

Mobilizing Political Talk in a Presidential Campaign

An Examination of Campaign Effects in a Deliberative Framework

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This article takes a talk-centered perspective on a mediated presidential campaign. It argues that election campaigns can be conceived of as collective deliberations and that informal political talk during a campaign may be examined as an analytical category in its own right. Analyzing the National Election Study 2000 panel data ($n = 1,555$), this article shows that political talk during the campaign was prevalent. Both the likelihood and frequency of engaging in political talk during the campaign were related to individuals' propensity to participate in public life and resulted from individuals' ideological intensity and interest in the campaign. The campaign also stimulated such political talk through individuals' exposure to campaign messages and other-initiated campaign contacts. General news media uses contributed to more political talk and campaign participation indirectly by increasing the frequency of exposure to campaign messages on media. Theoretical implications for the research on political campaigns in particular and media effects in general are discussed.

Keywords: *deliberation; political talk; election campaigns; political participation; media effects*

In recent years, the notion of broad-scoped citizen deliberation has captured the imagination of both democratic theorists and empirical researchers (e.g., Bohman, 1996, 1998; Chambers, 2003; Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Fishkin, 1991, 1995; Gastil, 2000; Mutz & Martin, 2001). Taking a “talk-centered” perspective (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Eliasoph, 1996; Katz, 1992, 1994), we may view an election campaign as a series of political activities mobilizing political talk among citizens, affecting its intensity and effectiveness (Huckfeldt, Sprague, & Levine, 2000). Then, one criterion to evaluate an election campaign can be how much it mobilizes

such talk. Doing so will allow us to examine how political campaigns may foster a deliberative environment for an informed citizenry to emerge.

Focusing on how election campaigns stimulate political talk also engages the current debate over the meaningfulness of “deliberation” as a theoretical construct (e.g., Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Mendelberg, 2002; Pellizzoni, 2001; Sanders, 1997; Schudson, 1997). There is no doubt that deliberative talk must be defined in terms of the normative criteria of inclusion, equality, justice, publicity, and reason provision. To be useful in guiding empirical research, however, the concept of deliberation needs to go beyond the rigid normative confines. Using “deliberation” in a broad sense, we consider political talk among the mass public to be meaningfully deliberative in actual political processes (Huckfeldt et al., 2000; Page, 1996). First, such talk in informal settings and in the mode of “ordinary talk” is as necessary for a democracy as formal discussions in deliberative bodies populated by elected representatives (Barber, 1984; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000a). It provides a necessary social context for formal deliberative talk to emerge and unfold. It is also among the key communicative activities to convey interests and lend the public’s voice to formal deliberative bodies (Verba, 1993). Second, the theoretical explication of “social capital,” a key construct in democratic theories, presumes such informal political talk among citizens. Such talk is among the necessary activities for building and renewing social networks and social trust, two critical ingredients in the prevailing conception of “social capital” (e.g., Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000).

Placed in this broad theoretical context, this article analyzes the American National Election Study (NES) panel data to examine the antecedents to and the participatory nature of informal political talk in the 2000 presidential election campaign. It addresses the following questions: First, how widespread was political talk during the campaign and what were its basic sociological features? Second, to what extent did the campaign stimulate political talk? And third, how was such talk related to voters’ civic engagement and campaign participation?

Political Talk in Election Campaigns

It is not the task of this article to join the ongoing scholarly debate over whether and to what degree election campaigns matter (e.g., Finkel, 1993; Gelman & King, 1993; Holbrook, 1996; Johnston, Hagen, & Jamieson, 2004; Shaw, 1999). It is relevant, however, to point out that with a few exceptions, the predominant orientation of the campaign effect studies has been to explain the following: how voters make their choices; how campaigns as informational and mobilizing inputs affect voters’ decision making and their voting behavior; and how such individual-level effects shape election outcomes. Some scholars have examined the important social dynamics stirred by and shaping a campaign. For example, campaign participation has been a key process and outcome variable in campaign studies (e.g., Stone, Atkeson, &

Rapoport, 1992; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). More directly relevant to our point here is a series of studies conducted by Huckfeldt and his associates (Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, & Levine, 1995; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). In these studies, they examined how political conversations among voters were contingent on the properties of their local social networks and how such conversations functioned as a key gateway channeling political information and influence. These studies demonstrate that citizens' vote choices are interdependent via political talk. Such talk filters information from the macro political environment. These findings provide empirically grounded substance to the conception that an election campaign is an important albeit messy collective deliberation involving the candidates, the media, and the voting public (see also Just et al., 1996).

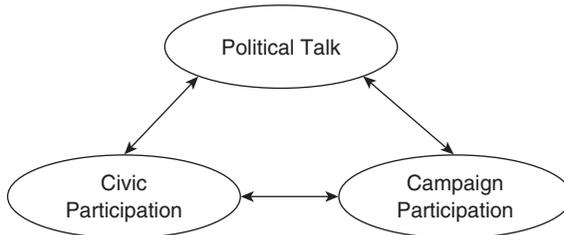
However, the outcome-oriented, one-way flow framework still dominates campaign effects research (e.g., Johnston et al., 2004). Under this framework, interpersonal communication and media-centered campaigns are mostly viewed as complementary channels for information and influence to flow from the elite to the mass public (e.g., Chaffee & Mutz, 1988; Mendelsohn, 1996; Mondak, 1995; Mutz, 1992; Robinson, 1976). Stimulation of political talk is rarely taken as a criterion of campaign effects in its own right. One reason may be the lack of conceptual recognition of informal political talk among the mass public as a distinct analytical category beyond simply mitigating or amplifying the effect of mediated campaign messages (see Chaffee, 1982). If, as Elihu Katz (1994) claims, conversation is "the elementary building block of participatory democracy" (p. xxx), then political talk among citizens during election campaigns matters not only because it moderates the effects of mass-mediated campaigns on voters' reasoning and choices, but also because it is among the activities that make an election campaign a collective deliberation (Huckfeldt et al., 2000). Election campaigns should mean more than one-way flow of information and influence from the elite to the mass public. More important, they are scheduled occasions for citizens to engage in broad-scope and deliberative reflections on the nation's political life, collective identity, and options for democratic renewal (Gronbeck, 1984). Conversations on politics during campaigns comprise the ingredients of the social dynamic that not only activate and crystallize citizens' "enlightened preferences" (Gelman & King, 1993) that get expressed in their vote choices on the Election Day, but also, potentially, enrich their experiences of self-governance and renew their democratic citizenship. Political talk among busy citizens oriented toward the collective decisions of electing leaders is important regardless of whether it produces any discernible influence on who wins an election.¹

On how political talk among citizens matters in democratic processes, there are at least two schools of thought. In one school, informal political talk without a formal structure, a set of codified rules of engagement, or a focused problem-solving objective is not a defining element of democracy. Nor is it deliberative (e.g., Schudson, 1997). In this restrictive view, deliberative democracy is embodied by substantive and institutionally structured debates on public policies among democratically elected

representatives. The other school views deliberation less restrictively and considers political talk among the public to be deliberative in nature. Although such talk falls far short of the normative ideals of deliberation, it is oriented toward collective decisions (e.g., choosing a policy option on a public issue or selecting a political leader); it is part of the public deliberation in a broader political environment (Page, 1996); and it is conducted at least on the normative *expectations* of being based on information and reason. Therefore, informal political talk should be taken as a distinct analytical category for studying democratic processes. It not only strengthens the representative democracy (Barber, 1984; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Verba, 1993; Wyatt et al., 2000a) but also adds more participatory and deliberative features to democratic decision making (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Evidence from the research adopting the second perspective has shown that political talk is not as rare an occurrence as what might have been assumed (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2003; Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Wyatt et al., 2000a). Such talk could add more elaborative elements to one's opinions (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002; Fearon, 1998; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Lindeman, 2002; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). It holds potentials for more informed reasoning through collective discoursing in which citizens blend information from the media, personal experiences, and broader cultural milieu to talk about issues (Delli Carpini & Williams, 1994; Gamson, 1992; Just et al., 1996). Such talk is related to other positive manifestations of a democratic citizenry, including increased political knowledge, interests, and various modes of participation (Eveland, 2004; Kim et al., 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Scheufele, 2000; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000b).

