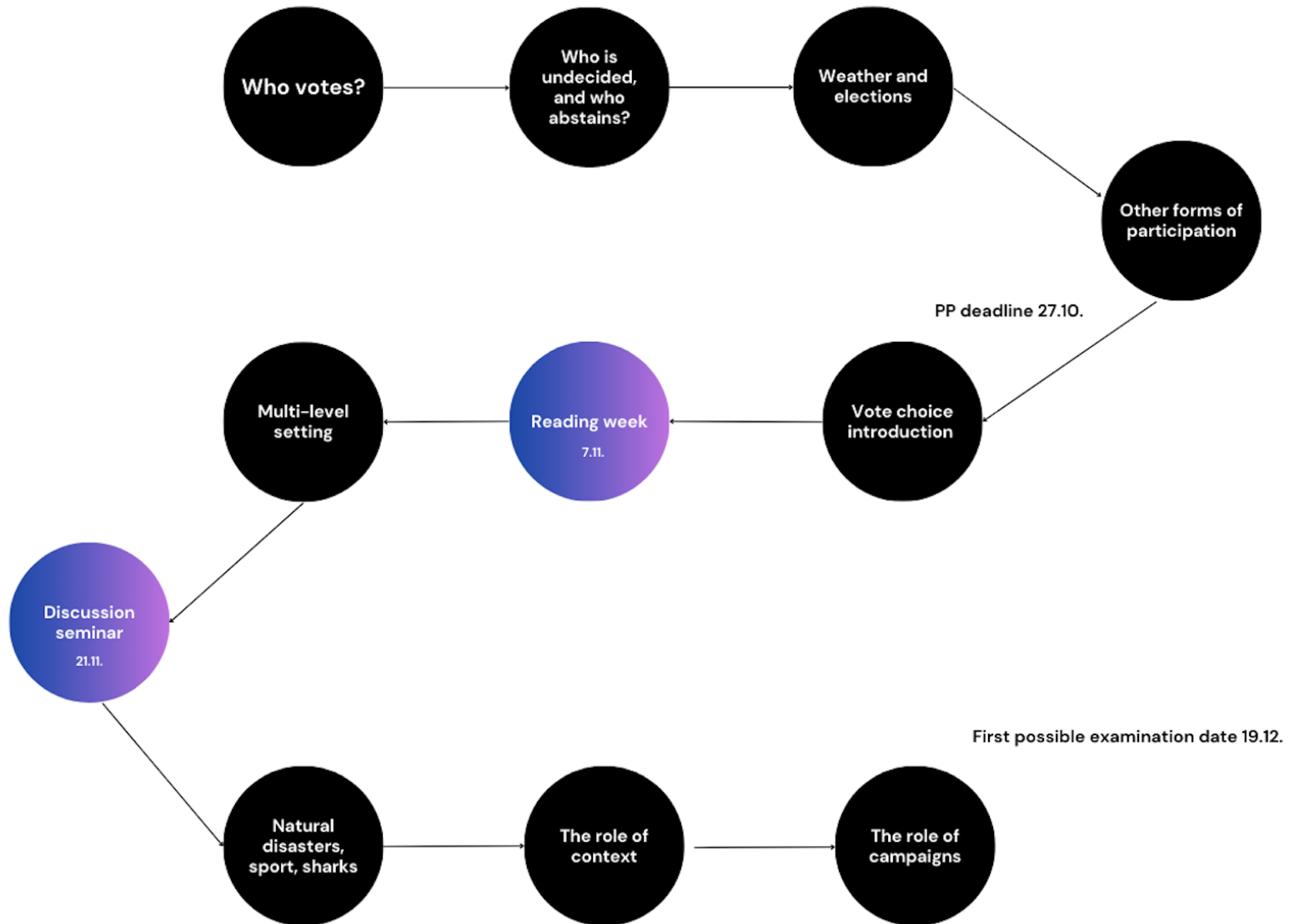


# Elections and electoral behavior



**M U N I**  
**F S S**

# The role of campaigns and polls

Jakub Jusko

# Campaigns

- \$8 billion on federal election campaigns during the 2011–2012 cycle; state and local campaigns costing \$2.8 billion => total recorded spending on the 2012 campaigns cca **\$11 billion**
- Campaigns aim to influence the behaviour of individual citizens, persuading those who might do otherwise to show up at the polls and to make the “right” choice

=> also, when, how, why?

