are recoded to a "pseudo" probability scale, where 0 is no chance of winning and 1 is certain to win.

7. We believe but do not know for certain that parallel actions to identify PCs are being taken by state and local officials, particularly to locate candidates for seats in state legislatures whose partisan control is in doubt.

7

Following the (Soft) Money: Party Advertisements in American Elections

MICHAEL FRANZ AND KENNETH GOLDSTEIN

In 1992, the Democratic party raised over $36 million dollars in soft money. In 2000, the party raised over $245 million. Similarly, the Republican party raised almost $50 million in 1992, and almost $250 million in 2000.[1] Joe Andrews, the former Democratic National Committee chairman, noted that Democratic party fund-raisers pulled in over $21 million dollars in soft money in the full year before the 2000 presidential election contest.[2] Such a permanent campaign mentality fueled the party's electoral campaigns across the country during the most contentious and balanced election cycle in recent memory. For many, such figures stand as conclusive evidence of what party scholars have been arguing for over a decade—political parties are back.

Less is known, though, about how parties are spending this new influx of capital and to what effect. The Federal Election Commission requires the detailed reporting of party contributions to candidates and of coordinated expenditures with candidates, but the disclosure of how soft money is spent is not required.[3] Opponents of campaign finance reform assert that soft money is being used in ways that build a party character within the electorate, as well as to establish an organizational infrastructure. Others counter that soft money is being used to win elections with the goal of gaining political power; they argue that party building is more an illusion than a reality. This chapter makes use of a unique source of data about television commercials to examine the role of party ads in the 1998 and 2000 elections. Campaign advertising has become one of the most important means of transmitting political messages, and parties are using their resurgent organizational agility to fund their advertising efforts. These data allow us to explore from a new perspective the murky question of what parties are doing with soft money.

Party Money: The Role of Soft Money

Parties can use money to aid candidates in three ways: direct contributions to a candidate's campaign, coordinated expenditures with candidates, and independent efforts known as soft money (or nonfederal money). Direct contributions are subject to the limits established in the 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). Limits on coordinated expenditures, also established in FECA, were recently upheld in the 2001 Supreme Court decision *FEC v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee,* 533 U.S. 431 (2001)—the case is known as Colorado Republican II; Colorado Republican I is *Colorado Republican Party v. FEC,* 518 U.S. 604 (1996).

Since the mid–1990s, though, when the courts upheld the unlimited use of independent expenditures in Colorado Republican I, soft money has become the weapon of choice for the Democratic and Republican parties. So long as parties avoid "express advocacy" of candidates (the definition of which was established in a footnote to the Supreme Court's 1976 decision in *Buckley v. Valeo,* 421 U.S. 1 (1976), parties are free to spend unlimited funds. Such expenditures are intended for activities that "build the party."

Table 7.1 shows the soft-money receipts by each party's national, congressional, and senatorial campaign committee since 1992, the first year the Federal Election Commission required full reporting of soft money donations (disclosure of how the money is spent is not required). The sharp increases in soft-money receipts are apparent, most prominently among the congressional and senatorial committees. For example, in 1992 the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) raised just over $500,000; in 2000, the DSCC raised over $63,000,000. In recent years the two parties have established a division of labor between national and legislative campaign committees whereby the national committee handles presidential contests and transfers of funds to state parties and the legislative committees handle House and Senate contests.

The recent debate over campaign finance reform, and the McCain-Feingold legislation, which seeks to ban the use of soft money, has spawned discussion of the role of soft money in contemporary elections.[4] There is little doubt that soft money is being used to directly support candidates. There is little doubt that parties are using soft money to gain political power. In this sense, soft money is proof of the parties' adaptation to a political environment that once threatened their legitimacy.

There is a question, however, as to how much parties use soft money to convey a party agenda and establish a stronger party-in-the-electorate. The FEC does not require full disclosure of soft-money outlays, and consequently there are limitations as to what scholars can find out and the confidence with which they can make broad claims about the ways soft

Table 7.1 Soft-Money Receipts

	2000	*1998*	*1996*	*1994*	*1992*
Democrats					
National committee	$136,563,419	$56,966,353	$101,905,186	$43,923,516	$31,356,076
Senatorial campaign comm.	$63,717,982	$25,880,538	$14,176,392	$372,448	$566,111
Congressional campaign comm.	$56,702,023	$16,865,410	$12,340,824	$5,113,343	$4,368,980
Total	$245,202,519	$92,811,927	$123,877,924	$49,143,460	$36,256,667
Republicans					
National committee	$166,207,843	$74,805,286	$113,127,010	$44,870,758	$35,936,945
Senatorial campaign comm.	$44,652,709	$37,866,845	$29,395,329	$5,582,013	$9,064,167
Congressional campaign comm.	$47,295,736	$26,914,05	$18,530,773	$7,371,097	$6,076,321
Total	$249,861,645	$131,615,116	$138,199,706	$ 52,522,763	$49,787,433

Source: Federal Election Commission.

money is used. Soft money's most ardent supporters tout its role in rebuilding political parties and infusing excitement about politics within the electorate. For example, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has emerged as one of the strongest defenders of soft money. He argues that soft money is vital in helping political parties perform a crucial task in American politics: "smoothing ideological edges and promoting citizen participation. The two major parties are the big tents where multitudes of individuals and groups with narrow agendas converge to promote candidates and broad philosophies about the role of government in our society" (*New York Times*, April 1, 2001, p. 17).

McConnell's assertions imply that parties are designed to foster a party identity within the electorate; that parties have some higher motive than gaining political power. More specifically, McConnell's defense of soft money is premised on the claim that soft money performs a function in elections that candidate money does not—that soft money spurs participation; makes elections more competitive; allows the party to convey a unified party message; and provides a forum for new and often-ignored ideas. Fortunately, such claims are empirical questions. What exactly do parties do in contemporary elections? Is there evidence that parties are in fact using soft money in the manner that opponents of reform claim?