This line of research provides two important premises for the present study. First, despite individuals' social contexts and selectivity that produce a bias in favor of like-minded people talking to one another (Huckfeldt et al., 1995; Mutz & Martin, 2001), ordinary political talk does go beyond one's immediate and close social circles. Second, although some evidence suggests that people with social networks embedded with greater political disagreement participate in politics less due to their own ambivalent political attitudes and desire to avoid confrontation (Mutz, 2002), political talk in general may accumulate and mobilize necessary resources for other participatory activities (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). Such resources include civic virtues and skills, participatory motivations and opportunities (Verba et al., 1995), and social networks for participatory activities (McLeod et al., 1999). Because of the theoretically assumed and, to a large degree, empirically verified close links between political talk and other modes of participatory activities, some have argued that political talk *is* a form of political participation (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Figure 1 summarizes these arguments on the relationships among political talk and the other two modes of participation.² In this conception, the three modes of citizen participation—political talk as discursive participation, civic engagement (nonelectoral participation in activities mostly at the local community level and/or for collective problem solving), and campaign participation—form a mutually reinforcing system. In other words, although individuals may differ in their modes of

Figure 1
An Illustration of Participation as a Self-Perpetuating System



participation (Verba et al., 1995), participants in one domain develop a stronger propensity to participation in other domains. Participation is a self-perpetuating system (Almond & Verba, 1963; Finkel, 1985).

This system may be set in motion by many factors. One such factor may be media use (e.g., McLeod et al., 1999; Scheufele, 2000). Here, we differentiate two types of media use. The first comprises regular news media use as a steady feature of individuals' everyday life (Chaffee & Choe, 1981; Comstock & Scharrer, 2001). These individual differences in media orientation may correspond to variations in participatory propensity (Kim et al., 1999; McLeod & McDonald, 1985). Such differences may be extended to campaign media exposure. This second type of media use is campaign specific and goes beyond media use in daily routines. It is related to a variety of effect variables, including campaign involvement (e.g., McLeod, Bybee, & Durall, 1979). As self-initiated communication behavior during a campaign, campaign media exposure may result from an underlying motivation for political participation. It may also induce more campaign involvement by increasing individuals' political knowledge and efficacy (Finkel, 1985; Kim et al., 1999; Scheufele, 2000). These arguments suggest the first two hypotheses³:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Higher levels of general news media use will lead to a higher likelihood and frequency of engaging in political talk.

H2: Higher levels of exposure to campaign messages will lead to a higher likelihood and frequency of engaging in political talk.

In stating these hypotheses, a distinction is made between the likelihood and the frequency of engaging in political talk. We consider them to be two differentiable aspects of political activation during election campaigns. Talking with others on politics or not may reflect the structural properties of an individual's social network, his or her interest, as well as willingness to include politics in one's social communication. Due to

potential tensions that could arise from disagreement when talking politics (Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2004; Mutz, 2002), it may be a higher hurdle for many people to start talking politics with others than to increase the frequency of such talk after having passed the hurdle. At the macro level, these two aspects of political talk may also have potentially different political implications. Whereas inducing people to start talking essentially involves getting more people into the game of collective deliberation, increasing the frequency of talk means elevating the intensity of such discursive participation among those already in action. This distinction, therefore, allows us to examine campaign effects at two fronts: broadening the scope of discursive participation and intensifying such participation. We address the following research question by examining the likelihood and frequency of political talk as two different dependent variables:

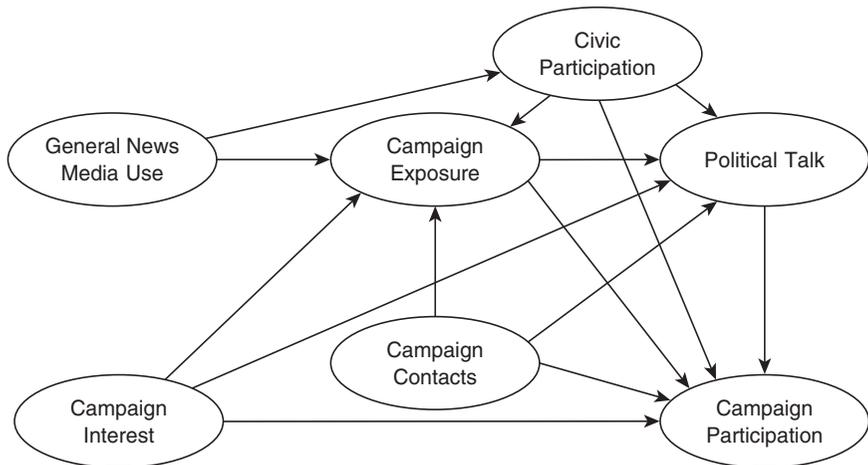
Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the impact of an election campaign on activating political talk and on intensifying political talk, respectively?

During a campaign, a major factor inducing more participation may be campaign contacts initiated by various campaign-related groups, including voter-turnout efforts by churches, civic associations, and activist organizations. Such contacts, primarily other initiated, are exogenous to individuals. But they may mobilize individuals to participate by activating their sense of civic duty, or by reducing the cost of participation with supplies of contacts and “mobilizing information” needed for action (Lemert, 1981), or both. Such campaign-initiated contacts may also be a key venue for opportunities to engage in political talk. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H3: More frequent campaign-related contacts will lead to a higher likelihood and frequency of engaging in political talk.

Extending the above arguments to the other factors in the self-perpetuating system of political participation depicted in Figure 1, we should expect similar causal paths leading to civic participation and campaign participation. In this model, civic participation refers to the everyday participatory activities that do not fluctuate with the on and off of election campaigns. Therefore, within one campaign, the campaign-specific stimulation is not expected to lead to an increase in civic participation directly. But the self-perpetuating force in the system may push those who regularly engage in civic activities to participate in campaign-specific activities, such as consuming campaign messages, talking about politics, canvassing, and attending campaign rallies. In addition, because those who use news media regularly have a stronger propensity to consume campaign messages during a campaign season, the impact of regular news media use on political talk during the campaign will be mediated by exposure to campaign messages. These arguments, combined with the previous hypotheses, suggest the causal model depicted in Figure 2. In this model, we also include campaign interest as a campaign-specific motivational factor. Past research has shown its empirical significance (e.g., McLeod et al., 1999). More

Figure 2
A Conceptual Model of Campaign Mobilization of
Political Talk and Participation



important, including the effects of this motivational factor will also enable us to arrive at estimates of the “net” effects of campaign exposure on political talk and campaign participation.

Even though the model itself is a summary of the hypothesized causal relationships, it is still useful to state three theoretically distinct paths of influence that are postulated in the model:

- H4:* More frequent regular news and public affairs media use will lead to heavier campaign exposure (the propensity hypothesis).
- H5:* Interest in political campaigns will lead to more campaign media exposure, political talk, and campaign participation (the motivation hypothesis).
- H6:* Heavier campaign exposure and more frequent campaign contacts each will stimulate more frequent political talk and higher levels of campaign participation (the campaign stimulation hypothesis).

