Why do They Talk about the Issues at All?
An Exploration of National Level Campaign Messaging Strategy in the Invisible Primary.

by

Justin Jay Norris

(Under the direction of Paul-Henri Gurian)

Abstract

The role of policy issues in presidential primaries has long been a topic of debate in political science. Much of the discussion is related to the role policy issues play in individual vote choice. Though worthy of discussion, this often neglects the intentions of the candidates as it relates to messaging strategies; rather it does not address the question: Why do some campaigns discuss issues more than others? To address this question, I build and test a model of monthly candidate issue messaging using a dataset compiled from the 1999, 2003, and 2007 invisible primaries. I find that candidate statements about the issues of concern to the nation appear to be primarily driven by the quest for resources, a candidate’s competitive standing, and the intervention of the horse race, as driven by the media.

Index Words: Presidential Elections, Presidential Campaigns, Campaign Strategy, Invisible Primary, Issues, Political Communications
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AN EXPLORATION OF NATIONAL LEVEL CAMPAIGN MESSAGING STRATEGY IN THE INVISIBLE PRIMARY.

by

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Introduction

There is a persistent narrative within American politics, or rather a growing fear that the political class is increasingly removed from the interests of “everyday” voters, and is instead interested in catering to the desires of deep-pocketed campaign donors and the oft-maligned, yet ill-defined “special interests.” Within the realm of political science, researchers have noted for some time that voters worry about the roles of money and the media within the context of presidential election cycles (Craig et al. 2006; Gold 2002; Traugott and Petrella 1989). One way to understand this dilemma is through the discussion of political issues in presidential elections. The role of issues in presidential primaries has long been a topic of debate in political science. However, much of the discussion is related to the role issues play in individual vote choice. Though this is a topic worthy of discussion, it often neglects the intentions of the candidates as it relates to messaging strategies; or rather it does not address the question: Why do some campaigns discuss issues more than others? Campaigns could discuss issues for many reasons. Candidates discuss policy issues because they are running for a national office, and because the electorate and the media expect them to. However, it could also be the case that candidates have strategic reasons that motivate the discussion of issues, and that these discussions are not just to meet expectations, but to further a campaign’s goals. The purpose of this paper is to build theory for explaining why candidates and their campaigns use issue messages to help pursue their goals during the invisible primary, which sheds light on why some candidates focus on issues more than others.

Presidential campaigns try to reach as many different groups of prospective voters as possible over the course of the nominating contest. Campaigns communicate with voters on the state and national level, and within the two levels, campaigns communicate with different groups, which include, but are not limited to: rank and file partisans, political independents, political elites, interest groups, and ethnic groups. Additionally, none of these
groups are mutually exclusive. To address the possibility that there is a strategic impetus behind presidential campaign issue messaging in the invisible primary, I take the first steps in building a multi-faceted theory of presidential campaign communications strategy.

The multi-faceted approach to campaign messaging strategy assumes that presidential campaigns attempt to communicate with different groups, that they likely do so in different ways, and that they do so for strategic purposes. The theory posits that candidates do this in an attempt to increase the likelihood of victory in the nominating contest by attempting to increase perceived campaign viability, and by attempting to increase campaign financial resources. Testing the possibility that candidates utilize a multi-faceted approach is useful, because if true, it would suggest that presidential campaign issue messaging is more dynamic than expected, and can be understood systematically. Furthermore, if true, it would also mean that presidential campaign messaging strategy is more complex than what the literature currently suggests.

If candidates are using the multi-faceted approach to win the nomination, they could do so in a number of ways. Candidates would likely emphasize different issues with different audiences, so that the candidate can appeal to groups through their interests, and in a fashion that simultaneously reinforces the campaign’s message, and points out the candidate’s strengths. Additionally, this phenomenon should also hold for both the macro and micro levels. In other words, campaigns should use this approach when communicating with groups on the aggregate level (state/national), and when communicating with particular groups within particular states, cities, and localities, or when communicating with particular groups across the nation. This is possible, if candidates know what different groups care about, and wish to use this information for their interests as parts of a larger communications strategy to achieve the ultimate goal: winning the nomination.

Testing a theory like the multi-faceted approach is difficult. For example, significant amounts of campaign communications are conducted privately, and not all campaigns can
afford to utilize some types of communications. However, there are some forms of communications which include virtually all candidates, and can be tested systematically. One such form of campaign communications is national-level issue messages. There is evidence that presidential campaigns, irrespective of competitive standing and campaign finances, discuss substantive issues on the national-level (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003). Therefore, it is likely that national-level issue messaging is a suitable testing ground for the multi-faceted approach.