Or are the reformers right? Are parties in fact simply focusing their energies and their soft money solely on helping candidates win elections? That is, is party soft money simply *more* of the same money, as opposed to *different* money? In the end, if the evidence indicates that parties care less about establishing a strong base than about simply putting candidates in office, we will acknowledge that the parties' chief goal has always been winning elections; the use of soft money and party advertisements is simply the modern-day means by which parties gain power.

Because both major parties mostly use soft money for campaign advertisements, the spending of soft money is particularly difficult to track. In the past, analysis of campaign advertisements has been somewhat problematic. Some scholars have gathered data through the purchasing of advertising records from candidates (Shaw 1999). Such data, however, do not contain information concerning the content of the advertisements, nor do the records report airings of party and interest group ads. Others have obtained advertising information by visiting television stations directly and asking them for their records (Magleby 2001). But the number of stations across the country makes this style of data collection impractical for comprehensively examining an election cycle's advertising content.

Now, a new source of data on campaign advertising is opening the door to a more systematic analysis of party influence in American elections. By examining the type of party ads and their distribution across

elections and election contexts, scholars can begin to understand the full impact of the party's most recent adaptation to the political environment.

The Advertising Data

The data on campaign advertisements for the 1998 and 2000 election cycles include two types of information: frequency data and content data. Frequency data are a record of when ads aired and in which markets. A commercial firm, Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG), collected this set of frequency data.[5] CMAG has "Ad Detectors" in each of the top 75 media markets, and these detectors track advertisements on the four major broadcast networks and 25 national cable networks.[6]

It is interesting to note that the United States Navy originally developed this technology with the intention of tracking Soviet navy vessels by measuring and recording the unique sound patterns of Soviet submarines. CMAG now uses the technology to track campaign advertising by listening for unique sound patterns in television advertisements. The system's software recognizes the electronic seams between programming and advertising and identifies the "digital fingerprints" of specific advertisements. When the system does not recognize the fingerprints of a particular commercial spot, the advertisement is captured and downloaded. Thereafter, the system automatically recognizes and logs that particular commercial wherever and whenever it airs.

The frequency data are extremely accurate. To ascertain the accuracy of the data, project staff at the University of Wisconsin–Madison traveled to a number of television stations and viewed their advertising logs. In every case, when the CMAG data indicate that an ad aired, the television logs confirm the airing to the minute. On the other hand, estimates of the cost of an ad should be regarded with caution, for they surely *underestimate* the amount of money spent by the sponsor. CMAG estimates the cost of an ad buy on the basis of the market and the cost of a regular advertisement in a particular time slot. In the heat of an election, however, television stations tend to overcharge parties and candidates. To confirm this, we compared the logs for the television stations we visited with the CMAG estimate of the cost of the spot. In almost every case, the CMAG data understated how much the sponsor spent for the ad.

The data set also contains a content code for each unique advertisement. CMAG provided a storyboard for each ad, and students at Arizona State University and the University of Wisconsin coded each storyboard.[7] The storyboard contains transcripts of all audio and a still of every fourth second of video. Coders were asked to determine the advertisement's tone, purpose, sponsorship, and even commonly used adjectives, among a number of other things. Some of the criteria were clearly very objective

(Did the ad mention the candidate? Did the ad urge voters to contact someone?), whereas other criteria were more subjective (Is the ad positive, negative, or contrasting in tone? "Contrasting" refers to an ad that mentions both the favored and opposing candidates and compares their policy and political stands).[8]

To create the data set, these coded data were merged to the larger data set of when each ad aired. Thus, the completed data set for each election cycle contains information on when each ad aired, as well as the focus and message of the ad. Consequently, every time an ad aired during the campaign, it was entered into the data set. If an ad aired 4,000 times, it has 4,000 entries. In the final data set, every entry stands for one airing of one ad, containing information on the date, time, and location of the ad (meaning the media market in which it was aired), as well as the list of codes concerning the content of the ad.

Party Advertising in the 1998 and 2000 Elections

Overview

The years 1998 and 2000 represent very different electoral environments. The presidential election in 2000 guaranteed that the airwaves would be packed with hundreds of thousands more campaign advertisements. In addition, the two-year gap between 1998 and 2000 allowed political operatives more time to master the still-developing and ever-growing game of soft-money fund-raising. Because the use of soft money became most prevalent in the late 1990s following Colorado I, the court case that upheld unlimited expenditures by parties, parties have had only a few years to understand the electoral implications of this legal blank check. In 1998, there were 302,344 political advertisements—a combination of candidate ads, party ads, candidate and party coordinated expenditures, and interest group–sponsored advertisements. By 2000 this had jumped to 970,410. Of the almost 1 million ads aired in 2000, 93 percent had an electoral objective; thus, only 7 percent of all ads aired in 2000 (about 62,000) were focused *only* on issue advocacy. In 1998, a little more than 3 percent (about 9,500 ads) were solely devoted to issue advocacy.

Table 7.2 shows the amount of money spent on candidate, party, and interest-group advertisements in the presidential, Senate, and House general election contests for 2000. As the numbers demonstrate, the parties clearly played a dominant role in these elections. The Democrats spent over $81,000,000, and the Republicans over $80,000,000 in 2000; looking beyond the parity in these aggregate numbers, we see that the Republican party spent more in the presidential contest, but the Democrats took the lead in the Senate and House races. These numbers should be regarded with caution, however; they surely *underestimate* the amount of money spent, as noted before.

Table 7.2 Expenditures for Advertising in 2000 General Election

	Presidential Race	*Senate Races*	*House Races*
Democratic candidates	$23,986,251[a]	$66,577,515	$43,429,993
Republican candidates	$16,186,159[b]	$63,178,384	$36,016,296
Democratic party	$35,697,348	$21,720,947	$24,026,562
Republican party	$45,847,137	$15,787,645	$18,687,788
Pro-Democratic IGs[c]	$12,412,894	$4,222,031	$10,685,012
Pro-Republican IGs[c]	$2,583,292	$6,097,535	$14,034,181

Source: Federal Election Commission.
[a] Al Gore; these numbers are for general election candidates only.
[b] George Bush; these numbers are for general election candidates only.
[c] IGs = interest groups.