Method

Data

To test the hypotheses, we analyzed the 2000 American NES panel data. The study involved a pre-election survey of 1,807 voters (overall response rate 61.2%).

Of them, 1,555 respondents were re-interviewed after the Election Day (overall response rate 86%). The postelection interviewing took place during a 45-day period immediately after the Election Day. The period coincided with that of the Florida recount and the court battles, which lasted until December 13, 2000, when Al Gore delivered his televised concession address.⁴

The panel design and multiple measures of political talk made this data set meet most of the data requirements for testing our hypotheses. In addition, other than its postelection fiasco and the way in which the final outcome was decided, the 2000 presidential campaign, by and large, did not differ in key characteristics from campaigns in the past two decades. True enough, every election was historically unique. However, with a few notable exceptions, the politics and the conduct of the media during the 2000 presidential campaign were nothing extraordinary, compared with those in recent memory (Johnston et al., 2004; Kerbel, 2001; Nelson, 2001). Only on the night of the Election Day did it become truly clear how evenly divided the country was. Therefore, even though postelection campaign measures of political talk might very well be boosted by the postelection drama, there was no apparent cause for us to suspect abnormality in the general patterns of relationships examined in this study.

Measures

Regular news and public affairs media use. The pre-election survey asked the respondents a series of questions on the number of days “in the last week” they watched (a) national network news, (b) early local TV news, and (c) late local TV news, and on how much attention (1 = *none*, 5 = *a great deal*) they paid to (d) network TV news and (e) local TV news. We have no compelling theoretical or empirical reasons to form a measurement model that is different from an additive one. Therefore, the five variables were normalized to have a range from 0 to 1 and then averaged into an index of TV news exposure ($\alpha = .83$). The same principle of applying the most parsimonious additive model also applies to other multi-item indices.

For newspaper reading, only a single question on the number of days “in the last week” respondents read a newspaper was asked in the survey.

Exposure to talk radio was measured by two questions: (a) the frequency of listening to talk radio (1 = *only occasionally*, 4 = *every day*) and (b) the amount of attention paid to radio talk shows (1 = *very little*, 4 = *very close*). For both measures, those who reported to have “never listened” received a zero. The two variables were normalized to have a range from 0 to 1 and then averaged into an index of talk radio exposure ($\alpha = .90$).

The three indices of general media use were found to be positively correlated, with correlation coefficients ranging from .08 ($p < .001$) between newspaper reading days and talk radio exposure to .23 between newspaper reading days and TV news consumption ($p < .001$).⁵

Campaign exposure. Campaign exposure involved a set of questions in the post-election survey on voter-initiated exposure to campaign messages on the media, including (a) the amount of campaign TV programs watched (0 = *none*, 3 = *a good many*), (b) the amount of a televised presidential debate watched (0 = *none*, 1 = *part*, 2 = *whole*), (c) the amount of radio discussion and speeches about campaigns listened to (0 = *none*, 3 = *a good many*), (d) attention paid to press news on campaign for president (1 = *none*, 5 = *a great deal*), and (e) attention to press news on campaign for Congress (1 = *none*, 5 = *a great deal*). They were each normalized to have a range from 0 to 1 and then averaged into a campaign exposure index ($\alpha = .77$).

Campaign contacts. Campaign contacts were measured by eight questions in the postelection survey asking the respondents whether (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) they were contacted by a party, a group, or an individual, whether information about candidates, parties, or political issues was made available in their place of worship, and whether they had been encouraged to vote for a particular candidate or party by the clergy or other church leaders. The “yes” answers to these items were summed into an index ($\alpha = .55$). Because very few individuals (2.3% of the total) scored above 5 on this index, values of 5 or above on the index were recoded into 5, resulting in a scale ranging from 0 to 5.

Political talk. All political talk measures came from the postelection survey. One set of questions asked the respondents whether they “discussed politics” with their “family or friends,” and if “yes,” “how many days in the past week” they “talk(ed) about politics with family or friends.” Another set of questions asked the respondents about characteristics of each partner (up to four) of their political conversations. The preamble of these questions read, “From time to time, people discuss governments, elections and politics with other people. I’d like to ask you about the people with whom you discuss these matters. These people might or might not be relatives.” With each partner so named, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of talk with him or her (1 = *rarely*, 3 = *often*) and their relationship with him and her (spouse, relative, coworker, someone who goes to the same place of worship, or someone in the same neighborhood). This article did not examine the other characteristics of each partner that had been asked about in the survey.

A detailed inspection of the data revealed a substantial amount of noise due to, in part, question wordings and questioning approaches. Among the 403 individuals who provided no information on conversational partners, 194 of them reported discussing politics with their family or friends “in the past week.”⁶ However, the summed frequency of talking to all reported partners was correlated with the “days in the past week” measure ($r = .32, p < .001$). The evidence suggests that combining the two items would yield a more inclusive (i.e., capturing more talk behavior than a single item alone) scale of the frequency of talking politics and reduce the number of respondents who had reported “never” to one of the two questions. Therefore,

after each variable was normalized into a range from 0 to 1, an average of the two was taken among those who had provided valid data on at least one of the two items ($n = 1,551$) to form an index of frequency of political talk ($\alpha = .65$).

Civic participation. In the postelection survey, respondents were asked a series of questions on whether (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) “in the past 12 months” they had (a) devoted time to volunteer work, (b) worked with other people to deal with some issues facing their community, (c) contacted public officials to express their views on a public issue, (d) attended a meeting about an issue facing their community or schools, (e) contributed money to church or charity, and (f) worked with others in the neighborhood to deal with common issues. They were also asked whether they were a member of a civic organization. These items covered a wide range of activities. Common across them, they were not tied to the electoral process directly and they corresponded closely to what Verba and Nie (1972) labeled as “communal activities.” For the present purpose, we summed the “yes” answers to these questions to form one index and called it civic participation ($\alpha = .71$).

Campaign participation. The postelection survey also asked respondents a series of questions on whether (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) they (a) tried to persuade anybody to vote for or against a candidate or party; (b) wore a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on their car, or placed a sign on their window or in front of their house; (c) went to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things alike in support of a particular candidate; (d) did any work for one of the parties or candidates; (e) gave money to any individual candidate running for public office; (f) gave money to a political party during this election year; and (g) gave any money to any group that supported or opposed candidates. We summed the “yes” answers to form one index ($\alpha = .73$).

Ideological extremity. Because the pre- and postelection responses to the ideological self-placement question (1 = *extremely liberal*, 7 = *extremely conservative*) were highly correlated ($r = .64$, $p < .001$), they were averaged into an index of ideological orientation ($\alpha = .80$). The absolute distance of each individual score from the midpoint was obtained as a measure of ideological extremity.

Demographics. Ten demographic characteristics were available in the pre-election survey, including age, gender, marital status (dummy coded into married vs. other), educational level (years of formal schooling completed), household income (1 = *less than \$4,999* and 22 = *\$200K or above*), occupational status (Duncan’s SEI), race and ethnicity (dummy coded into White vs. other), length of residence in the current community, home ownership (dummy coded into owner vs. other), and having a child living in the house (dummy coded into “yes” vs. “no”).⁷

Model Specifications

To ascertain a more reliable picture of who talked politics and how such talks might be part of the spiral process of participation, we conducted our analyses in two steps. First, we set out to address the question on who reported talking politics. At this stage of analysis, the two political talk measures were examined separately. They served as an internal replication of each other. To address our question on potential differences between the likelihood and frequency of talking politics, we estimated the same tobit regression models with the two political talk measures as dependent variables.

