.

The American National Election Studies data provides all the needed information to conduct this study. I utilize logistic regression to examine the influence of vice presidents on voter's choice. In order to more effectively describe the relationship between evaluations of vice presidential candidates and voter preferences, post-estimation techniques are applied to the significant relationships found in the model. These allow us to compare the predicted probabilities of voting

for the vice presidential nominee's ticket based on one's feelings toward the different vice presidential candidates.

Results

The results presented in Table 2 reveal four instances from 1968 to 2008 where the traditional method of analyzing the influence of vice presidential candidates on voters was misleading [Wattenberg's 1995 results are posted in Table 1]. This first example occurred in the 1980 election where the Democratic vice presidential nominee, Sen. Walter Mondale, did not have a significant influence on voters while his Republican counterpart, George H.W. Bush did play a role in voter's decisions. Although it may not be surprising to most that Mondale was insignificant, this does show that when Reagan selected his rival from the primary season, who went so far as to coin Reagan's supply side economics tactics as voodoo economics, the choice benefitted him electorally. The second instance where there is a discrepancy with Wattenberg's (1995) conclusions occurred in the 1988 election. It was here that Dukakis' choice, Lloyd Benson, did not enter into the minds of voters while George H.W. Bush's selection, Dan Quayle was a significant factor. The next discrepancy took place in the heated 2000 battle for the presidency. In this case, George W. Bush's Republican running mate, Dick Cheney, failed to influence voters while interestingly enough, Al Gore's choice to fill the position, Joe Lieberman, did influence voters. This phenomena occurred most recently when Sarah Palin

Table 2: Logistic Regressions Predicting Two-Party Presidential Votes by Year and Candidate, 1968-1992

	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992							
	Muskie	Agnew	Shriver	Agnew	Mondale	Dole	Mondale	Bush	Ferraro	Bush	Bentson	Quayle	Gore	Quayle
VP Ratings	0.029* (0.007)	0.032* (0.008)	0.028* (0.007)	0.018* (0.006)	0.032* (0.007)	0.025* (0.007)	0.015 (0.008)	0.02* (0.009)	0.026* (0.006)	0.032* (0.007)	0.012 (0.006)	0.021* (0.006)	0.023* (0.007)	0.026* (0.006)
Presidential likes/dislikes	0.439* (0.043)	-0.461* (0.044)	0.545* (0.061)	-0.523* (0.059)	0.556* (0.049)	-0.556* (0.049)	0.554* (0.058)	-0.562* (0.057)	0.539* (0.048)	-0.567* (0.048)	0.622* (0.06)	-0.531* (0.054)	0.657* (0.061)	-0.634* (0.057)
Party Identification	-0.664* (0.077)	0.710* (0.079)	-0.420* (0.086)	0.499* (0.086)	-0.575* (0.064)	0.577* (0.064)	-0.608* (0.082)	0.629* (0.084)	-0.524* (0.069)	0.519* (0.068)	-0.654* (0.076)	0.601* (0.067)	-0.628* (0.078)	0.595* (0.071)
Ideology	-0.009 (0.01)	0.010 (0.011)	-0.040* (0.012)	0.043* (0.012)	-0.032* (0.01)	0.04* (0.009)	-0.06* (0.012)	0.058* (0.012)	-0.041* (0.012)	0.037* (0.012)	-0.054* (0.013)	0.053* (0.012)	-0.059* (0.013)	0.055* (0.013)
Constant	0.795* (0.726)	-4.522* (0.712)	1.536* (0.797)	-4.367* (0.664)	2.1* (0.74)	-5.511* (0.633)	4.083* (0.821)	-5.939* (0.904)	1.572* (0.741)	-4.703* (0.715)	4.453* (0.796)	-5.857* (0.765)	4.221* (0.861)	-6.231* (0.723)
N	812	677	954	689	1230	1004	1265							

Source: American National Election Studies

Note: Coefficients are estimated for each Democrat and Republican VP candidate per election year. VP satisfaction ratings range from 0 to 100. Presidential likes/dislikes include the sum of Democratic presidential 'likes' and Republican presidential candidate 'dislikes' minus the sum of Democratic presidential candidate 'dislikes' and Republican presidential candidate 'likes'. Party Identification ranges on a 7 pt. scale from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Ideology ranges from -100 to 100, most liberal to most conservative. Standard errors are located within parentheses. "*" indicates statistical significance at a 0.05 level or better two-tailed test.