In both 1998 and 2000, political parties aired solely electoral ads, meaning there were no party-sponsored spots that were solely aired with the intention of relating party-based issues. Party ads accounted for 34 percent of all campaign spots in federal contests in 2000 (about 230,000 ads) and 15 percent in 1998 (about 45,000 ads). Clearly, political parties quickly learned to take advantage of the new advertising environment; they aired more than five times the number of advertisements in 2000 than in 1998—no doubt owing to the high stakes of the 2000 election, where each party saw the possibility of gaining unified control of the House, Senate, and executive branch.

For the most part, however, parties played the same essential role in both election cycles. More specifically, political parties have mastered the ability to play the bad guy: In 1998, 62 percent of party ads were negative, compared to only 20 percent of candidate ads. In 2000, 45 percent of party ads were negative, compared to only 16 percent of candidate ads. At the same time, 55 percent of candidate ads were positive in 1998 and in 2000. One could argue that candidates and parties have developed a fairly sophisticated game of good cop/bad cop.

Nonetheless, this distinction remains somewhat curious—in that party ads and candidate ads are nearly indistinguishable in content. A voter would be hard-pressed to distinguish between a party ad and a candidate ad beyond the often indecipherable tag line at the end of the advertisement. Furthermore, a vast majority of all campaign advertisements chose to avoid mentioning the party label. For example, in 1998, 88 percent of candidate ads did not mention either the candidate's party or his opponent's. Eighty-three percent of party ads failed to mention a party label. The percentages are even more striking from the 2000 cycle, where 95 percent of candidate ads avoided mention of a political party and 92 percent of party ads eschewed an overt party identification.

Consider the text from the following two advertisements:

AD 1

Gore: George Bush and I actually agree on accountability in education.
Announcer: The Gore Plan begins with accountability.
Gore: We need smaller classes and better-trained teachers.
Announcer: One hundred thousand more teachers to lower class size. Increase discipline in learning.
Gore: We need help for middle-class families to help pay college tuition by making it tax-deductible.
Announcer: A ten thousand-dollar deduction every year for college tuition.
Gore: We are making education the number one priority.

AD 2

Gore: Strengthening education begins with us, not the government. Parents simply have to get involved and take responsibility to make sure their children study and learn. But government has to take responsibility for what it can do. Fix failing schools, reduce the class size, set higher standards for students and for teachers. We're in an information age. We have a responsibility to make sure our schools are the very best in the entire world.

One would be hard-pressed to correctly identify ad number 1 as an ad paid for by the Democratic party and ad number 2 as an ad paid for by the Gore campaign.

Table 7.3 Tone of 1998 House and Senate Advertisements (No. of Ads)

	House			Senate		
Tone	*Candidate Ads*	*Party Ads*	*Interest-Groups Ads*	*Candidate Ads*	*Party Ads*	*Interest-Groups Ads*
Positive	62,509	6,530	1,582	63,912	5,379	77
(%)	(64)	(36)	(18)	(51)	(22)	(11)
Negative	16,263	9,618	6,142	29,913	17,671	233
(%)	(16)	(54)	(70)	(24)	(71)	(32)
Contrast	21,383	1,805	1,084	32,017	1,923	416
(%)	(20)	(10)	(12)	(25)	(7)	(57)

Table 7.4 Tone of 2000 House and Senate Advertisements (No. of Ads)

	House			Senate		
Tone	*Candidate Ads*	*Party Ads*	*Interest-Groups Ads*	*Candidate Ads*	*Party Ads*	*Interest-Groups Ads*
Positive	64,897	7,336	12,465	77,919	6,001	4,981
(%)	(52)	(14)	(31)	(57)	(11)	(38)
Negative	23,204	35,991	25,900	21,457	8,075	7,028
(%)	(19)	(68)	(65)	(16)	(53)	(53)
Contrast	35,685	9,317	1,439	7,622	18,946	1,170
(%)	(29)	(18)	(4)	(27)	(36)	(9)

What does this imply? First of all, one could argue that the difference in message tone across candidate and party advertisements is evidence that parties are increasingly acting as money-laundering organizations whose major purpose is to allow candidates to avoid being labeled "negative campaigners." Second, the absence of a party label on most party ads (whose lawful justification is, after all, to "build the party") stands as interesting evidence for the new role of parties in elections. If parties are powerful players in politics by virtue of their use of soft money, why are parties avoiding the party label? Indeed, the organizational strength of parties is clearly not going to waste; more than likely the intention is not to establish strong partisans, but to win elections and gain power.

In the next two subsections, we analyze party, candidate, and interest-group advertising activity in the 1998 and 2000 House and Senate elections, and then give an overview of the distribution of advertising in the most recent presidential election.

House and Senate Elections

In 2000, 479,079 ads were aired for primary and general election candidates for House and Senate seats. The effect of the presidential election and the stakes of the particular 2000 election cycle account for the substantial increase from the 302,377 ads aired for House and Senate elections in 1998, prompting in particular a substantial increase in the airing of party and interest-group advertisements. Tables 7.3 and 7.4 show 1998 and 2000 candidate, party, and interest-group ads for Senate and the House elections in terms of tone taken by the ads.

As can be seen, candidates clearly took the high road in the majority of their own ads (meaning the majority of candidate ads were positive in tone), whereas party ads were mostly negative. Note, however, the sheer increase in the volume of party ads in 2000. While the number of candidate ads remained fairly similar in both election cycles, parties aired four times as many negative ads in House elections in 2000, and party negative ads in Senate elections increased by nearly 60 percent. This is indicative of a substantial increase in fund-raising and organization in the two years from 1998 to 2000.

Note also the increased role of interest groups. Groups also aired mostly negative ads in both cycles (except in Senate elections in 1998, where over half of the group-sponsored ads were coded as contrast ads), but the main story is in the increase in the *number* of ads. In 1998, groups aired 8,808 ads in House elections and practically ignored Senate races, airing a total of 726 ads. In 2000, however, interest groups aired 39,804 ads in House elections and 13,179 ads in Senate elections.