To test the multi-faceted approach as applied only to campaign national-level issue messaging, I build and test a model using a dataset compiled from the 1999, 2003, and 2007 invisible primaries. In this case, the invisible primary is operationalized as the year before voting begins in Iowa and New Hampshire. The invisible primary is a suitable testing ground for this particular theory since candidates use this time to build their war chests, frame the argument for their campaign, and attempt to position themselves for victory in the early primaries and caucuses. Specifically, I test the model against hypotheses derived from the general expectations of the multi-faceted approach, yet focused on the expectations of the multi-faceted approach as applied to the national-level issue messaging of campaigns.

To test the model, I measure the extent to which candidate statements about the issues of concern to the nation are driven by the quest for resources, a candidate’s competitive standing, and the intervention of the politics of the horse race, as driven by the media. Specifically, candidate issue messages are measured using campaign press releases, competitive standings are measured using national polling data, campaign finances are measured using candidate FEC filings, and the effects of the national media are measured using the number of national and state level news stories about the candidates. By testing this model, I find that campaigns publish their press releases about the issues of concern to voters on the national-level in a manner that is consistent with the expectations related to candidates trying to improve the perceived viability of their campaign. This suggests that presidential campaign national-
level issue messaging is at least partially in line with the expectations of the multi-faceted approach to campaign messaging strategy.

The remainder of the paper is dedicated to elucidating these issues in greater detail, and is structured as follows: we begin with a discussion of the relevant literature, followed by a discussion outlining the multi-faceted approach to presidential communications strategy, then there is a discussion of the expectations for the theory as it is applied to issue messaging on the national-level, this is followed by a discussion of the data and methods used to test the theory, a discussion of the results of said test, and finally there are closing remarks about the utility of the theory, this particular approach to the theory, and the need for future research which refines and expands our understanding of campaign messaging strategy.
Literature Review

Presidential nominating contests are nation spanning events, with contests in every state, in a predetermined sequential order, during a designated period of time, and are often tied to the nature of the times, which are to some extent reset every election cycle. In order to systematically evaluate how prospective presidential nominees navigate the primary season, political scientists often assume that candidates are rational actors, in the sense that they are goal oriented individuals who have the requisite information necessary to effectively pursue their goals (Aldrich 1980; Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993). During the course of the nomination fight, researchers assume that the goal for office-seeking candidates is to win the party’s nomination (Aldrich 1980; Gurian 1986).

To pursue this goal, candidates adopt strategies that increase the likelihood of winning the nomination in a dynamic multi-faceted electoral environment. Candidates will try to raise and strategically allocate the necessary financial resources (Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993; Mutz 1995; Haynes, Gurian, and Nichols 1997), develop and implement purposeful communication strategies (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003), and effectively interact with the media (Sigal 1978, Haynes and Rhine 1998) as to increase the likelihood of victory in the nomination process. Consequently, the costs of failure for the candidates in the nominating process are high, since many of the least competitive candidates are winnowed out after the initial contests (Norrander 2000; Haynes et al. 2004). Therefore, campaigns may try to use their messaging strategies as efficiently and effectively as possible to avoid being winnowed out.

Candidates use their campaign communications for a variety of purposes. For example, campaigns use their communications strategies in an attempt to convey their substantive po-

\footnote{\textsuperscript{1}It is important to note that often times the primary calendar is not finalized until late in the invisible primary, though candidates can reasonably assume that the first two contests will be in Iowa and New Hampshire. This serves to underscore the dynamism of the nominating contest.}
sitions, attack opponents, address the campaign’s competitive standing, announce campaign movements and events, and release biographical information about the candidate (Haynes and Rhine 1998; Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003). Specifically, and perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this study, campaigns use their communications in an attempt to reach different audiences. Research on campaign communications suggests that campaigns direct messages to both local and national audiences, in addition to trying to reach both audiences through interactions with the media, and that to some extent, the media is an audience unto itself (Haynes and Rhine 1998; Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003).

Research focusing on campaign communications strategies indicate that a relatively small proportion of total campaign messages deal with substantive policy (issue) positions (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003). Furthermore, top-tier candidates are less likely to discuss substantive issues (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003). This may contribute to the unease of voters on the national level since the national media spends only a small amount of its time covering issues in general (Haynes and Murray 1998; Flowers, Haynes and Crespin 2003), and even less time covering issues when the race is competitive (Hayes 2010). Furthermore, there is evidence that many voters do not retain much from what little time the national media does devote to issues (Weaver 1996). Moreover, candidates devote a substantial amount of time to campaigning in the states with early contests during the year before voting begins (Vavreck, Spiliotes, and Fowler 2002), meaning that the majority of voters generally do not get the opportunity to hear directly from the candidates during the nominating process.