Table 2 Continued: Logistic Regressions Predicting Two-Party Presidential Votes by Year and Candidate, 1996-2008

	1996	2000	2004	2008				
	Gore	Lieberman	Cheney	Edwards	Cheney	Biden	Palin	
VP Ratings	0.030* (0.008)	0.021* (0.01)	0.033* (0.009)	0.006 (0.008)	0.041* (0.01)	0.042* (0.008)	0.006 (0.005)	0.012* (0.004)
Presidential likes/dislikes	0.611* (0.066)	-0.606* (0.065)	0.62* (0.071)	-0.582* (0.065)	0.527* (0.07)	-0.484* (0.069)	0.048* (0.003)	-0.045* (0.003)
Party Identification	-0.515* (0.077)	0.547* (0.082)	-0.755* (0.087)	0.791* (0.065)	-0.545* (0.099)	0.605* (0.097)	-0.220* (0.109)	0.229* (0.101)
Ideology	-0.07* (0.015)	0.068* (0.016)	-0.058* (0.014)	0.069* (0.014)	-0.057* (0.017)	0.042* (0.017)	-0.019* (0.004)	0.034* (0.007)
Constant	4.339* (0.959)	-7.425* (0.982)	3.811* (0.944)	-6.795* (0.873)	2.476* (1.07)	-6.426* (0.971)	1.83 (0.50)	-2.55* (0.436)
N	883		897		757		1281	

Source: American National Election Studies

Note: Coefficients are estimated for each Democrat and Republican VP candidate per election year. VP satisfaction ratings range from 0 to 100. Presidential likes/dislikes include the sum of Democratic presidential 'likes' and Republican presidential candidate 'dislikes' minus the sum of Democratic presidential candidate 'dislikes' and Republican presidential candidate 'likes' except for 2008 presidential candidates. 2008 totals for this variable are determined by Romero's (2001) measure for combined presidential candidate evaluation and use feeling thermometer scores, Republican minus Democrat, ranging from -100 (most-Democratic) to 100

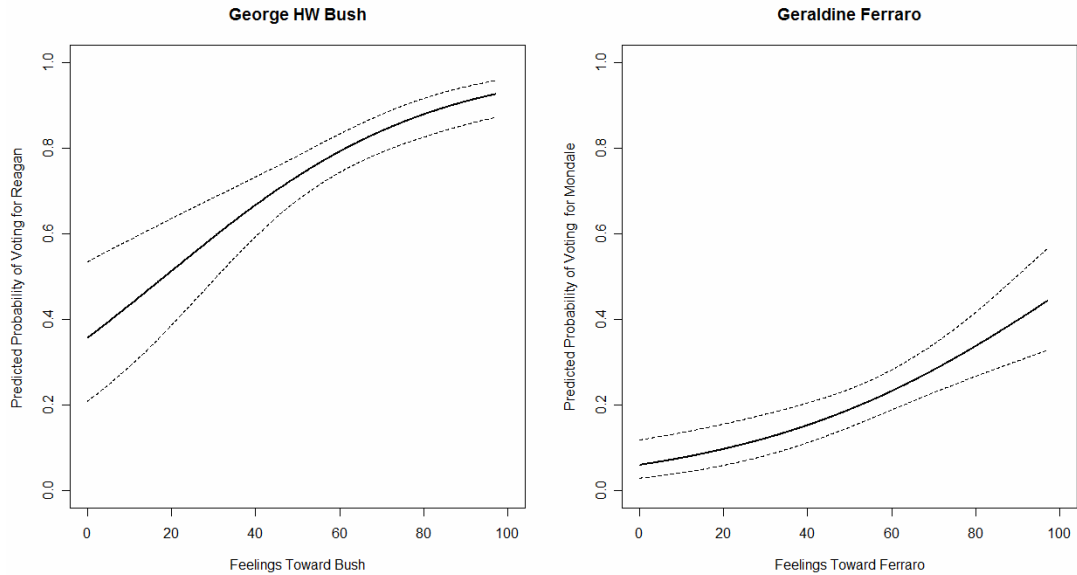
influenced voters although Joe Biden was not a contributing factor for voters. According to Wattenberg's methodology these particular elections, along with all of the elections from 1968 through 1992, were significantly influenced by the vice presidential running mates. Our new evidence suggests such sweeping conclusions are misguided.