The tobit regression model was developed to address censored dependent variables (Tobin, 1958; Long, 1997). A variable is said to be censored (at the lower or upper end or both ends of the scale) if the underlying continuous characteristic was not fully recorded by the scale used, resulting in an unusually large number of cases piling up at the point of censoring. Following this logic, individuals vary in a latent propensity toward talking politics that might not be captured by the crude frequency measure. The reason is that actual behavior of talking politics may be constrained by external factors, some of which may be accidental (e.g., a person happened to be swamped by work during the period asked about, or it just happens that a person did not find issues of intense concern to turn his or her propensity into manifested behavior). In this case, a linear regression model would underestimate the effect of a predictor on engaging in political talk. Alternatively, we could define the observed political talk (y) being related to the latent variable (y_i^*) as $y_i = y_i^*$ if $y_i^* > \tau$, and $y_i = t_y$ if $y_i^* \leq \tau$. In other words, the latent variable (y^*) is observed for values greater than t and censored for values less than or equal to t . In our case, if a respondent reported no manifested behavior of talking politics, t is recorded as zero. The tobit model then is stated as follows:

$$y_i^* = \mathbf{x}_i \boldsymbol{\beta} + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where $\varepsilon_i \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$, \mathbf{x}_i are independent variables observed for all cases, and $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ is a vector of regression coefficients.

Given the specification of the relationship between observed y and the latent y^* , the tobit model essentially involves a simultaneous estimation of a probit model and a linear regression model. The probit part estimates how much each independent variable predicts the *likelihood* that respondent i would pass the threshold t and the linear part estimates the effect of each predictor on the frequency of talk by respondent i , given that he or she has passed this threshold. The expected value of y in the model is

$$E y = \mathbf{x} \boldsymbol{\beta} F(z) + \sigma f(z) \quad (2)$$

where $z = \mathbf{x} \boldsymbol{\beta} / \sigma$, $f(z)$ is the unit normal density and $F(z)$ is the cumulative normal distribution function (see Long [1997, pp. 196-197] for a slightly different expression of the basic model).

It has been shown that each tobit regression coefficient can be decomposed into two components. Using the dependent variable in our model, the two parts are as follows: (a) the effect of x on the likelihood of talking politics and (b) the effect of x on the frequency of talking politics. They may be calculated with the equations provided by McDonald and Moffitt (1980) (also see Roneck, 1992). For cases above the limit (reported talking politics), the effect of x_i is

$$\delta E y^* / \delta x_i = \beta_i [1 - z f(z) / F(z) - f(z)^2 / F(z)^2]. \quad (3)$$

For cases at the limit (reported no talk of politics), the effect of x_i is

$$\delta F(z) / \delta x_i = f(z) \beta_i / \sigma. \quad (4)$$

For each political talk measure, a partial model with only the demographics, ideological extremity, and campaign interest as predictors was estimated. The results from the partial model will supplement the descriptive data in addressing the distribution and basic features of political talk. Then, the model was expanded to include media exposure and campaign contact variables. This model estimation strategy allows us to do the following: (a) to assess the overall effects of all the media and campaign variables in terms of the changes in the log likelihood relative to the degrees of freedom from the partial to the expanded model and (b) to test the first three hypotheses on the effects of the media and campaign variables net of the influences of the exogenous variables. In estimating these models, listwise deletion was used to remove the cases with missing values.

In the second step, we placed the combined index of the frequency of talking politics in a structural equation model (SEM) to examine how talk was intensified by political campaigns and related to civic and campaign participation. Based on our current theoretical understanding of participation, we felt theoretically grounded only in estimating such a model among those who had exhibited the behavior of talking politics. We did not have clear enough theoretical guidance to specify the causal paths related to the likelihood of talking politics among those who did not report talking. Therefore, we included only those who responded "yes" to at least one of the talk questions ($n = 1,152$). This treatment also removed technical complications of including a tobit component in SEM. As a result, we must interpret the SEM results in terms of the relationships conditioned on surpassing the threshold of engaging in political talk.

The statistical model was specified following the conceptual model shown in Figure 2. But we had to adjust some paths due to the constraints of the data. We specified causal paths from campaign exposure and campaign contacts to political talk and campaign participation. This specification reflects our theoretical focus on the causal flow in accordance with the thesis that media stimulate talk (Katz, 1992). Although it precluded the plausible reciprocal relationship between campaign exposure and political

talk, this specification has the benefit of avoiding statistical under-identification of a nonrecursive model. Because the frequency of political talk index included “days in the past week” as the time frame and the election campaigns were over by the time most respondents were interviewed in the postelection survey, a causal path from talk to campaign participation would not be consistent with the time frame embedded in the measures. Therefore, we specified a correlation between political talk and campaign participation. Civic participation was considered a perpetual participatory tendency that would be extended to political talk and campaign participation. It was also measured in the time frame of “the past 12 months.” Therefore, it was postulated to precede and have direct paths to the campaign-related variables. Campaign contacts were other initiated and thus exogenous to the self-initiated factors in the model. The regular news use variables were measured in the pre-election survey, indexing the routine level of news media consumption. Campaign exposure as self-initiated, campaign-specific behavior was built on this perpetual tendency. It functioned to directly stimulate more participation during the campaign, thereby transmitting the impact of general news media uses on campaign participation.

In estimating the model, we took a path-analysis approach to focus on assessing the structural parameters. In the latent-variable approach to SEM (Stephenson & Holbert, 2003), both the measurement and the path model components contribute variation to affecting the model fitness. As a result, the fitness statistics cannot be a guide for evaluating the theoretical model exclusively. By taking the measurement part out, we can focus on the fitness of the theoretical model.

Results

Before testing the hypotheses, we first address the question on the prevalence and some other basic features of political talk. An empirical portrayal of political talk during the 2000 presidential campaign is shown in Table 1. These descriptive statistics suggest that political talk was quite prevalent during the campaign, similar to those observations from noncampaign studies (e.g., Delli Carpini et al., 2003; Wyatt et al., 2000a) and campaign studies (e.g., Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). On the question about the days of talking about politics “in the past week,” more than 80% of the sample reported engaging in political talk at least for one day, and more than 42% claimed to have talked politics daily. When asked about specific discussants, nearly three quarters of the respondents reported talking with at least one person, and more than 20% reported talking with four partners, the maximum allowed in the survey. More detailed inspection of the data revealed a variety of relationships between the respondents and their reported partners, including spouse, relatives, church members, coworkers, and neighbors. The results are consistent with the observation that people talk about issues of public concern in a variety of settings and with people they are socially related to in

Table 1
A Descriptive Portrayal of Political Talk in
the 2000 Presidential Campaign

Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Days in the last week talk politics		
0	297	19.4
1	63	4.1
2	149	9.7
3	145	9.5
4	97	6.3
5	110	7.2
6	23	1.5
7	648	42.3
Total	1,532	100.0
Number of conversational partners		
Do not talk politics		
0	399	25.7
1	291	18.8
2	311	20.1
3	223	14.4
4	327	21.1
Total	1,551	100.0
Partner's social relationships ^a		
Spouse	415	36.1
Relatives by blood or marriage	528	46.0
Coworkers	451	39.3
Neighbors	324	28.2
Members of the same church	171	14.9
Others	155	13.5
Total	2,044	—

a. The total is based on multiple responses. Each percentage is out of the total number of respondents who named at least one partner ($n = 1,148$).

a variety of ways (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Wyatt et al., 2000a, 2000b). In addition, more than 60% of the sample reported talking to at least one person who was thought to have voted for a different candidate, indicating some degree of political talk across lines of political difference (Mutz & Martin, 2001).