As noted previously, an important key to success in the nominating contest is a candidate’s ability to raise campaign funds. Campaigns must build and maintain a broad base of donors if they are to successfully pursue the nomination through the primary process (Mutz 1995). For example, a candidate’s ability to successfully raise funds increases the likelihood
of winning the nomination (Buell 1996), especially since candidates continually require larger
sums of money to deal with a dynamic electoral environment that can include: changes in
campaign rules, changes in campaign finance laws, the prominence of front-loading, where
the primary calendar is continually compressed to a shorter period of time, and large single
day multi-state elections like Super Tuesday (Busch 2000; Norrander 1993; Witcover 1977).
This underscores the importance of the invisible primary for aspiring candidates seeking the
party nomination. Specifically, candidates who perform well during the invisible primary,
in both fundraising and poll standings are more likely to win the party nomination (Adkins
and Dowdle 2001; Dowdle, Adkins, and Steger 2009; Hinckley and Green 1996; Steger 2000;

In order to develop a theory for understanding why presidential campaigns discuss issues
as part of their national campaign strategy, it is important to first understand how political
scientists discuss issues generally, as it relates to presidential elections. In general, much of
the literature on issues focuses on the effect of issues on voting behavior. Early research on
voting behavior in the general election suggests that many voters are ill informed on many
issues, and instead rely on party cues when casting their vote for president (Campbell et al.
1960). Further research supports this claim, and also indicates that economic conditions are
more important than issues when it comes to vote choice in the general election (Alvarez and
Nagler 1995; 1998). Additionally, there is evidence that candidates generally favor valence
issues over policy issues when attacking their opponents in the general election (Sigelman
and Buell 2003).

Unlike the general election, the literature on primary elections is divided as it relates
to the importance of policy issues. Some research suggests that the predominant factors
governing vote choice in the primaries are candidate evaluations, viability and electability
(Abramowitz 1989; Bartels 1987; 1988). Additionally, there is evidence that prospective
voters rely more on their pre-conceived notions for what constitutes an ideal candidate when
evaluating candidates during the invisible primary (Parmelee 2008). Alternatively, there is research that argues that voters use the primaries to pursue their policy preferences (Polsby and Wildavsky 1980). John Aldrich (1980) argues that since voters cannot use party cues to inform their vote choice in the primaries, issue preferences play a more important role in the decision calculus for voters in presidential primaries. Early empirical tests did not support this claim (Gopoian 1982; Norrander 1986; 1991). However, further research suggests that primary voters use candidate policy issue statements to determine the priorities of prospective presidential nominees, and use these priorities as part of the decision calculus when casting their vote in the primary (Aldrich and Alvarez 1994).
Theory

Within the literature on campaigns there is evidence that candidates behave strategically in a number of ways. For example, campaigns strategically allocate their resources to pursue particular campaign strategies (Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993). There is also evidence that candidates use negative messages, or attack messages, in a strategic attempt to improve their competitive standing in the nominating contest (Haynes and Rhine 1998). When it comes to voting behavior, there is evidence that primary voters use candidate issue positions to formulate their vote choice, in that candidate issue positions serve as cues for what would be prioritized if the candidate were to become president (Aldrich and Alvarez 1994). Given that presidential campaigns behave strategically in a variety of ways, and because candidates use their campaign communications for a variety of purposes (Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003; Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Haynes and Rhine 1998), it begs the question: Do candidates know how primary voters use issue positions, and if so, do they use this information to craft their communications strategies? In other words, do campaigns seek to understand the preferences of voters, and then use this information to formulate communications strategies, and what should we expect if candidates do formulate and execute strategies in such a fashion? To further explore this possibility, I propose the multi-faceted approach to campaign messaging strategy.

Presidential campaigns attempt to communicate with a number of audiences over the course of the nominating contest. Campaigns communicate with voters on the state and national level, and within the two levels, campaigns communicate with different groups, which include, but are not limited to: rank and file partisans, political independents, political elites, interest groups, and ethnic groups. Additionally, none of these groups are mutually exclusive. The multi-faceted approach to campaign messaging strategy tries to take this into account, and assumes that presidential campaigns attempt to communicate with different
groups, that they likely do so in different ways, and that they do so for strategic reasons. The theory posits that candidates do this in an attempt to increase the likelihood of victory in the nominating contest. It is not outside the realm of possibility that campaigns use this approach for a number of reasons. For example, there are anecdotal press accounts of presidential campaigns communicating strategically with different groups of voters through microtargeting (Ambinder 2009; Balz 2006; Levy 2008; Purdum 2006). Furthermore, there is both anecdotal evidence (Issenberg 2012), and systematic evidence (Claibourn 2008), that campaigns strategically use their television ad campaigns to reach different audiences, and to reinforce different messages. Similarly, there is evidence that campaigns strategically utilize television appearances on talk shows to emphasize candidate likeability for low-information voters (Baum 2005), and to communicate with younger voters (Baumgartner and Morris 2006). Therefore, if candidates pursue the multi-faceted approach to campaign messaging strategy, I believe they must meet the following assumptions:

1. Office-Seeking candidates are rational actors, whose primary goal is to do everything possible to maximize the likelihood of winning the nomination.