Another finding worthy of attention is that in all cases when vice presidential candidates were influential, they were a positive addition to their party's ticket. This discovery is worth noting as it directly contradicts the media's framing and our understanding of certain vice presidential selections. For example in the 1988 election George H.W. Bush asked a political advisor to draw up a list of 20 possible candidates including a handful of candidates added to throw off the media. According to Witcover (1992, p. 335) Bush's selection of the relatively inexperienced "Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana – generally regarded as a lightweight and certainly one of the decoys" making the list was "fantastic – but not in the way George Bush meant". In an effort to set himself apart from Reagan's administration, many felt he made a rash and miscalculated decision that hurt his ticket especially considering Bush had never formally spoken with Quayle prior to his selection. Bush also received great pressure to remove Quayle from the Republican ticket when running for a second term in 1992 (Witcover 1992). Evidence in Table 2 suggests that although it is impossible to know if a different selection would have benefitted Bush's ticket, Quayle did positively influence voters in both elections.

In order to gain a stronger understanding of the influence of vice presidential candidates on voters, post estimation techniques simulate the predicted probability of voting for a party's ticket based on feelings toward that party's vice presidential candidate while holding all other variables constant. I concentrate on voters indentifying as Independents, as these voters are more likely to be undecided or persuadable in comparison to Democrats and Republicans. I will examine three more controversial selections, including Geraldine Ferraro in 1984, Dan Quayle's second selection in 1992, and Sarah Palin in 2008. First I will start by examining the 1984 election in which Walter Mondale chose Geraldine Ferraro to serve as the first woman on a major party ticket.

The results in Figure 1 graphically display the influence of each vice presidential candidate on voting for their respective ticket amongst Independents in 1984. Bush's influence changes more dramatically amongst Independents who report unfavorable feelings toward him. For example, Independents who report not liking Bush at all, ranking him at a zero on the scale of zero to 100, are predicted to vote Republican a mere 36%, plus or minus approximately 8%, of the time, yet those who ranked him at a more neutral fifty are predicted to vote for his ticket 73%, plus or minus 3% of the time. This is a change in average probability of 37%. Interestingly enough, at Bush's higher ratings on the feeling thermometer scores, between 51 and 100, the predicted probability of voting rate of change only increases by 19%; however, for this range, he both starts high at an average of 73% (+/- 3%) and finishes high at 92% (+/- 2%).