# Campaigns

- Generations of empirical research => campaigns matter (at least some of the time) -> but **"minimal effects" thesis**

⇒ Campaigns only minimally influence the outcomes of elections

⇒ High degree of stability of individual vote preferences during election years (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944)

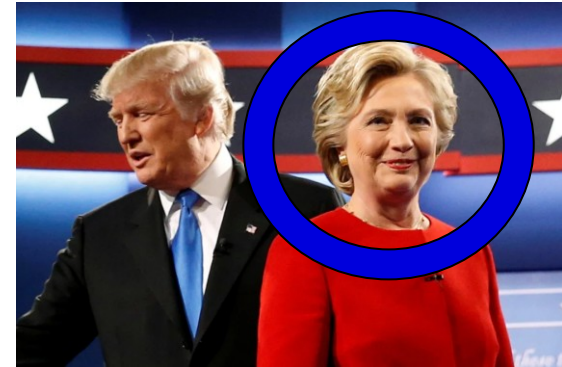
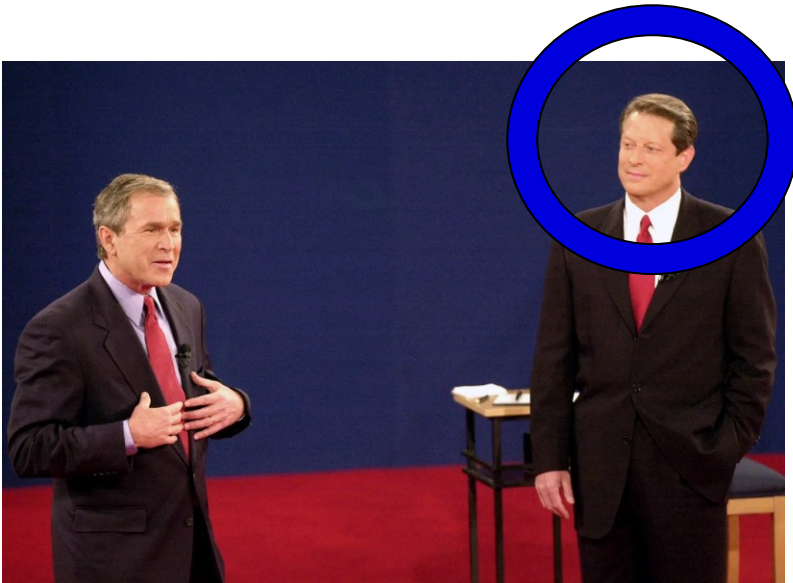
⇒ High degree of partisan stability from one election to other (Campbell et al. 1960)

# Campaigns

- In other words, we can get accuracy by looking at **fundamental conditions** -> state of the economy, ideological positions of candidates before campaigns, distribution of partisans, incumbency
- Challenge to the relevance of the campaign strategies, events, ads

# Campaigns

- If only fundamentals would work ->



# Campaigns

- Campaigns are necessary for the fundamentals to be realized: they “**enlighten**” otherwise uninformed voters about the fundamentals (Gelman and King, 1993)
- **Clarifying** public identity, vision for the future, competent and flexible campaign organisation
- Some campaign effects persist, becoming part of the fundamentals
- Other “shocks” likely to matter only if they occur close to the election (decay theory)
- The issue with the direction and effects of campaign <-> vote choice

# Campaigns

- **Learning**

- Candidates and parties, their names and positions, qualifications, traits, competence,...