These figures were likely inflated by (a) the social desirability of reporting political talk in the immediate aftermath of a presidential campaign and (b) the postelection fiasco while the survey was in the field. However, neither of these factors was sufficient to discount the significance of prevalent political talk among the general public. The very possibility that the social norm and the postelection events might have inflated levels of reported political talk suggests that citizens recognized the social expectation of engaging in political talk.

Predicting Likelihood and Frequencies of Talking Politics

The results in Table 1 show clearly that 20% to 25% of the sample reported that they did not talk politics during the campaign at all. For those who did, there were considerable variations in how frequently they talked politics. These observations rendered further empirical justifications to estimating the tobit regression models. Tables 2 and 3 present the results. Table 2 shows the results from the models predicting “days in last week” talking politics, and Table 3 shows the results from the models predicting the summed frequency of talking politics with specific individuals. Each tobit regression coefficient was decomposed into two components, using the Equations (3) and (4) provided in the Method section. The decomposed effect estimates are displayed in the second and third columns under each model in Tables 2 and 3. Whereas the likelihood component expresses the effect of each predictor on the percentage change in the likelihood of talking politics, the frequency component is the unstandardized regression coefficient of each predictor on the frequency of talk.

Before getting into the specific findings shown in the tables, it is useful to point out that we may apply the bracket term in Equation (3) to calculate what fraction of the effect of each predictor was on the likelihood of talking politics. The term involves only the distribution of each dependent variable. Therefore, the fractions only differ between models predicting the two dependent variables (McDonald & Moffitt, 1980; Roneck, 1992). This calculation shows that for each predictor, 59.2% of its effect was on “days in last week talking politics” and 52.8% on the summed frequency of talking politics, respectively. Although the tobit regression could not test statistical significance of each component of a tobit coefficient or the difference between the two components of a tobit coefficient, we did learn from these figures that for any factor that influenced political talk significantly, more than 40% of its effect was on increasing the likelihood of individuals engaging in political talk.

To facilitate the interpretation of these results, we designed Figure 3 to illustrate the effects of two independent variables, years of formal schooling (ranging from 2 to 17) and campaign exposure (normalized into a 0-1 scale), on the likelihood and frequency (days in the last week) of talking politics, respectively. For the likelihood part, the null effect mark was set at 50%. We took the minimum and maximum values of each independent variable and calculated the corresponding increment in likelihood above the 50% mark. Figure 3a shows that for those with 2 years of formal schooling, the likelihood of talking politics would increase only 2.6%. This increase would be 22.1% for someone with 17 years of formal schooling. These are what the effect of education on the likelihood (.013, partial model) tells us. Taking the same approach, we took the coefficient of campaign exposure from the second column of the full model to compute the likelihood associated with the minimum and maximum values of this variable. From Figure 3a, we can see that those who reported the highest level of campaign exposure had a 0.36% increase in the likelihood of talking politics, a rather small amount. We then used the same strategy to interpret the

(text continues on p. 333)

Table 2
Estimates of the Tobit Regression Model on “Days
in Last Week Talking Politics”

	Partial Model			Full Model		
	Tobit Coefficients	Effects on Likelihood of Talk	Effects on Frequency of Talk	Tobit Coefficients	Effects on Likelihood of Talk	Effects on Frequency of Talk
Age	-0.024*** (0.006)	-.002	-.014	-0.036*** (0.006)	-.003	-0.021
Gender (female)	-0.051 (0.170)	-.005	-.030	0.147 (0.164)	.014	0.087
Race (White)	0.378 (0.202)	.035	.224	0.310 (0.194)	.030	0.184
Marital status (married)	0.627*** (0.180)	.058	.371	0.499** (0.173)	.048	0.296
Education (years)	0.144*** (0.042)	.013	.085	0.074 (0.040)	.007	0.044
Income	0.054 (0.031)	.005	.032	0.030 (0.030)	.003	0.018
Occupational prestige	0.001 (0.001)	.000	.000	0.001 (0.001)	.000	0.000
Having children in household	-0.491* (0.204)	-.045	-.291	-0.402* (0.195)	-.039	-0.238
Length of residence (years)	-0.004 (0.005)	.000	-.003	-0.007 (0.005)	-.001	-0.004
Homeownership	0.440* (0.185)	.041	.261	0.304 (0.178)	.029	0.180
Ideological extremity	0.390*** (0.099)	.036	.231	0.262** (0.095)	.025	0.155
Campaign interest	1.485*** (0.120)	.137	.880	0.657*** (0.137)	.064	0.389
TV news watching				0.350 (0.320)	.034	0.207
Newspaper reading				0.110*** (0.028)	.011	0.065
Talk radio listening				0.342 (0.268)	.033	0.202
Campaign exposure				3.676*** (0.489)	.356	2.177
Campaign contact				0.230*** (0.053)	.022	0.136
Intercept	-2.726			-1.752		
Sigma	2.967			2.823		
Log likelihood	-3,374.196			-3,303.510		

Note: The sample size after listwise deletion is 1,520. Among them, there are 293 left-censored observations (i.e., those who did not talk) and 1,227 uncensored observations (i.e., those who talked at least one day in the last week). Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

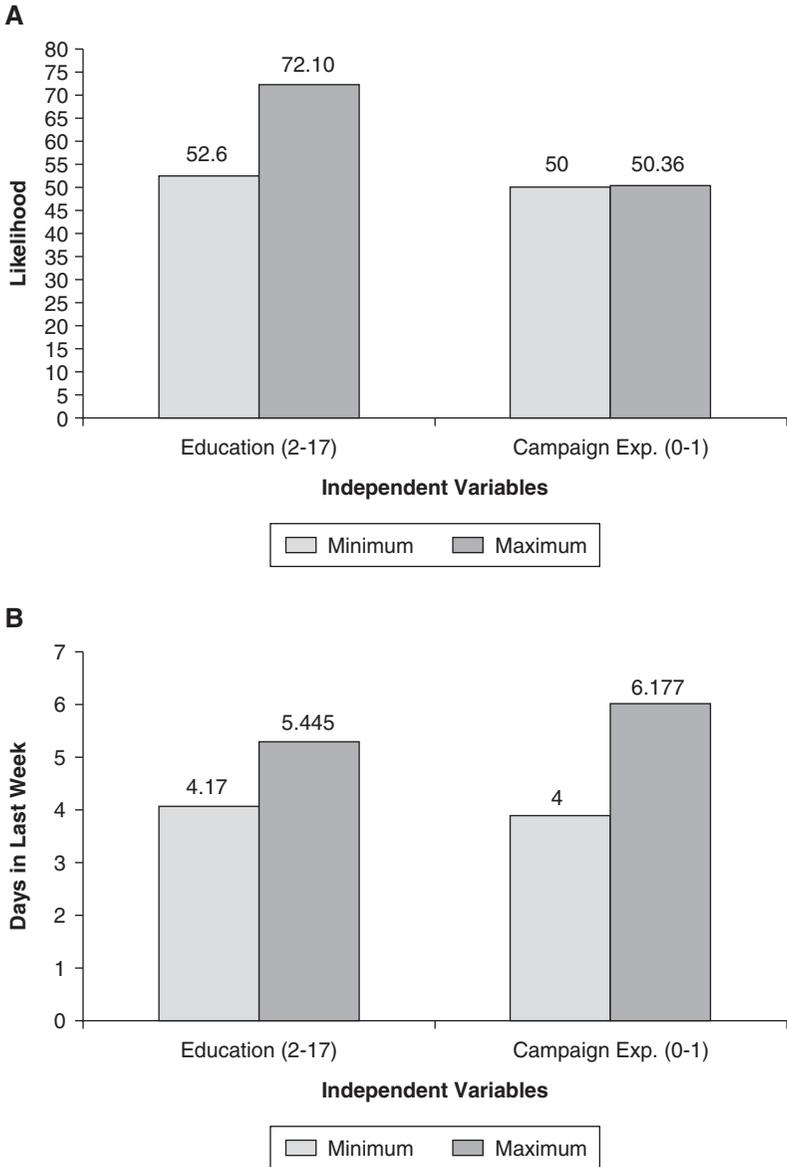
Table 3
Estimates of the Tobit Regression Model on the
Summed Frequency of Talking Politics