The overall pattern of party ads eschewing the party label holds for the House and Senate elections in 1998 and 2000. Tables 7.5 and 7.6 highlight the number and percentage of candidate, party, and interest-group advertisements that mentioned a party label (of either the favored or opposing candidate). The overwhelming majority of all ads did not mention the party in any fashion.

Clearly, political parties desire to win elections. However, if party money were being used mostly to lay a foundation for a stronger partisan electorate, or if money were being spent to convey a unified party message, one might expect more party ads in noncompetitive races. We do not see that here. With 435 House elections and over 30 Senate elections every two years, even the most well funded parties and interest groups must spend money where they are likely to receive the greatest return. And because the Republicans in both 1998 and 2000 did not have secure majorities in either branch of Congress, it is no surprise that the competitive elections received the most attention from parties and groups. Table 7.7 highlights the difference in candidate, party, and group ads in competitive and noncompetitive House and Senate elections in 2000.[9] It is no surprise that candidates air more advertisements in competitive elections (given the heightened political environment), but the numbers show that parties and groups virtually ignored non-competitive races.

At the same time, Table 7.8 shows the tone of ads used in House and Senate competitive and noncompetitive races. Interestingly, candidates in both competitive and noncompetitive races steered clear of negative advertisements; nonetheless, there was a difference in the tone of ads. More specifically, candidates in competitive races shifted the tone of advertisements from positive to contrast—as noted, contrast ads mention both the favored and opposing candidates and compare the policy and political

Table 7.5 Number of 1998 House and Senate Advertisements and Mentions of Party

	House			Senate		
Tone	*Candidate*	*Party*	*Interest-Groups*	*Candidate*	*Party*	*Interest-Groups*
Party not mentioned	88,319	12,447	5,528	114,642	24,231	1,027
(%)	(87)	(70)	(63)	(90)	(95)	(100)
Party mentioned	13,606	5,336	3,208	13,132	1,148	0
(%)	(13)	(30)	(37)	(10)	(5)	(0)

Table 7.6 Number of 2000 House and Senate Advertisements and Mentions of Party

	House			Senate		
Tone	*Candidate*	*Party*	*Interest-Groups*	*Candidate*	*Party*	*Interest-Groups*
Party not mentioned	115,252	49,306	39,563	135,835	49,238	12,919
(%)	(93)	(94)	(99)	(99)	(93)	(98)
Party mentioned	8,872	3,338	322	1,184	3,750	260
(%)	(7)	(6)	(1)	(1)	(7)	(2)

stands of the candidates. A fairly uncontroversial hypothesis would be that contrast ads tend to be negative in tone, in that they are designed to make the opposing candidate look bad when compared to the favored candidate; nonetheless, they are clearly not *as* negative as the pure negative spot because at least the appearance of a genuine issue comparison between candidates is maintained. Thus, it appears that candidates who aired contrasting ads were clearly trying to avoid the stigma of a being negative campaigners, and even when the stakes were high (as they are in competitive elections), candidates avoided a purely negative attack on the opposition.

As Table 7.8 makes clear, candidates enabled parties to go on the offensive. For example, although parties did not air many ads in noncompetitive House races in 2000, the distribution of ads across tone was not as apparent as in competitive House elections, where party ads were overwhelmingly negative. Although ads were mostly negative in both competitive and noncompetitive Senate races, there was a higher percentage of positive party ads in noncompetitive races than in competitive contests.

It is clear that parties and interest groups favored competitive contests, but what of the dynamics across elections? When a competitive race in one year becomes noncompetitive in the next contest, do parties and groups now ignore the race? A story of party building might expect parties to continue airing ads in races no longer featuring a competitive contest—so as to build on the foundation built during the competitive contest. Indeed, to understand the intention behind party expenditures it is important to examine them over time. One could argue that parties do not spend money in noncompetitive races because either the loyalty of the base to one's own party is already established or it is already firmly entrenched with the opposition. A competitive contest, however, indicates that a district is in play and that the base is not firmly behind one party. If parties desire to establish themselves, they would undoubtedly have to continue cultivating the base after the election.

David Magleby (2001) and his associates have extensively documented the activity of groups and parties in competitive contests in 1998 and 2000. We briefly examined four races that were listed as highly competitive in 1998 but noncompetitive in 2000 and that were featured in Magleby's analysis. For each race we examined the candidate, party, and group ads aired in the major media market(s). Magleby's analysis is more comprehensive in that it examines a number of electoral activities (television, radio, print media, etc.), and it also contains some information on advertisements in smaller markets not covered by the CMAG data. The brief analysis offered here, however, will allow us to see what parties do when the race is no longer competitive.

In 1998, Iowa's 3rd district featured a highly competitive contest between Leonard Boswell, an incumbent Democrat, and the Republican Larry McKibben. Boswell received support from his party in the form of 309 ad airings in the Des Moines media market, in addition to 129 spots by organized interests. Republican party officials aired almost 500 spots for McKibben, more than the candidate aired for his own campaign. In 2000 the contest was not competitive. The parties aired zero ads in the Des Moines market. Boswell won again.

The 1998 competitive race for New Mexico's 3rd district was between an incumbent Republican, Bill Redmond, and the Democrat Tom Udall.