2. Candidates seek out and use reliable information about the issue preferences of different constituencies.

In general, assuming that prospective presidential candidates are rational actors, whose primary goal is to win the nomination, is neither unusual nor controversial. In fact, this is the assumption of much of the literature on campaigns (Aldrich 1980; Bartels 1987; 1988; Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993; Haynes et al. 2004; Norrander 2000; 2006). However, there is also evidence that not all candidates are motivated to pursue victory, in that some candidates know they cannot win, and are thus motivated by other factors (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003; Haynes et al. 2004; Norrander 2000; 2006). However, so long as the distinction between office-seeking candidates (Wilson
1973), and advocacy candidates (Norrander 2000; 2006) is clear when testing the theory, it should not be problematic. Specifically, the theory as currently structured only applies to office-seeking candidates. This is not to say that advocacy candidates are unimportant, or that they do not play a role in the process. For example, comparing the messaging of office-seeking candidates to the messages of advocacy candidates could lead to some interesting insights. However, including advocacy candidates would require the development of an additional theoretical framework to account for their behavior, which is outside the scope of this paper. Therefore, the paper’s focus remains on office-seeking candidates, and advocacy candidates are not included in the study. Finally, identifying advocacy candidates can be difficult. For the purposes of this study, I classify a candidate as being an advocacy candidate if the candidate had not recently held federal office or recently held a governorship.

The second assumption is perhaps more difficult to meet for the purposes of systematic analysis. It is conventional wisdom that presidential campaigns use polls of different segments of the electorate to formulate election strategies. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence supporting the contention that presidential candidates use polling data to formulate their election strategies in the general election (Jacobs, and Shapiro 1994; Shaw 1999). What’s more, there is anecdotal evidence that candidates not only collect and use polls in the general election, but also collect personal information on voters for use in microtargeting (Ambinder 2009; Balz 2006; Levy 2008; Purdum 2006). However, there is no direct empirical evidence that I am aware of that shows that candidates use polling data during the invisible primary. Be that as it may, it seems likely that candidates view the presidential contest as a continuous process. Therefore, I see no reason that candidates would not use polling data to

\[ \text{2The dataset used in this study does not include so-called “advocacy” or “Benefit-Seeking” candidates. Partially, this is because the theory does not apply to advocacy candidates, and partially this is because the necessary data for advocacy candidates were unavailable for the time frame covered in the study.} \]

\[ \text{3as is often the case when it comes to advocacy candidates, I have one exception. My dataset includes Rudy Giuliani, but only because he was the Republican frontrunner for nearly all of the 2007 invisible primary.} \]
formulate strategies during the invisible primary. Moreover, even if a particular candidate cannot afford to conduct their own polls, there is an abundance of publicly available polling data which candidates can refer to at almost any given time. In other words, it is reasonable to assume that every candidate can determine what the important issues are in the minds of different groups of voters if they so desire. Therefore, I believe the second assumption is met.

If candidates are using the multi-faceted approach to win the nomination, they could do so in a number of ways. Candidates would likely emphasize different issues with different audiences, so that the candidate can appeal to groups through their interests, and in a fashion that simultaneously reinforces the campaign’s message, and points out the candidate’s strengths. Additionally, this phenomenon should also hold for both the macro and micro levels. In other words, campaigns should use this approach when communicating with groups on the aggregate level (state/national), and when communicating with particular groups within particular states, cities, and localities, or when communicating with particular groups across the nation. Specifically, it is likely that campaigns target voters on both the aggregate level, and the individual level. For example, candidates could use broad-based message when trying to communicate with the nation as a whole, or when trying to communicate with the electorate in particular states, and then use more targeted messages when trying to communicate with particular groups of voters within states and smaller subdivisions, or when communicating with particular groups that comprise a national constituency. This is possible, if candidates know what different groups care about, and wish to use this information for their interests as parts of a larger communications strategy to achieve the ultimate goal: winning the nomination.

Assuming that candidates are using the multi-faceted approach, it is important to know what the campaigns hope to achieve by communicating with the different audiences. In order for campaigns to win the nomination, they must accrue the requisite number of delegates,
which they collect through victories in the primaries and caucuses. In general, different campaigns utilize different strategies to achieve victory in the nominating contest depending on the size of their war chests, and their competitive standings in the national polls (Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993). Therefore, it is likely, that this is also true when candidates apply the multi-faceted approach to their campaign communications. In other words, campaigns likely communicate with the various audiences in hopes of increasing their war chests, and in hopes of increasing their competitive standings in the national polls. Candidates do this for two reasons: to convince voters to support the campaign, which increases campaign viability, which increases the likelihood of success in the primaries (Abramowitz 1989; Aldrich 1980; Bartels 1987; 1988; Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993), and to enlarge the campaign’s network of campaign donors and increase the number of donations, so that they can amass the necessary funds to compete in the nominating contests. Candidates focus on prospective donors because building a broad base of supporters is critical for successfully raising funds (Hinckley and Green 1996), voters use the competitive stakes of the election when deciding which campaigns to support financially (Mutz 1995), and because candidates require large sums of money if they are to be serious contenders, and survive the dynamics of the nominating contest (Busch 2000; Norrander 1993; Witcover 1977).