	Partial Model			Full Model		
	Tobit Coefficients	Effects on Likelihood of Talk	Effects on Frequency of Talk	Tobit Coefficients	Effects on Likelihood of Talk	Effects on Frequency of Talk
Age	-0.040*** (0.011)	-0.002	-0.021	-0.053*** (0.011)	-.003	-.028
Gender (female)	-0.348 (0.308)	-0.021	-0.184	-0.049 (0.300)	-.003	-.026
Race (White)	1.082** (0.369)	0.066	0.572 (0.356)	1.015** (0.356)	.064	.537
Marital status (married)	0.221 (0.328)	0.013	0.117	0.002 (0.317)	.000	.001
Education (years)	0.409*** (0.076)	0.025	0.216	0.305*** (0.075)	.019	.161
Income	0.080 (0.056)	0.005	0.042	0.044 (0.054)	.003	.024
Occupational prestige	0.002 (0.001)	0.000	0.001	0.001 (0.001)	.000	.001
Having children in household	-0.567 (0.370)	-0.034	-0.300	-0.438 (0.356)	-.028	-.231
Length of residence (years)	-0.012 (0.009)	-0.001	-0.006	-0.014 (0.009)	-.001	-.007
Homeownership	0.539 (0.336)	0.033	0.285	0.271 (0.324)	.017	.143
Ideological extremity	0.830*** (0.178)	0.050	0.439	0.578*** (0.174)	.037	.305
Campaign interest	2.353*** (0.218)	0.143	1.244	1.055*** (0.250)	.067	.558
TV news watching				-0.098 (0.585)	-.006	-.052
Newspaper reading				0.063 (0.052)	.004	.034
Talk radio listening				0.802 (0.490)	.051	.424
Campaign exposure				6.256*** (0.896)	.395	3.306
Campaign contact				0.514*** (0.097)	.033	.272
Intercept	-7.623			-6.173		
Sigma	5.334			5.110		
Log likelihood	-3,890.974			-3,830.169		

Note: The sample size after listwise deletion is 1,539. Among them, there are 396 left-censored observations (i.e., those who did not talk) and 1,143 uncensored observations (i.e., those who talked with at least one partner occasionally). Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

** $p < .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Figure 3
An Illustration of the Interpretations of Tobit Regression Coefficients



effects of these two variables on the number of days in the last week talking politics among those who reported talking (see Figure 3b). This time, we took the midpoint of the 7-point scale as the arbitrary null-effect mark in our illustration. The results showed that for those with only 2 years of formal schooling, by average, they did not talk much more than 4 days; for those with 17 years of formal schooling, they would talk more than 5 days. The effect of campaign exposure was more dramatic on the frequency of talking. For those who reported the highest level of campaign exposure, by average, they reported talking politics more than 6 days in the last week.

Following these illustrations, we now interpret the results in Tables 2 and 3. First, we examine the partial models. Although these models did not test any of the stated hypotheses, they were useful for us to assess the sociological features of political talk during the campaign. Despite some differences between the two models, a general pattern emerging from the results suggests that political talk was not distributed evenly across different social strata. Engaging in political talk, similar to engaging in other modes of participation, was resource dependent (Brady et al., 1995). Education was shown to have a significant impact on political talk. In Table 3, Whites were more likely to talk politics than other ethnic minorities. Among those who did talk, Whites did so more frequently. No statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and political talk was found in Table 2. Having small children might have drained individuals' time resources, as it decreased the likelihood of engaging in political talk in "the last week" by 4.5% and reduced the frequency of such talk by .291 point on this scale. In addition, talking politics might also be indicative of maintaining an active social life. One indication is that after controlling for socioeconomic and interest factors, age showed negative relationships with talk in both models.

Both ideological extremity and campaign interest were the strongest predictors of the likelihood of talking politics and frequency of talking politics with specific individuals. Levels of ideological extremity corresponded to an increase of 10.8% in the likelihood of talking politics according to the estimate in Table 2 and 15% more according to the estimate in Table 3. In addition, the more extreme one's ideological orientation, the more frequently one talked politics. Campaign interest had similar positive effects on both the likelihood and the frequency of talking politics. The results were consistent with the findings that those who had strong ideological positions were more likely to participate in political activities (Verba et al., 1995).

Next, we look at the full models in Tables 2 and 3. In each model, general media use, campaign exposure, and other-initiated campaign contacts variables were added. As a single block, these variables significantly improved the prediction of political talk, as indicated in each table by a significant reduction in the absolute value of the log likelihood function in the full model (compare the two log likelihood values from the partial and full models in each table). For the model on "days in last week talking politics," this reduction was 70.69 ($df = 5, p < .001$). For the model on "frequency of talking with specific individuals," this reduction was a bit smaller at 60.81 ($df = 5, p < .001$). Furthermore, comparing the coefficients in the full and partial

models, we could see that these media and campaign variables may have mediated the effects of several predictors in the partial model, including educational level, marital status, ideological extremity, and campaign interest. The five media and campaign variables may also have functioned as suppressors on the relationship between age and talking politics. This possibility is indicated by an increase in the absolute values of the age-related tobit coefficients in both tables. The most striking case of mediation was related to campaign interest. As shown in the tables, the media and campaign variables would reduce the estimates from the partial model by more than half.

Tables 2 and 3 showed that general media use variables, when assessed in terms of direct effects in these tobit regression models, were not robust predictors of political talk. The only general media use variable that showed a significant effect on political talk was days per week reading newspaper. However, the effect was limited to the model of “days in last week talking politics.” In contrast, being exposed to campaign messages and contacted by campaigning individuals or groups each had a robust direct effect on political talk. Each unit of increment in the exposure to campaign messages increased the likelihood of talking politics “in the last week” by more than 35% (see Table 2) and the likelihood of talking politics with specific individuals by nearly 40% (see Table 3). Each point of increase in exposure to campaign messages also corresponded to more than 2 more days of talking politics (see Table 2) and more than 3 additional points in the frequency of talking politics with specific others. Contacts by campaigns and nonpartisan groups or individuals also contributed to an increase in the likelihood of talking politics as well as the frequency of talking politics.

In summary, these results provided no clear support for H1, which predicted significant effects of general media use on political talk. They provided strong support for H2, which predicted significant effects of exposure to campaign messages on political talk. The results also provided strong support for H3, which predicted a significant effect of various campaign-related contacts on political talk.

Structural Equation Modeling of Campaign-Stimulated Talk and Participation

Next, a path model was fitted to the covariance matrix after partialing out the control variables, which include the demographics and ideological extremity variables. The partial correlation matrix and standard deviations used to generate the covariance matrix analyzed are shown in Table 4.