Table 7.7 Number of Advertisements in 2000 House and Senate Elections by Competitiveness

	House		Senate	
	Noncompetitive	*Competitive*	*Noncompetitive*	*Competitive*
Candidate ads	48,347	75,303	42,358	93,048
Party ads	1,147	51,497	7,362	45,660
Interest-groups ads	5,289	34,696	2,053	11,126

Table 7.8 Number of Advertisements in 2000 House and Senate Elections by Competitiveness and Tone

		House		Senate	
		Non-competitive	*Competitive*	*Non-competitive*	*Competitive*
Candidate ads	Positive	30,377 (63%)	34,436 (46%)	32,406 (77%)	44,657 (48%)
	Negative	8,403 (17%)	14,524 (19%)	5,085 (12%)	6,179 (17%)
	Contrast	9,324 (20%)	26,117 (35%)	4,846 (11%)	32,212 (35%)
Party ads	Positive	571 (50%)	6,765 (13%)	2,284 (31%)	3,717 (8%)
	Negative	319 (28%)	35,672 (69%)	3,993 (54%)	24,082 (53%)
	Contrast	257 (22%)	9,060 (18%)	1,085 (15%)	17,861 (39%)
Interest-groups ads	Positive	2,275 (44%)	10,190 (29%)	964 (47%)	4,017 (36%)
	Negative	2,833 (55%)	23,067 (66%)	1,089 (53%)	5,939 (53%)
	Contrast	0 (0%)	1,439 (5%)	0 (0%)	1,170 (11%)

Note: When the number of positive, negative, and contrast ads in each of the above categories (i.e., House, noncompetitive, candidate ads) are added up, there may be slight differences between the total and the number in the previous table. This is because the numbers in the table above exclude the handful of ads that coders could not identify as having a tone.

Table 7.9 1998: Top Issues in Candidate and Party Ads, House and Senate Races (No. of Mentions)

Democratic		Republican	
Candidate Ads	*Party Ads*	*Candidate Ads*	*Party Ads*
House Races	**House Races**	**House Races**	**House Races**
Education (8,539)	Social Security (751)	Taxes (8,164)	Taxes (4,559)
Political record (4,974)	Education (595)	Social Security (5,420)	Honesty (1,973)
Social Security (4,326)	Crime (498)	Background (4,285)	Education (1,855)
Health care (4,138)	Minimum wage (367)	Education (4,008)	Clinton (1,397)
Background (3,135)	Child care (225)	Honesty (3,298)	Crime (944)
Senate Races	**Senate Races**	**Senate Races**	**Senate Races**
Education (9,854)	Health care (1,898)	Taxes (11,270)	Social Security (2,644)
Health care (6,756)	Education (1,597)	Education (8,418)	Taxes (2,239)
Honesty (4,822)	Medicare (1,593)	Political record (4,002)	Medicare (905)
Taxes (3,841)	Minimum wage (1,238)	Attendance record (3,839)	Political record (725)
Social Security (3,517)	Political record (974)	Honesty (3,833)	Trade (565)

Source: Federal Election Commission.

The Udall campaign aired 800 ads, almost twice as many ads as the Redmond campaign, in the Albuquerque media market. The Democratic party basically stayed out of the race—owing to money issues and the sense that Udall was ahead (Magleby 2001). The Republican party, on the other hand, aired almost 700 ads for Redmond, enough to make up Udall's advantage in candidate ads. Nonetheless, with the Democratic party sitting out the ad race, pro-Udall interest groups aired almost 800 ads, giving him an upper hand that helped him to win the race. In 2000 the race was considered noncompetitive, and both parties and interest groups stayed out of the race, airing zero ads.

In 1998, Ohio's 6th district was listed as a competitive contest between the incumbent Democrat, Ted Strickland, and the Republican Nancy Hollister. Ads were tracked by CMAG in the Cincinnati, Charleston, and Columbus media markets. The candidates showed near parity in the airing of candidate ads, but there was a huge presence of Republican party ads, 1,319, motivated by the belief that Strickland was vulnerable. Though pro-Strickland interest groups attempted to make up for the meager Democratic party presence, they were dwarfed by the Republican party presence. Nonetheless, Strickland prevailed. In 2000 the race listed as noncompetitive, and neither party aired any ads in the district.

In 1998, the race for Wisconsin's open 1st district was between an incumbent Democrat, Lydia Spottswood, and the Republican Paul Ryan. Ryan had almost twice as many candidate ads as Spottswood, and there was rough parity in party ads—250 airings for Spottswood and 256 airings for Ryan in the Milwaukee media market. Pro-Democratic interest groups made up some of the difference for Spottswood, airing over 200 spots, but the Ryan campaign, helped by a strong Republican presence, took the seat. In 2000 the race was noncompetitive, and both the Democratic and Republican parties ignored it.

Clearly, parties are highly pragmatic in soft money expenditures. There is little indication thus far that parties use money to cultivate a party following. Their goal is to win elections, pure and simple.

Finally, Tables 7.9 and 7.10 compare the top issue mentions in candidate and party ads for Democrats and Republicans in the 1998 and 2000 House and Senate elections. If a party were attempting to use its advertisements to convey a unified political message, we may expect to see similar issues in House and Senate party ads. For the 2000 elections, the Democrats appear to be unified in their message, having the same top five issues for House and Senate elections, but the Republicans in 1998 and in 2000, and the Democrats in 1998 appear to have no consistent message across House and Senate elections. Thus, one might argue that parties are using soft money to air ads that are race-specific; that is, parties are using their advertisements to help candidates in specific contests, not to project generalized messages about themselves.

Table 7.10 2000: Top Issues in Candidate and Party Ads, House and Senate Races (No. of Mentions)

Democratic: Candidate Ads	Democratic: Party Ads	Republican: Candidate Ads	Republican: Party Ads
House Races	**House Races**	**House Races**	**House Races**
Health care (11,789)	Health Care (5,515)	Background (10,580)	Taxes (4,603)
Background (6,593)	Education (3,268)	Taxes (6,916)	Honesty (3,208)
Education (5,861)	Social Security (2,784)	Education (6,690)	Education (2,525)
Medicare (4,439)	Medicare (2,733)	Social Security (4,792)	Background (1,889)
Social Security (4,235)	Political Record (1,911)	Health Care (4,761)	Gov't Spending (1,536)
Senate Races	**Senate Races**	**Senate Races**	**Senate Races**
Health care (10,143)	Health Care (6,223)	Political Record (9,965)	Political Record (4,550)
Education (9,760)	Political Record (3,813)	Education (8,304)	Taxes (3,729)
Political record (7,181)	Social Security (3,755)	Social Security (5,565)	Social Security (2,739)
Background (5,677)	Education (3,026)	Taxes (5,518)	Education (1,681)
Budget/surplus (3,240)	Medicare (1,977)	Health Care (5,517)	Health Care (1,548)

Source: Federal Election Commission.