Another factor requiring consideration relates to the different audiences, or rather, which audiences campaigns should target. It is useful to address this question in the context of candidate goals, and their associated constraints. If the goals are to increase campaign viability, and increase campaign funds, it would be in a campaign’s best interests to communicate with as many different groups as possible. However, the number of specific groups campaigns communicate with may be hampered by the size of their war chests. For example, getting the information necessary to effectively communicate with particular audiences through micro targeting is cost-intensive (Vander Veen 2006). Similarly, television advertising in particular media markets is cost-intensive (Claibourn 2008). Therefore, I believe it is likely that
campaigns strategically choose as many of the most important cost-effective audiences as possible.

A good environment for observing the multi-faceted approach is the invisible primary. The invisible primary, being the year before voting begins in the first primaries and caucuses, is a useful testing ground for a number of reasons. The invisible primary is a low-information environment where candidates experiment with their communications strategies (Parmelee 2008). Furthermore, candidates use the invisible primary to build their war chests, frame the argument for their campaign in the minds of voters, and place themselves in a competitive position for the coming primaries. Likewise, there is strong evidence, that the candidate in the best position in the national poll standings (Adkins, and Dowdle 2001; Dowdle, Adkins, and Steger 2009; Norrander 2006; Steger 2000), and with the largest war chest (Buell 1996) at the end of the invisible primary is more likely to be their respective party’s nominee in the general election (Adkins, and Dowdle 2001; Dowdle, Adkins, and Steger 2009; Norrander 2006; Steger 2000). Simply put, a strong showing during the invisible primary is critical for campaigns that hope to secure the party nomination. Therefore, the invisible primary is conducive for testing the multi-faceted approach.

Testing the multi-faceted approach presents some interesting challenges. The theory is large in scope, and relies on partially untested assumptions, which increases the difficulty of testing the theory systematically. Furthermore, significant amounts of campaign communications are not conducted publicly. Examples of campaign communications that do not occur in public include, but are not limited to: phone calls, emails, and direct mail. Additionally, not all campaigns can afford to utilize some types of communications. Some examples of cost-intensive forms of campaign communications include: micro targeting, television advertising, and radio advertising. However, there are some forms of communications which include virtually all candidates, and can be tested systematically. There is evidence that presidential campaigns, irrespective of competitive standing and campaign finances,
discuss substantive issues in a manner that seems catered to a national audience (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003). Therefore, it is likely that national-level issue messaging is a suitable testing ground for the multi-faceted approach.

In accordance with the multi-faceted approach, we would expect that candidates use national-level issue-based messages to try and raise their national poll numbers, and elicit campaign donations. Accordingly, the same general arguments and evidence for why candidates use the multi-faceted approach also applies to national-level issue messaging. In other words, candidates want to try and increase their poll numbers, because they believe voters and the media use national poll numbers as a sign of campaign viability (Abramowitz 1989; Aldrich 1980; Bartels 1987; 1988; Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993), which increases the likelihood of victory in the nominating process (Adkins, and Dowdle 2001; Dowdle, Adkins, and Steger 2009; Norrander 2006; Steger 2000). Similarly, candidates want to use national-level issue messages to increase their campaign funds because they require large sums of money to be serious contenders, and survive the dynamics of the nominating contest (Busch 2000; Norrander 1993; Witcover 1977). For a visual representation of the general proposed relationship as it relates to candidate expectations for national-level issue-based communications see Figure 1.

Since the proposed relationship is nested within the multi-faceted communications strat-

![Figure 1: The Theoretical Expectations for Issue-Based Candidate Messaging on the National-Level During the Invisible Primary.](image-url)
egy there is another necessary component to the relationship. Given the assumptions of the multi-faceted approach we would expect that the campaigns know the issue preferences of the targeted group of voters and craft their messages in hopes of eliciting the preferred response. The target audience in question, broadly speaking, is interested partisans across the nation, which would include strong partisans, weak partisans, and independent leaning voters. Therefore, the campaign messages are national-level issue-messages. Though partisans are the target audience, there is evidence that voters in primary elections are no more ideologically extreme than voters in the general election (Geer 1988), and thus likely prioritize many of the same issues that concern voters on the national level in general. However, candidates would likely send issue messages that are generally in line with party orthodoxy, since they are competing in presidential primaries, and because prospective primary voters use issue positions as part of their decision calculus (Aldrich and Alvarez 1994). Though this should not be problematic since there is also evidence that primary voters are no more ideologically extreme than their fellow partisans (Norrander 1989).