- **Agenda setting**

- Limitations of voters for what is important in political universe
- Selective attention to a few issues that appear important at the moment
- The role of candidates/parties for choosing the agenda (with media)

- **Priming**

- a campaign focuses on a particular topic and voters' attitudes about the topic become more strongly linked to their vote choice (Peterson 2015)

⇒ Ability to make voters learn something and set agenda -> **costs something**

⇒ **Role of money** -> studied mostly in the US (challengers vs incumbents)



# Negative campaigns

- **Significantly more memorable and informative than other ads (Lau et al. 2007)**
- No effect on political interest
- Aim: reduce support for the target (yes)  
BUT reduction in support for attacker too
- Not definitive impact on reduction of turnout
- Reduction of political efficacy and trust in government
- But still, good for agenda setting, issue salience (Carson et al. 2020)



# Overall effects

- **Turnout**

- Yes, mostly GOTV (first turnout lecture)

- **Vote choice**

- Voters **reluctant to vote for unfamiliar** candidates/parties (Jacobson 2013)

- Little evidence that campaigns alter basic **predispositions** of voters -> rather they induce them to frame the choice

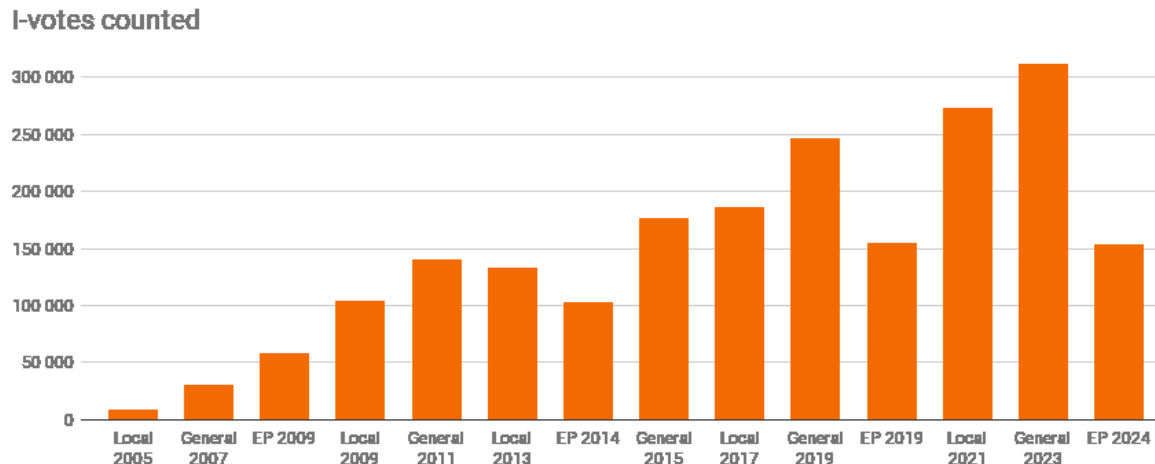
- Mostly **undecided, swing, volatile voters** – changing positions between elections, less polarized opinions of the parties, not enough information or cross-pressures

- Mostly **uncertain** voters (about candidate's position) -> change in perceptions of the candidate's traits (Peterson 2015)

# Estonia case

- Trumm (2022) – 2019 Estonia elections

- Both online and offline campaigns have (similar) strong positive effects on candidates' electoral performance (in traditional and i-votes)
- Online campaigns have become effectively as relevant as offline campaigns in influencing candidates' electoral fortunes



# Polls

- Polls as an inherent part of modern election campaigns
  - media – commenting the results
  - parties – publicize any favourable results -> more money for campaigns
- Some **TV stations** base their decision to invite candidates/parties on poll results
- Some countries **forbid** the polls some time before elections
- The role of **accuracy** of “predictions”



# Polls effects

- **Bandwagon effect**

-voters rally their support towards the leading alternative

- **Underdog effect**

-voters sway their support towards the trailing alternative

⇒ No definitive conclusion which effect is dominant

⇒ Agranov (2018) – when close elections -> bandwagon; when landslide victory -> underdog