Tables 7.9 and 7.10 do not provide much support for that thesis because they show data from so many races. To see if candidate and party ads have the same themes within specific contests, we examined candidate and party ads in competitive Senate races in 2000. For the most part, there is consistency within contests, with less consistency for party ads across contests, although as noted above, the Democrats were fairly unified in their messages for the 2000 election cycle. Consider the Republicans in the Michigan Senate race. The topics Senator Abraham's campaign aired the most ads about were health care (1,838 ads), taxes (1,080), and education (820). The Republican party aired 3,733 ads, about half as many as the Abraham campaign, and its favored topics were social security (827 ads), drugs (734), candidates' political record (643), crime (441), honesty (438), education (334), and taxes (316). In the other contests, the Republican party aired a significant number of ads about special interests (Minnesota), the deficit (Minnesota), abortion (Virginia), Medicare (Missouri, Nevada), and gun control (Virginia). Although such an analysis is far from conclusive, the evidence points to contest-specific decisions about what issues to mention. There is no clear party program that party operatives are using advertisements to convey.

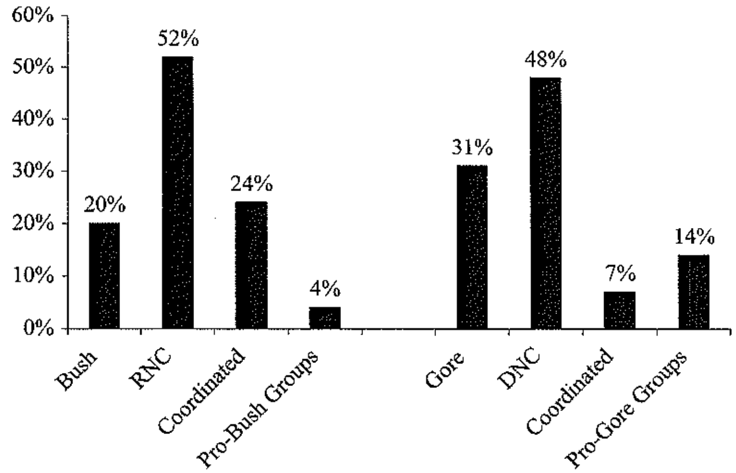
The 2000 Presidential Election

Of the 970,410 political advertisements in 2000, presidential spots accounted for 302,450, a figure that includes party, candidate, and pro-candidate interest-group advertisements in both primaries and the general election. Thus, in 2000 there actually were 106 more *presidential* ads than all political ads combined (302,344) in 1998.

The vast majority of presidential ads, 247,224, were aired by Gore and Bush and their allies after June 1, when their nominations had long since been assured. This number far exceeds the 162,160 presidential election ads aired by Clinton and Dole in 1996. Figure 7.1, "2000: Presidential Ads," highlights the distribution of ad sponsorship for each campaign. Interest groups, parties, and coordinated expenditures accounted for an overwhelming majority of pro-Bush and pro-Gore ads. Indeed, Gore hard money accounted for only one fifth of all Gore advertisements and Bush hard money accounted for just less than a third.

These numbers illuminate the role of party advertisements specifically and soft money more generally in the 2000 campaign. To be sure, the Republican National Committee's ad barrage was 3 percent greater than the Democratic National Committee's, but the principal overall message is that party advertisements greatly outweighed candidate advertisements in both campaigns. Note also the presence of coordinated expenditures

Figure 7.1 2000: Presidential Ads



Note: These are for presidential ads after June 1, 2000.

and pro-candidate issue advertisements. Nearly a quarter of Bush's advertisements were coordinated expenditures between the Republican party and the Bush campaign. Only 4 percent of pro-Bush ads were sponsored by interest groups. Gore, on the other hand, relied to a greater extent on interest-group advertisements and to a much lesser extent on coordinated expenditures. Pro-Gore interest groups aired a substantial number of ads in a few key markets, most specifically St. Louis (1,684 ads), Philadelphia (1,630), Detroit (1,417), Portland, Oregon (1,104), and Milwaukee (966). Bush received no comparable interest-group support in any of the 75 top media markets.

Tables 7.11 and 7.12 break down the distribution of candidate and party advertisements by highlighting the top media markets in which pro-Gore and pro-Bush ads aired. When we compare candidate and party ads in the top markets, we find that the Gore campaign and the Democratic party were fairly consistent. For example, Pittsburgh was the only market in the Democratic party's top 10 that was not also a top Gore market. Nonetheless, even within similar top markets, we can witness how the party ads dominated. In no markets did the Gore campaign air more ads than the Democratic party, and in only one market (Albuquerque–Santa Fe) was there rough parity. This contrasts slightly

Table 7.11 Number of Candidate and Party Ads in Top 10 Gore Markets

Candidate Ads	*Party Ads*
Albuquerque–Santa Fe—2,332	Seattle–Tacoma—2,530
Green Bay—1,948	Green Bay—2,506
Portland, Ore.—1,908	Albuquerque – Santa Fe—2,495
Grand Rapids—1,799	Detroit—2,341
Milwaukee—1,651	Portland, Ore.—2,317
Flint—1,636	Milwaukee—2,290
Detroit—1,634	Grand Rapids—2,248
Philadelphia—1,581	Philadelphia—2,153
Des Moines—1,553	Flint—2,112
Seattle–Tacoma—1,506	**Pittsburgh**—2,021 (1,368 candidate ads)

Note: Boldface entries indicate top markets for party ads but not for candidate ads.