The model specified in the Method section was fitted to the resulting covariance matrix. Although the model fit the data quite well ($\chi^2 = 14.90$, $df = 6$, $p < .02$), a close inspection of the residuals showed that we could improve the model fitness if we allowed for direct paths of the general media use variables on political talk. A model with these paths added was found to fit the data very well. Figure 4 shows the structural parameters estimated in this model (correlations among exogenous variables are

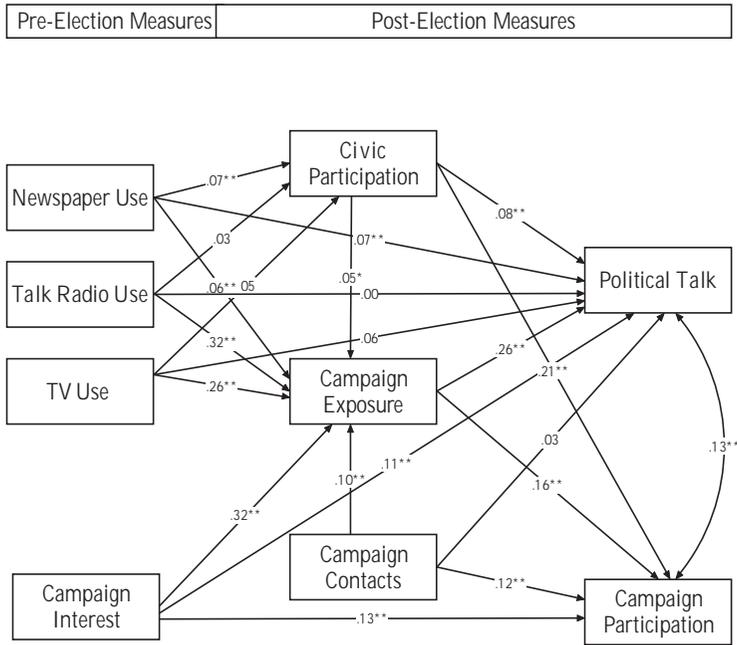
Table 4
Partial Correlation Coefficients and Standard Deviations Analyzed via Structural Equation Modeling

	Political Talk	Civic Participation	Campaign Participation	Campaign Interest	TV News Viewing	Newspaper Reading	Talk Radio Listening	Campaign Exposure	Campaign Contacts
Political talk	1.000								
Civic participation	0.144***	1.000							
Campaign participation	0.274***	0.274***	1.000						
Campaign interest	0.283***	0.087*	0.243***	1.000					
TV news viewing	0.218***	0.062	0.105***	0.372***	1.000				
Newspaper reading	0.146***	0.076*	0.082*	0.142***	0.110***	1.000			
Talk radio listening	0.138***	0.037	0.109***	0.191***	0.063	0.015	1.000		
Campaign exposure	0.366***	0.132***	0.279***	0.505***	0.421***	0.153***	0.408***	1.000	
Campaign contacts	0.125***	0.252***	0.222***	0.118***	0.108***	0.055	0.059	0.200***	1.000
Standard deviations	0.242	0.274	0.159	0.341	0.284	0.413	0.323	0.219	0.299

Note: $n = 1,152$.

* $p < .05$ *** $p \leq .001$.

Figure 4
Completely Standardized Parameter Estimates of the
Discursive Participation Model



not shown for simplicity). The figure also shows the timing of the measures of the variables in the model to highlight the temporal order as a factor that we considered in specifying the causal model. More complete results are shown in Table 5.

Supporting H4, the three general media use variables each had a significant and positive path to campaign exposure, showing an underlying “propensity” among regular users of news media toward consuming campaign content frequently during the campaign. Through campaign exposure, the three regular news media use variables affected political talk and campaign participation significantly. As Table 5 shows, the indirect effects of all the three variables on frequency of talk were significantly positive. In addition, regular newspaper use also had a significant direct effect on political talk.

Support for the “propensity hypothesis” also came from the significant paths from civic participation to political talk and campaign participation, suggesting that routine participation in collective and community activities set in motion the propensity for individuals to participate in the election campaign. Campaign participation

Table 5
Parameter Estimates of the Campaign Mobilization
Model (completely standardized solution)

Predictors	Campaign Exposure	Civic Participation	Political Talk		Campaign Participation	
			Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
TV news consumption	.26**	.05	.06	.07**		.05**
Newspaper reading frequency	.06**	.07**	.07**	.02**		.03**
Talk radio listening frequency	.32**	.03	.00	.08**		.06**
Campaign interest	.32**		.11**	.08**	.13**	.05**
Campaign exposure			.26**		.16**	
Campaign contact	.10**		.03	.03**	.12**	.02**
Civic participation	.05*		.08**	.01	.21**	.01
Political talk (correlate with)					.13**	
R^2	.53	.01	.18		.18	
Overall fitness statistics	$\chi^2(3) = 2.86$, RMSEA = .00, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = .99, NNFI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, $n = 1,152$					

Note: RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; CFI = comparative fit index. Correlations among the three general news media use variables, correlations of the general media use variables with campaign interest and campaign contact, and correlation between civic participation and campaign contact are not shown for simplicity. All the numbers are from the completely standardized solution. Each R^2 was adjusted to represent the percentage of variance in the endogenous variable after the control variables were partialled out.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

was positively correlated with political talk, suggesting possible reciprocal causal paths between the two participatory factors that would need to be disentangled with richer data. Civic participation also had a significant indirect effect on political talk via campaign exposure.

Such evidence lent solid empirical support to the conception that political talk during the election campaign was a mode of participation (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). It supported the idea that political talk was a part of broader citizen participation in the democratic process. The 2000 presidential campaigns did contribute to intensifying the perpetual motion of participation, indicated by both performing specific acts and engaging in political talk.

The results also supported H5, the "motivation hypothesis." Campaign interest at the early stage of the campaign not only led to more campaign exposure but also had direct effects on political talk and campaign participation. This finding indicates

that for those who were interested in the campaign, venues other than campaign exposure were available to induce participatory activities during the campaign. A significant portion of the total effect of campaign interests on political talk and campaign participation was mediated via campaign exposure.

In addition, the results also supported H6, the “campaign stimulation hypothesis.” In this model, with the available measures, we were able to estimate two paths of campaign stimulation. The first set comprised the significantly positive paths from campaign exposure to political talk and campaign participation. The second set included the significantly positive paths from campaign contacts to both campaign exposure and campaign participation. Although the direct path from campaign contacts to political talk was nonsignificant, the indirect path via campaign exposure was significant. The first set of paths represented such stimulation resulting from individuals’ self-initiated exposure to campaign messages. The second set of paths indicated such stimulation by intense campaign contacts at the grassroots level during campaigns.

Conclusion and Discussion

This article takes a talk-centered perspective to examine the effects of the 2000 presidential campaign. It argues that political talk during an election campaign should be examined as a deliberative activity affected by the campaign (Huckfeldt et al., 2000) and that engaging in such talk during the campaign is participatory in nature (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Kim et al., 1999; Wyatt et al., 2000a, 2000b). Analyzing the NES 2000 panel data, we devised two sets of statistical analyses with political talk as a focal variable. In the first set of analyses, we demonstrate that although political talk during the campaign was widespread among the electorate and not limited within one’s family circle or with like-minded others, engaging in political talk was resource dependent. Those with a higher level of education and a more stable integration in their social surroundings were more likely to engage in political talk and talked politics more often. We also show that engaging in political talk was a result of individuals’ motivation. Those with more extreme ideological orientation and greater campaign interest were more likely to engage in political talk and talked politics more often. These patterns clearly suggest unequal distributions in both the likelihood and intensity of discursive participation in the 2000 presidential campaign, replicating the findings on other modes of participation (Verba & Nie, 1972). Such inequality may have the consequences of imbalanced articulation and representation of interests through election campaigns (Verba et al., 1995). Our results thus underscore the persistent challenges facing modern election campaigns in a democracy where inclusive articulation of public interests is normatively expected: how to expand the reach of a campaign to the hard-to-activate segment of the electorate and how to level the extent of discursive interactions among the electorate?