⇒ Daoust et al. (2020) – 2015 Canadian election -> being exposed to polls is not associated with voter's likelihood of changing their vote choice, does not affect the propensity to turn out, but improves the ability to forecast the winner

- **Strategic voting**

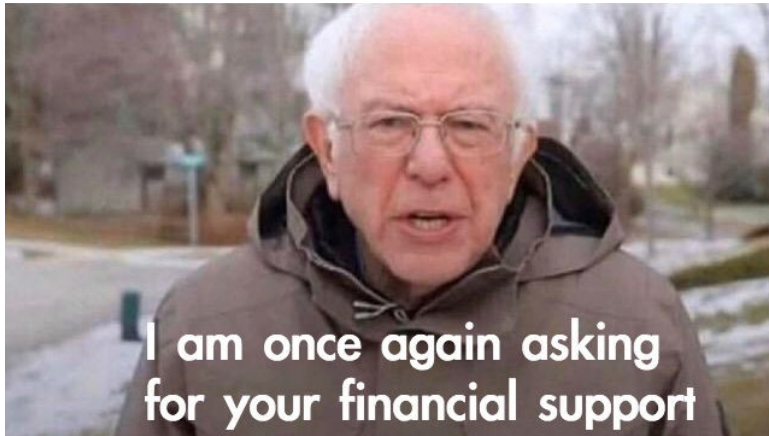
- Voting for less-preferred option to make their vote more effective (not sincere voting) or help prevent a worse outcome



### Obama's Win ... In A Word

| #  | <u>Obama Voters</u> | #   | <u>McCain Voters</u> |
|----|---------------------|-----|----------------------|
| 87 | Happy               | 139 | Disappointed         |
| 71 | Hope/Hopeful        | 30  | Not surprised        |
| 53 | Excited             | 27  | Expected             |
| 46 | Ecstatic            | 21  | Surprised            |
| 44 | Elated              | 18  | Hope/Hopeful         |
| 44 | Relieved            | 18  | Scared               |
| 36 | Great               | 15  | Fear/Fearful         |
| 32 | Change              | 11  | Historic             |
| 30 | Pleased             | 10  | Satisfied            |
| 26 | Satisfied           | 10  | Shocked              |
| 21 | Good                | 9   | Concerned            |
| 20 | Historic            | 8   | Fine                 |
| 19 | Thrilled            | 7   | Disgusted            |
| 13 | Surprised           | 7   | OK                   |
| 10 | Glad                | 6   | Terrified            |
| 10 | Joy                 | 6   | Worried              |
| 9  | Amazed              | 5   | Apprehensive         |
| 8  | Proud               | 5   | Good luck            |
| 7  | Awesome             | 5   | Happy                |
| 7  | Fantastic           |     |                      |
| 7  | Optimistic          |     |                      |
| 6  | Delighted           |     |                      |
|    | Hallelujah          |     |                      |
|    | Jubilant            |     |                      |
|    | Thankful            |     |                      |

e: Figures show numbers of respondents who  
 red each word out of 767 Obama voters and  
 McCain voters. These numbers are *not*  
 percentages.



**MUNI**  
**FSS**

# Summary

- The role of campaigns in learning, enlightenment, (possibly) vote choice
- Polls as part of the campaign for media, candidates, voters
- Bandwagon and underdog effects
- Strategic voting

# Course summary

- Different models of turnout
- Different factors impacting undecidedness – sociodemographic, partisanship, cross-pressures, political sophistication, strategic considerations, contextual factors
- Other formal and informal ways of participation – referendum, petitions, demonstrations
- General vote choice predispositions - ideology, class, religion, SES, party identification
- Multilevel setting of elections – surge and decline, referendum, balancing, SOE theory
- Seemingly unrelated events - natural disasters, sports matches, life-changing events, economic situation and the role of rationality
- Seemingly unrelated events during election day – weather, ballot information, ballot order, voting environment
- Campaigns and their effects



Next...



**My first reaction  
when I see  
the question paper**

# Literatute

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