Table 7.12 Number of Candidate and Party Ads in Top 10 Bush Markets

Candidate Ads	*Party Ads*
Miami–Ft. Lauderdale—2,427	**San Diego**—2,175 (361 candidate ads)
Albuquerque–Santa Fe—2,219	Seattle–Tacoma—2,170
Seattle–Tacoma (2,180	Tampa–St. Petersburg—2,124
Portland, Ore.—1,887	Grand Rapids—2,074
Grand Rapids—1,802	Miami-Ft. Lauderdale—2,034
Tampa–St. Petersburg—1,758	Portland, Ore.—2,001
Spokane—1,753	**Orlando–Daytona Beach**—1,964 (1,654 candidate ads)
Philadelphia—1,719	**Cleveland**—1,914 (1,346 candidate ads)
Detroit—1,716	**Sacramento**—1,892 (234 candidate ads)
Green Bay—1,703	**Kansas City**—1,831 (1,671 candidate ads)

Note: Boldface entries indicate top markets for party ads but not for candidate ads.

with the Bush campaign. As Table 7.12 makes clear, party ads dominated in a few markets such as San Diego and Sacramento, markets that the Bush campaign essentially ignored, but Bush campaign ads did outnumber Republican party ads in other key markets, such as Miami–Ft. Lauderdale. There is little reason to believe, however, that national party officials are acting independent of the two major presidential candidates. Undoubtedly there are high levels of coordination between campaign and party officials in the spending of money. The disparity in ad buys between Bush and the RNC in California markets is likely due to Bush operatives simply choosing to spend RNC money in those areas.

Finally, Figures 7.2 and 7.3 highlight the distribution of advertisements by week for the Bush and Gore campaigns after June 1. As can be seen, the Gore campaign aired zero advertisements in the summer months prior to the party national conventions. The Democratic party aired all pro-Gore advertisements during this time. The Bush campaign aired some advertisements during this time, and there is less of a clear division between the airing of pro-Bush candidate and party advertisements. Recall, however, that Gore, during his primary campaigns against Bill Bradley, had chosen to abide by spending limits. His campaign was somewhat strapped for cash in the summer months as it awaited federal money for the general election. The Democratic party simply picked up the slack during the slow summer months. Note also the airing of interest-group ads. Throughout the fall campaign, pro-Gore interest groups aired a number of advertisements. By contrast, pro-Bush groups aired almost zero advertisements until the final week of the campaign.

Future Directions

The CMAG data represent a truly innovative avenue into the investigation of modern political parties, and open the door for a comprehensive analysis of the role of parties in contemporary elections. There are at least two lines of research that are deserving of further examination here, if only to outline what will hopefully become a productive research agenda.

First, the CMAG data may be used to examine how increased party strength in one form affects party strength in another form. The study of political parties has long been split into three separate research agendas: party organizations, party cohesion in government, and party strength among the electorate. In recent years, however, scholars have noted the benefits of theorizing across these programs and hypothesizing the relationships between them (Baer and Bositis 1988; Coleman 1996). The CMAG data allow a step in this direction. For example, do incumbents who toe the party line in Congress receive more party advertisement support? This question raises the empirically testable proposition that party strength in government has implications on the use of party organizations.

Even more interesting is the possibility of assessing the effects of individual-level measures of exposure to party advertisements. Goldstein and Freedman (1999, 2000) match survey responses with the advertising data and estimate an individual-level measure of advertising exposure, which they use as independent variable to predict turnout and vote choice. With the use of CMAG data in this way, scholars may explore whether exposure to party advertising messages affects the level of party identification within the electorate. If it does not, such evidence would indicate that party

Figure 7.2 Number of Gore Ads Aired Weekly from June 1, 2000

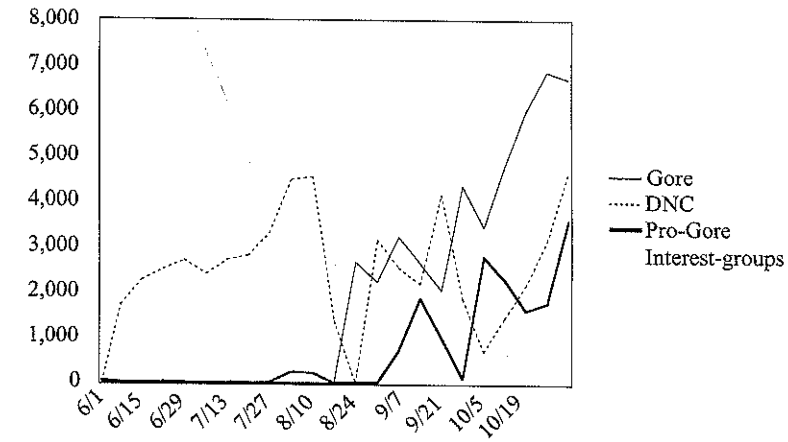
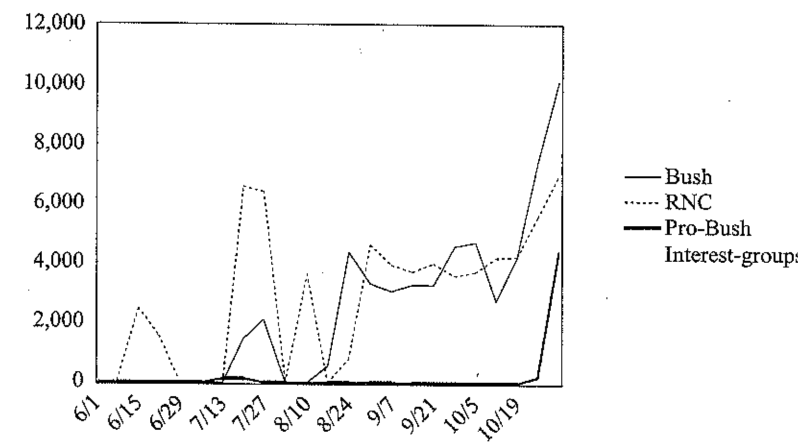


Figure 7.3 Number of Bush Ads Aired Weekly from June 1, 2000



expenditures are doing little to build the party base. This would support the claim that parties have little interest in doing this in the first place.