Figure 1: Influence of VP Candidates on Independent Voters in 1984



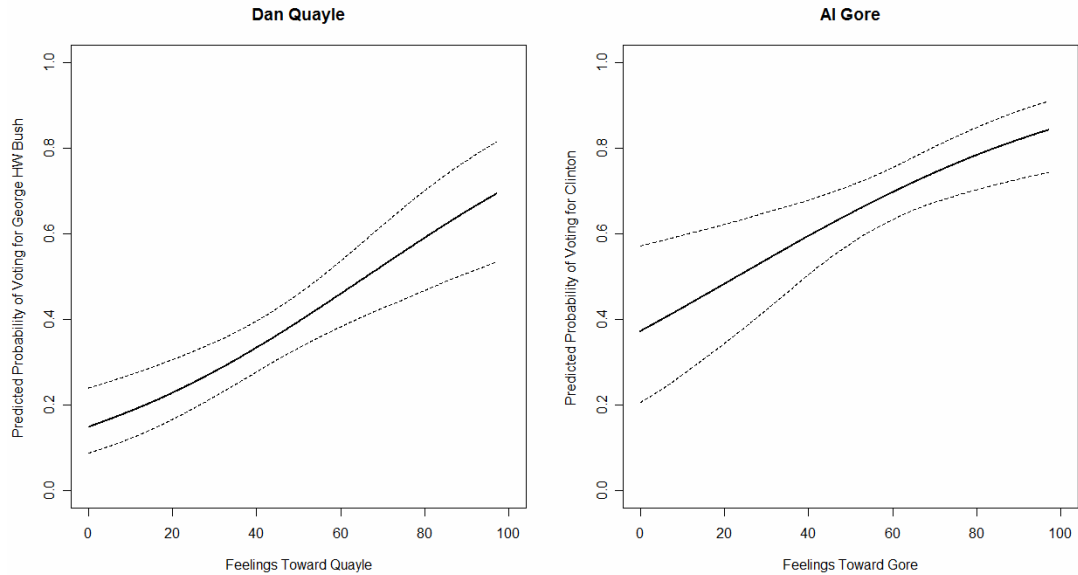
Note: Graphic displays the predicted probabilities of Independents voting for each presidential ticket in the 1984 election based on their feelings toward the vice presidential candidates of that party. Predicted probabilities are estimated with all other continuous variables held at their means. Dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities estimated using the Zelig software package.

On the other hand, Geraldine Ferraro appears to increase the likelihood one will vote for Mondale at a much slower rate. While those who most strongly disliked Ferraro, rating her a zero, were predicted to vote for Mondale 6% (+/- 2%) of the time, those who were neutral towards her, rating her at a 50, were still highly unlikely to vote for Mondale, at rates of 19% (+/- 2%). Surprisingly, even those who reported liking Ferraro at the highest level were only predicted to vote for Mondale 44% (+/- 6%) of the time. While the logistic regression showed Ferraro positively influenced her ticket, her more modest rate of change only ranging 38 total percentage points is perhaps more of a reflection on the strength of the Reagan ticket in relation to

Mondale's. Perhaps there was only so much her unique addition to the Democratic presidential ticket could do in an election where Reagan carried 49 out of the 50 states and won with a convincing 525 Electoral College votes to Mondale's embarrassingly low 13 votes.

Moving on to the 1992 election, Figure 2 displays the influence of Quayle and Gore on voting for George H.W. Bush. First it is important to note that although the sample over all showed that both vice presidential candidates had a positive influence on the race, more Independents indicated they felt favorable towards Gore than did not, and more Independents felt unfavorable towards Quayle than favorable. At the height of Quayle's favorability, the highest predicted probability of an Independent voting for the Republican ticket is only 69% (+/- 7%) and at his lowest rating the predicted probability is a meager 15% (+/- 4%). Independents who felt impartial to Quayle, rating him a fifty, were only predicted to vote for the Republican ticket 40% (+/-3) of the time. Gore experienced almost the same rate of change over time that Quayle did over Independents in the 1992 election. However, Gore's predicted probabilities were considerably higher to start. Those who disliked Gore the most still voted for the Democratic ticket 38% (+/- 9%) of the time. While those Independents who liked him reached their highest levels, most were predicted to vote for the Democratic ticket as often as 84% (+/- 4%) of the time.