With the specific audience in focus we now apply the relevant theoretical assumption. In keeping with the assumption that campaigns know the preferences of voters, and craft their messages accordingly, I assume that candidates commission polls and use the data, or use publicly available polling data, to craft their issue messages intended for voters on the national-level. Specifically, we should expect that the campaign will dedicate a portion of their issue messages to addressing the top policy (issue) concerns of voters on the national level. With the proposed relationship in focus, and the assumptions accounted for, we can now propose hypotheses to test the multi-faceted approach as it is applied to campaign issue-messaging on the national-level.

Hypotheses for testing the multi-faceted approach on national-level issue messages should meet a number of criteria. The hypotheses should be consistent with the assumptions and expectations of the general theory. However, though the hypotheses should be in keeping
with the general expectations of the multi-faceted approach, they should only be applicable to the unique environment governing general campaign communications with voters on the national-level. Finally, the other factors outside of the hypothesized relationships thought to affect general campaign communications at the national-level should be accounted for. In other words, we should keep in mind that though the hypotheses are offered under the auspices of the multi-faceted approach, they apply only to campaign issue messages addressing the concerns of voters on the national-level, and not the theory as a whole. Unfortunately, at this stage we can test but a piece of the total theory.

If candidates do target a national audience in hopes of expanding the campaign’s financial base, and increase campaign donations, it should be both observable, and in keeping with the expectations of the multi-faceted approach. Campaigns implement different strategies in their quest to win the nomination depending on their financial resources (Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993). This also applies to the multi-faceted approach. Specifically, it is likely that candidates that are already in a healthy financial position will be able to afford the tools necessary for communicating with more select audiences, and thus rely less heavily on national-level issue-based communications to try and expand their donor base and increase donations. Conversely, candidates with smaller war chests, or are struggling financially, likely cannot afford the necessary tools to pursue communications strategies that require things like micro targeting, television advertising, online advertising, and radio advertising, and are thus more likely to rely on blunter instruments, like national-level issue-based communications, to try and expand their donor base and increase campaign donations. Therefore, I posit the following testable hypothesis:

- \( H_1: \) All things being equal, campaigns with fewer financial resources should send out more messages addressing the issues of concern to voters on the national-level.

The proposed hypothesis is useful for testing the expectations of the multi-faceted approach since it taps into the expectations related to candidate finances. Candidates discuss policy
issues at the national level regardless of theoretical expectations. Therefore, if the hypothesis is incorrect, we would expect that the size of a candidate’s war chest has no discernible effect on the number of candidate messages about the issues of concern to voters on the national-level.

As it relates to a candidate’s standings in the national polls, we can expect that candidate statements about the issues of concern to voters on the national-level will conform to the expectations of the multi-faceted approach. According to the multi-faceted approach, candidates should use their messages to try and increase the perceived viability of the campaign. Evidence suggests that candidate standings in the national polls are a visible symbol of campaign viability (Abramowitz 1989; Aldrich 1980; Bartels 1987; 1988; Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993). Therefore, we should expect that candidates will try to use their national-level issue-based messages to try and bolster support for their campaigns, thereby increasing polls standings, and thus improving a campaigns perceived viability. Specifically, we should expect campaigns with lower poll standings to issue more issue-based messages, to try and increase poll standings.

Conversely, we should expect that campaigns with higher poll standings will release fewer issue messages. We should expect this, because candidates with lower poll standings want to avoid being winnowed out after the initial contests, and because candidates with higher poll standings want to solidify their lead by other means, and build their organizations to prepare for later primary contests (Norrander 2000; 2006). Hence, I posit the following testable hypothesis:

- \( H_2: \) All things being equal, campaigns with lower standings in the national polls will issue more messages addressing the issues of concern to voters on the national-level.

The preceding hypothesis tests the expectations of the multi-faceted approach as it relates to the desire to increase poll standings, and it conforms to the expectations of the literature. If the hypothesis is incorrect we should expect that there is no discernible relationship be-
tween a candidates poll standings and the number of candidate messages about the issues of concern to voters on the national-level.

Though the preceding hypotheses attempt to test the core of the proposed relationship, they do not account for the effects of two principal actors of importance when it comes to campaign communications on the national-level: the media, and the other campaigns. Prior research indicates that the media is one of the principal audiences for campaigns, and that campaigns devote a significant amount of time communicating with the media (Haynes, Flowers, and Gurian 2002; Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003). Campaigns must also contend with the other candidates vying for the party nomination.\(^4\) Accordingly, candidates continually interact with the media, either by design, in that they are trying to use the media as a platform to disseminate the campaign’s message, or by circumstance, in that the campaign has to interact with the media to disseminate information about the campaign’s positions on unfolding stories. Campaigns also attempt to interact with each other using the media as an intermediary, especially in the matter of attacking other campaigns or responding to the attacks of other campaigns (Haynes and Rhine 1998).