Second, the data may also be used to theorize anew the relationship between parties and interest groups. Democratic theory has long assumed that interest-group politics and party politics stand in opposition to each other. The classic debate, between Schattschneider (1942) and Dahl (1956), for example, indicates that the relationship between interest groups and parties is best characterized as an inverse one. And for much of American history, such a description may have been accurate. However, in the postreform political environment of the early twenty-first century, there is evidence that parties and groups now see it as in their mutual best interest to cooperate.

Such cooperation, however, may not be the same in all electoral contests and in all campaign environments. For example, one might envision a vertical and horizontal theory of cooperation, where interest group and party coordination becomes increasingly sophisticated as you move from House elections to Senate elections and presidential elections (vertical) and across noncompetitive and competitive contests (horizontal).

Conclusion

This chapter takes advantage of a unique analysis of data on campaign advertisements to explore in detail how parties are using a significant portion of their soft money. The evidence shows that parties are primarily interested in winning elections. They are less concerned (if they are at all) with infusing a party character throughout the electorate. Even as people lament the lack of a strong party in the electorate, there is no evidence that party leaders care.

The literature espouses a party revival in organization and in government. It is clear that party cohesion in Congress is on the rise and so long as campaign finance reform does not preclude the use of soft money, there is every indication that the party's ability to spend money and help candidates will increase. There is even growing evidence that parties coordinate campaign activities with interest groups, a curious empirical reality given the claims of democratic theory that posits their being in opposition (Herrnson, forthcoming).

What is one to make of this? On the one hand, if there is little evidence that party ads are having lasting and broad effects on the state of the party as a whole, then the influx of soft money may be nothing more than a candidate-inspired money-laundering scheme hidden behind a façade of "party building." On the other hand, there is the question of party motivation. Parties have always been focused on winning elections; in that case, the use of soft money and party advertisements is simply the modern-day means by which parties gain power.

Finally, there is also the question of what we want parties to do and whether it matters if winning elections is the goal. It matters if we make policy on the assumption that parties seek to cultivate a base

grounded in the kind of public enthusiasm for parties that existed 150 years ago. Opponents of campaign finance reform want to grant parties the means by which to build that base through the continued use of soft money. And over 50 years ago, the American Political Science Association report on parties recommended that programmatic parties were good for democracy. Intellectuals may believe this; some politicians may believe this. Has anyone asked whether party leaders are listening to them?

Notes

1. Figures from the Federal Election Commission.
2. From National Journal Online (www.NationalJournal.com), October 1, 2001.
3. See Sorauf (1998) for an analysis of how parties in recent years have contributed to candidates and coordinated expenditures with them.
4. See information posted October 1, 2001, by the Brennan Center for Justice (www.BrennanCenter.org) on the recent debate over campaign finance.
5. The purchase of data from CMAG was made possible by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.
6. Starting with the 2001 election cycle, CMAG will track and record campaign advertisements in the top 100 markets. The top 75 media markets are as follows: Albany-Schenectady-Troy, Albuquerque–Santa Fe, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Buffalo, Charleston-Huntington, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus Ohio, Dallas–Ft. Worth, Dayton, Denver, Des Moines–Ames, Detroit, Grand Rapids–Kalamazoo–Battle Creek, Fresno-Visalia, Green Bay–Appleton, Greensboro–High Point–Winston-Salem, Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville, Harrisburg-Lancaster-Lebanon-York, Hartford–New Haven, Houston, Indianapolis, Jacksonville-Brunswick, Kansas City, Knoxville, Las Vegas, Lexington, Little Rock–Pine Bluff, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami–Ft. Lauderdale, Milwaukee, Minneapolis–St. Paul, Mobile-Pensacola, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orlando-Daytona, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland-Auburn (Me.), Portland (Ore.), Providence–New Bedford, Raleigh-Durham, Roanoke-Lynchburg, Rochester (N.Y.), Sacramento-Stockton, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco–Oakland, Seattle-Tacoma, Spokane, St. Louis, Syracuse, Tampa–St. Petersburg, Toledo, Tulsa, Washington, D.C., West Palm Beach–Ft. Pierce, Wichita-Hutchinson, Wilkes Barre–Scranton.
7. Michael Franz, as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, was directly involved in coding the 2000 advertising data.
8. Goldstein and Krasno (2000) discuss tests of coder reliability in determining advertisement tone. Agreement among coders for the 1998 and 2000 data was extremely high.

9. For House races, we used Charles Cook's classification of the 46 most competitive elections in 2000; for Senate races, we classified the races in Michigan, Washington, Missouri, New York, Minnesota, Delaware, Florida, Nevada, Montana, and Virginia as competitive.

8

Political Parties in the Era of Soft Money

RAY LA RAJA

The debates in the 107th Congress over campaign finance reform demonstrate just how much parties changed in the 1990s. At the top of the reform agenda was a ban on party soft money, the funds parties raise that exceed the "hard" limits established by federal regulation. The virtual silence about the role of political action committees (PACs), which were the focus of concern in the 1980s, indicated that parties replaced them as the demons of the campaign finance system. How did parties change so quickly? In what ways did they take advantage of soft money to strengthen their position in American campaigns?

To understand party transformation it is necessary to review briefly the history of campaign finance reform and the effect of reform measures on different political actors. Parties emerged as central players under a new set of laws created in the 1970s that were intended to do away with the worst abuses highlighted by the Watergate scandals. The recent controversy over soft-money contributions and party-sponsored "issue ads" is a classic story about the unintended consequences of political reform.

But it is also a classic story about party adaptation. At mid-century, it appeared that party organizations were increasingly obsolete, but beginning in the 1970s parties found a new and influential role in campaigns. By adapting themselves to the cash economy of modern political campaigns, American parties assumed an important role in financing and organizing them. Through their strategic use of soft money, the national parties became critical patrons to candidates and to lower levels of the party.

The Emergence and Growth of Party Soft Money

Little did reformers realize in the 1970s that their well-intentioned efforts to tighten up the process of raising and spending political money would lead to a surge in noncandidate campaign activity in the 1980s and 1990s. The drafters of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) in 1971 worked on the assumption that candidates rather than parties