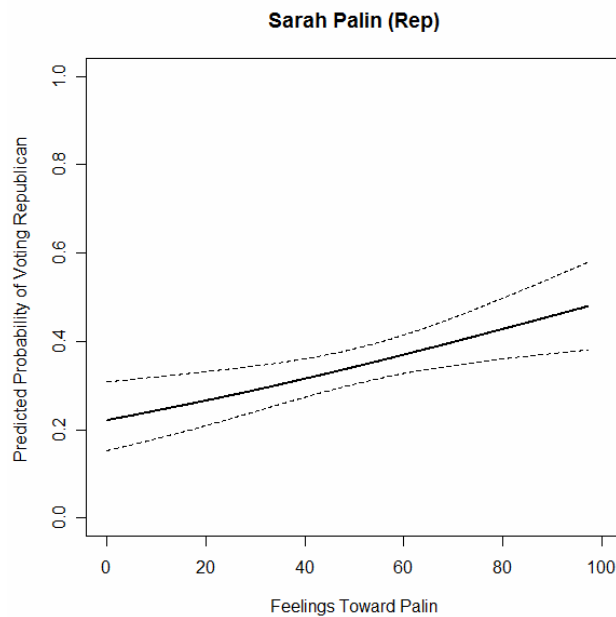
Figure 2: Influence of VP Candidates on Independent Voters in 1992



Note: Graphic displays the predicted probabilities of Independents voting for each presidential ticket in the 1992 election based on their feelings toward the vice presidential candidates of that party. Predicted probabilities are estimated with all other continuous variables held at their means. Dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities estimated using the Zelig software package.

The 2008 election was different than the elections discussed earlier. For starters as was the case in forty percent of the elections studied, only one candidate was influential on voters' decisions. Figure 3 shows the predicted probability for Independents of voting for John McCain across the various levels of satisfaction towards Sarah Palin. Although it is evident that as Palin's likability increases so too does the predicted probability an individual will vote Republican, her influence

Figure 3: Influence of Sarah Palin on Independent Voters in 2008



Note: Graphic displays the predicted probabilities of Independents voting for the Republican presidential ticket in the 2008 election based on their feelings toward the vice presidential candidates. Predicted probabilities are estimated with all other continuous variables held at their means. Dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence bounds. Predicted probabilities estimated using the Zelig software package.

appears less dramatic than say Quayle in 1992 or George H.W. Bush in 1980. On average, Independents who responded with the strongest dislike for Palin were only predicted to vote Republican roughly 22 percent (+/- 4%) of the time. On the other hand, those reporting the highest levels of satisfaction towards her only increased their predicted likelihood of voting Republican by approximately 25%. This modest increase is less than half the overall increase George H.W. Bush experienced in 1980.

Additionally, the highest estimated predicted probability of Independents voting for the Republican ticket rests at Palin's highest satisfaction rating, but still fails to exceed 50%.

Discussion

These results confirm the initial apprehension towards treating both party's vice presidential candidates as one unit across and within elections. Wattenberg's (1995) methodology, treating elections separately while combining feelings towards both vice presidents, misleadingly assumes that in each election vice presidential candidates are influential on voters. These findings, taking into consideration historical differences between vice presidential candidates from 1968 to 2008, suggest that in 40% of the elections studied, such conclusions are simply inaccurate. The graphic displays of the influence of select vice presidential nominees on voters further stress the differences amongst candidates.

These results more accurately depict the wide array of candidates vying for the vice presidency. For example, the 2008 election pitted two very different vice presidential candidates against one another. As an experienced Senator, Joe Biden more accurately fit the stereotypical politician description, but was met by a radically different Republican counterpart. Although Sarah Palin was a near unknown before her nomination, this did not remain the case for long. By the election, nearly twice as many respondents (615:376) indicated they either had no opinion towards Joe Biden or they did not know who he was than responded in this way when asked how they

felt towards Sarah Palin. Arguably Sarah Palin and her family's media exposure far outshined that of the attention Joe Biden received. Although experienced, it appears that Joe Biden was overshadowed by larger personalities within the election, and people simply did not see him as a factor.