Therefore, I assume that the more the campaign interacts with the media, the more likely it is that the campaign is interacting with the other campaigns through the media, and the more likely it is that the campaign has to deal with other non-message related events. For example, if a positive story about a particular campaign is published or aired, the other campaigns will likely try to attract media attention, in an attempt to mitigate the effect of positive media coverage for the campaign in question. Similarly, if a negative story about a campaign is in the works, it is not unusual for reporters to ask the other campaigns to comment on the story. In short, for the relationship in question, the nature of the media coverage (positive/negative) is probably not as important as the amount of coverage, in that

\(^4\)Additionally, campaigns must contend with and respond to: candidates of the other party, contemporaneous events, and the actions of the national government.
the more the media covers the campaign the harder it is for the campaign to stay on its preferred message, thereby making it more difficult for campaigns to pursue their goals. As a consequence, it is likely that the campaign will release fewer issue statements addressing the concerns of voters on the national level.
Data & Methods

I test the multi-faceted approach as applied to national level campaign communication strategy using a dataset derived from the 1999, 2003, and 2007 invisible primaries. As previously stated, the invisible primary is an ideal environment for testing the theory since candidates use this period of time to try and amass their war chests, frame the argument for their campaign in the minds of voters, and place themselves in a competitive position for the coming primaries. Furthermore, there is also strong evidence, that despite the intentions of election reformers, the candidate in the best position in the national poll standings is more likely to be their respective party’s nominee in the general election (Adkins, and Dowdle 2001; Dowdle, Adkins, and Steger 2009; Norrander 2006; Steger 2000). Simply put, a strong showing during the invisible primary is critical for campaigns that hope to secure the party nomination. The 1999-2007 invisible primaries are a suitable testing ground because they cover the different electoral environments common to the nominating process: an open election, an election where the incumbent vice president is seeking the nomination, and an election where the incumbent president is seeking reelection. Similarly, this allows for a test that includes both parties, over a longer period of time, and allows for greater variability in the issues of concern to the nation.

The dependent variable for the model is: the number of press releases about the issues of concern to voters on the national-level, issued by each candidate, per month. Since the theory hinges on the assumption that candidates possess and use information about voter issue preferences, the dependent variable is derived in two stages: by identifying the relevant issues, and by identifying the relevant press releases. Using polling data for every month in the 1999-2007 invisible primaries, I identified the top issues of concern to a national sample of voters.\(^5\) The top issues of concern to voters on the national level in 1999 were: Social Secu-

\(^5\)Gallup polls were available for every month in the sample, which means all of the polls used a consistent methodology, and when possible, other polls were consulted to verify the consistency of the selected issues.
rity & Medicare, education, healthcare, the economy/taxes/jobs, and gun control. In 2003, the top issues of concern were: the economy/taxes/jobs, anti-terrorism efforts, education, and healthcare. During the 2007 invisible primary, the top issues of concern to voters on the national level were: the Iraq war/War on Terror, healthcare, the economy/taxes/jobs, immigration, and Social Security & Medicare. Using multiple issues is critical, since different candidates have different issue preferences, different policy proscriptions, and may have varying records related to particular issues, thereby incentivizing the discussion of some issues over others due to positive or negative issue associations. Using multiple issues, as opposed to just the top issue accounts for these possibilities, and though it is not the case in this particular dataset, it also addresses the possibility that the top issue can change throughout the invisible primary.

After identifying the relevant issues, the total press releases issued by the campaigns were tallied by month and examined for relevant issue content. Press releases were classified as being about one of the issues of interest if they mentioned the issue by name within the press release, and then substantively discussed the issue, or if the press release had a keyword tag for one of the issues. I believe press releases are a reasonable measure of a campaign’s across the sample, which showed that the top issues were comparable across different polls.

6For each cycle, the top issue of concern was constant for the duration of the invisible primary. The other issues were fluid in their placement within the rankings, but constant in that they never ceased being one of the top four issues of concern, and often times, the second and third place issues were tied. Furthermore, the issues listed in this paper are stated exactly as they were in the results for the poll, meaning that when multiple items are listed together as a single issue, as in the case of economy/taxes/jobs, that is how it was listed in the poll results.

7The press releases for 2007 are from all candidates whose press releases were accessible through their public websites during the invisible primary. The press releases for 1999 and 2003 were originally collected by Dr. Audrey Haynes, and were tallied for every complete month’s worth of press releases before the Iowa caucus.

8For example, almost all of the Republican candidates in 2007 had their press releases about taxes keyword tagged on the website under the word “economy.” Also, if a press release dealt with more than one of the issues of interest they were counted as multiple press releases. For example, during the 2008 cycle, the Romney and Obama campaigns regularly issued press releases that were essentially omnibus policy position papers where multiple issues were addressed. Press releases that dealt with the issues of interest, but were explicitly directed to specific geographic locations or specific audiences (ethnic or interest groups) were not counted as part of the issue sample.
national-level messaging strategy for a number of reasons. It is reasonable to assume that many voters on the national-level get their news from the media, and press releases are one of the primary tools campaigns use to communicate with the media. Additionally, press releases are publicly available, and if they were not meant for public consumption they would only be disseminated to the media, especially since press releases are increasingly available through candidate websites. Similarly, press releases contain messages related to substantive issues, messages related to the campaign’s competitive standing via endorsement announcements, messages about fundraising announcements, and messages announcing a candidates standing in the polls. The press releases also appear to be intended for the media, national audiences, and local audiences.