Although our data do not speak to the distinction between purely sociable talk and political talk (Scheufele, 2000; Schudson, 1997), it is probably safe to conclude that the political talk measured in the NES 2000 surveys was not devoid of social functions such as networking and exchanging pleasantries. At the same time, given that the questions were specifically on talking about politics, government, and elections, which were asked in the immediate aftermath of the presidential campaign of 2000, it may also be safe to conclude that the talk captured by these measures is as close to the real informal political talk in people's everyday life as we can get (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). Viewed in this light, the descriptive statistics demonstrate that political talk during the campaign was quite prevalent in terms of its spread among the electorate, its considerably high frequency, and the diverse social relationships involved. Campaign exposure and campaign contacts during the 2000 presidential election stimulated more political talk. They not only mobilized more voters to talk politics but also increased the frequency of such talk. In light of such evidence, we may conclude that the 2000 presidential election campaign, despite its many serious flaws (Johnston et al., 2004), did broaden and heighten social communication concerning politics (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). However, this article examined only a very rudimentary dimension of political talk. It said very little about the specific deliberative qualities of such political talk. To fully assess the extent to which an election campaign activates political life and mobilizes political talk, future research must examine various dimensions that make informal political talk deliberative, as suggested in the literature (e.g., Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Katz, 1992; McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Schudson, 1997; Wyatt et al., 2000a).

In this article, we argue that as part of the system of participation, political talk is closely related to other modes of participation (Verba, 1993; Verba et al., 1995). In the second set of analyses, we placed three modes of participation—civic participation, campaign participation, and political talk—in an SEM. The results clearly show that the frequency of political talk is positively related to both civic participation during regular times and campaign participation during the campaign. In addition, the two modes of participation in an election campaign—political talk and campaign activities—were built on individuals' (a) propensity to participate, (b) self-initiated campaign exposure, and (c) campaign contacts initiated by other groups and individuals. Frequent use of general news media played an indirect role in shaping such propensity in that it led to frequent exposure to campaign messages during the election campaign. Therefore, although campaign stimulation may be an important force in mobilizing political talk, persistent buildup of the propensity to engage in political talk through, among other means, the news media is equally important. It remains a challenge for the American democracy to keep the commercial media fulfilling such a role (Gans, 2003; Graber, 2003).

Taking this talk-centered perspective on election campaigns does not entail judging American democracy in a normative domain (Anderson, 1998). It does mean that first,

we take deliberative democracy as normatively preferable; second, as many scholars have argued, public opinion is strengthened with more deliberative innovations (Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000) and citizens' talk, when mobilized, can lead to important policy outcomes under specific conditions (Page, 1996); and third, particularly in light of the postelection drama in the 2000 presidential campaign and the intensity of the 2004 presidential campaign, we would ignore a critical facet of election campaigns if we did not take political talk among citizens seriously and continued to think about election campaigns only as elite-to-mass persuasion. The overall point is that election campaigns matter not only in their ability to influence individuals' levels of information, attitudes, and vote choices, but more importantly in their capacity to activate and mobilize political talk among citizens. Seriously examining such talk among citizens during election campaigns does not need to impose an a priori model, using it to screen "nondeliberative" from "deliberative" political talks. It does require us to see an election campaign as a collective deliberation (Huckfeldt et al., 2000) and to evaluate it accordingly. Focusing only on the outcome-driven effects of campaigns undervalues the democratic functions of election campaigns that by definition, feature (and ought to feature) contesting ideas and candidates (Anderson, 1998) and serve as democratic renewal via inclusive deliberations (Gronbeck, 1984).

Taking the talk-centered perspective also means reconceptualizing the roles of the media and reorienting the search for media effects. Several scholars in recent years have taken steps toward this direction (Cappella et al., 2002; Delli Carpini & Williams, 1994; Kim et al., 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, Moy, et al., 1999; Mutz & Martin, 2001; Scheufele, 2000; Wyatt et al., 2000a, 2000b). A common theme among all these empirical studies is to move beyond the traditional view of conversation as a "channel" distinct from the mass media (Chaffee, 1982; Chaffee & Mutz, 1988) through which information and influence flow (Robinson, 1976). Rather, political conversation among citizens in the familiar settings of their everyday life needs to be viewed as a building block of public life in a democracy. Research needs to examine how mass media, both through news and other public affairs contents during regular times and through election coverage during campaign periods, encourage, enrich, and elevate such conversations. Examining various facets of political talk during election campaigns is an important step for us to link such campaigns to the democratic process and to link political practices observed empirically to our normative conviction to the deliberative principles that, we argue, will render the real meaning and purpose to political practices as well as empirical studies of such practices.

Notes

1. Gelman and King (1993) demonstrate that election campaigns could have important effects even if they did not produce outcomes unpredicted by good forecasting models. Extending their argument, we argue that an election outcome should not be judged only by which candidate has won or would have won; rather it should also be judged by *how* a winner is determined. Here, we refer to only the first meaning of the phrase "election outcome."

2. Researchers have recognized different modes of political participation (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). Following Verba et al. (1995), two issues related to the conceptualization of participation are pertinent to our study. First, participation is communicative in that citizens communicate their needs, desires, and interests to the government and, we may add, to one another. Second, different modes of participation may be differentiated based on (a) what participatory acts can get for the citizen, (b) what these acts get the citizen into, and (c) what it takes to get into such acts. For the present article, it is sufficient for examining campaign effects to differentiate regular civic participation and campaign participation.

3. The hypotheses are stated in causal terms based on the normative and sociological assumption that one of the functions of the media in a democratic system is to stimulate conversations. The media-conversation-opinion model is first articulated by Gabriel Tarde, the French social psychologist, and discussed in Katz (1992, 1994). Nevertheless, we recognize the possibility that mass media use and talks may be related reciprocally. The limitation of the data analyzed for the present article prevents us from disentangling this reciprocal relationship.

4. Multistage area probability sampling was used in selecting respondents from the universe of all citizens of voting age on or before the Election Day (November 6, 2000) residing in housing units other than on military reservations in the 48 coterminous states. The original study also built in experiments on modes of survey administration (face-to-face vs. telephone interviewing), question wording, as well as response option variations. In the present analysis, the sample across such experimental conditions was pooled together and only those who completed both pre-election and postelection surveys were included. For details of the sample design and field administration, see Burns, Kinder, Rosenstone, Shapiro, and the National Election Studies (NES) (2001). The sample is not weighted.

5. However, the talk radio use variable should not be treated simply as a component of news media use. As the prior research has shown, talk radio exposure is more closely related to opinion-expressing activities (Pan & Kosicki, 1997). In addition, the variable is highly skewed. These features of the variable remind us to exercise caution in interpretation.

6. To explore what differentiated the respondents who reported talking politics but not a single partner and those who reported not talking politics and no partner, we ran a logistic regression model on the 403 respondents. The model included the following predictors: age, gender, years of formal schooling, household income, occupation (Duncan's SEI), length of residence in the current community, home ownership, being White, married, single, and ideological extremity. The only significant predictor turned out to be "currently married or not" ($\beta = .68, p < .001$). The model would correctly predict more than 60% of category belonging. The results suggest that a significant amount of noise came from the respondents not considering their political talk with their spouse when answering the second set of questions. Another more remote possibility could be a typical question-order effect (Schuman & Presser, 1981). The questions concerning conversational partners were framed in the present tense. This might have caused some respondents to think about only their talks *other than* those that they had reported in answering the question about "the past week." This possibility is much weaker because the two sets of political talk questions were far apart in the same questionnaire. It was unlikely that respondents carried their answer to the "past week" question over to the "partners" questions. However, one cannot rule out this possibility without more detailed probing. We decided to leave that to a future study.

7. A complete list of the variables used as they appear in the original NES 2000 codebook is available from the senior author on request.

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