This study does have some limitations. For instance, the measure for the vice presidential candidate used to infer a relationship to voter choice is dependent on a feeling thermometer question asking the respondent to rate their feelings toward the vice president on a scale of 0 to 100, negatively to positively. It could be that this measure, although consistent across all elections contained within this study, does not effectively capture evaluations of vice presidents. However, with the controls considered within the study, including affect towards the presidential selections, and the appeal of using such a large secondary data set, this measure still does an adequate job of isolating the impression the vice presidential candidate makes on the ticket.

Yet another concern arises when considering the potential for reciprocal effects between the evaluations of presidential candidates and the vice presidential candidates they chose to join their party's ticket. I believe that by reducing the correlation between the variables through maintaining different measures for affect towards the presidential candidate and satisfaction ratings for the vice presidents with the exception of 2008, I have adequately addressed these concerns for the purpose of

my study. I have shown that variation exists across vice presidential candidates with regards to their influence on voters.

Conclusion

The vice presidency has evolved over the past two centuries and was shaped by the political actors who filled the position throughout the years. As far back as the traditional era, parties and presidential hopefuls made their presidential running mate selections based on the idea that if chosen wisely, a good choice will not harm their party's ticket and might actually help them win the election. While conventional wisdom suggests vice presidents either do not have an impact on voters or potentially hurt a ticket, previously conducted research suggests vice presidents do influence voters. They also show that vice presidential nominees encourage votes in favor of their party over all election years examined. However this research suggests previous methods which combined the influence of both vice presidential candidates and at times election years is not an appropriate methodology. Instead this research supports the idea that considering the vast differences in vice presidential candidates over the years, not all will be influential if treated individually.

Throughout the past forty years, I find that the 1980, 1988, 2000, 2008 presidential elections were all examples of elections in which one vice presidential candidate was a significant influence on voters while the same was not true for their counterpart. When treated as a combined unit in each of these elections, the vice presidents were both considered influential and these conclusions are misleading. When examining the influence of candidates individually, I discover that even within

elections when both candidates are influential, their influence on Independents can vary dramatically. Looking back on the 1984 election is a prime example where Bush was predicted to help his ticket at a far higher rate than Ferraro was estimated to influence Independents. If these two nominees were treated in the aggregate, these differences would be overlooked. Future studies on the influence of vice presidential candidates should be mindful of the variations amongst candidates and should be cautious to not treat them in the aggregate.

Appendix

Table 3: Correlation Relationship Between Feelings Toward Vice Presidential and Presidential Candidates by Party

Election Year	Political Party (Candidates)	Correlation
1968	Republicans (Agnew & Nixon)	0.37
	Democrats (Muskie & Humphrey)	0.43
1972	Republicans (Agnew & Nixon)	0.47
	Democrats (Shriver & McGovern)	0.44
1976	Republicans (Dole & Ford)	0.42
	Democrats (Mondale & Carter)	0.43
1980	Republicans (Bush Sr. & Reagan)	0.28
	Democrats (Mondale & Carter)	0.45
1984	Republicans (Bush Sr. & Reagan)	0.58
	Democrats (Ferraro & Mondale)	0.64 *
1988	Republicans (Quayle & Bush Sr.)	0.37
	Democrats (Bentsen & Dukakis)	0.27
1992	Republicans (Quayle & Bush Sr.)	0.68 *
	Democrats (Gore & Clinton)	0.52
1996	Republicans (Kemp & Dole)	0.41
	Democrats (Gore and Clinton)	0.68 *
2000	Republicans (Cheney & Bush Jr)	0.38
	Democrats (Lieberman & Gore)	0.37
2004	Republicans (Cheney & Bush Jr)	0.69 *
	Democrats (Edwards & Kerry)	0.62 *
2008	Republicans (Palin & McCain)	0.70*
	Democrats (Biden & Obama)	0.65*

Note: Correlations between 0.0 and 0.19 are considered to have a very weak relationship, 0.2 and 0.39 a weak relationship, 0.4 to 0.59 a moderate relationship, 0.6 to 0.79 a strong relationship (denoted with a *), and 0.8 to 1.0 a very strong relationship.

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