The dataset is comprised of press releases from the campaigns of as many office-seeking candidates as possible. Press releases were available for the following office-seeking candidates: Bill Bradley, Lamar Alexander, George W. Bush, John McCain (1999), Orrin Hatch, John Edwards (2003), Howard Dean, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John Edwards (2007), Bill Richardson, Joe Biden, Chris Dodd, Rudy Giuliani, John McCain (2007), Mitt Romney, and Fred Thompson. The dataset is notable for its exclusion of candidates that were important to each particular cycle. For example, the dataset does not include Former Vice President Al Gore, or Elizabeth Dole. Furthermore, the only candidates from the 2003 invisible primary are Howard Dean and John Edwards. However, this should not be problematic since theoretically, candidates use the multi-faceted approach regardless of who else is running, and because the presence of all the candidates is accounted for when controlling for interactions with the media.\footnote{It is also important to note that the results for the estimated model are essentially the same if the 2004 candidates are excluded, and when the model is estimated using only candidates from the 2000 election cycle, or using only candidates from the 2008 election cycle.}

To test the hypothesis related to poll standings I use polling data collected through the Roper Center (2012). The poll standings were collected for each candidate in the dataset,
and are measured in percentages. For 1999 and 2003, Fox News/Opinion Dynamics polls were used since they were available for every month in the sample. For 2007, NBC/Wall Street Journal polls were used because they were available for every month in the sample. This means that each month’s poll standings for each election cycle were collected using a consistent methodology. Additionally, each candidate’s monthly poll rankings were evaluated against other available polls to see if the rankings were comparable across polls for each month in the sample. By this measure, the poll standings were comparable for each month in the sample, which suggests that using this particular dataset should not be problematic.

Measuring the campaign financial resources to test the associated hypothesis is more problematic. Candidates are required to publicly disclose the names of donors, the size of their donations, as well as the fundraising totals during the invisible primary. However, unlike the election year, where campaigns must file their public financial disclosures monthly, during the invisible primary campaigns are only required to file their public financial disclosures quarterly. Therefore, to measure campaign financial resources I use the dollar amount that a candidate has on hand at the beginning of each quarter, combined with the campaign spending from the previous quarter, and use this figure (rounded to the nearest million) for each month in the quarter. Though this is not an ideal measure of financial resources, it does capture what the theory is trying to test, in that it accounts for the relative level of a campaign’s financial power at any point in time. This also allows for a degree of comparability between the campaigns. For example, this measure is likely a realistic account of the weight of the Clinton campaign’s resources compared to the Edwards campaign’s resources, and so on. If anything, this measure likely overstates a campaign’s financial resources at any point in time since it combines cash on hand with previous spending; thereby making the results derived from this measure more conservative than would likely be the case for results derived from a more precise measure. Additionally, the variable for campaign finances is logged to mitigate the effect of outliers.
To control for the effects of media coverage within the context of the theoretical framework, Lexis/Nexis searches were conducted to find news stories that mention each candidate for each month in the dataset. Using print media is a logical choice since it is not unusual for print stories to drive network and cable news coverage of the campaigns, and because the print media often discusses television news coverage. Consequently, since the theory is not concerned with media content per se, and because the proposed relationship suggests that media coverage stands more as an impediment for candidates to stay on message, the study uses the total number of national news stories where a candidate is mentioned, for each month in the dataset. Additionally, since previous literature (Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003; Haynes, and Murray 1998) suggests that there is a substantive difference in how local news outlets cover campaigns, and that local news outlets focus more on issues, the study also uses the total number of news stories where a candidate is mentioned by a news outlet in the first four primary and caucus states for each month in the dataset.\footnote{For national news stories, Lexis/Nexis searches were conducted using The New York Times, The Washington Post, The L.A. Times, The Chicago Sun, and the AP national wire. For local news stories, Lexis/Nexis searches were conducted using the state and local settings for the first four states of the primary season. For GOP candidates in 1999 these were: Iowa, New Hampshire, Hawaii, and South Carolina. For the Democrats in 1999, the states were: Iowa, New Hampshire, Delaware, and Washington. For 2003, the states were: Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Arizona. For 2007, the states were: Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Nevada.} Between the two media measures, the proposed effects of media coverage should be accounted for. Similarly, the variables for media coverage should also serve as a rough measure for the interactions between the campaigns since the media often acts as an intermediary for campaign to campaign communication and attacks. To control for the possibility that there are differences between the parties I include a dummy variable to delineate between members of the different political parties, with 1 for Democrat, and 0 otherwise.

There are several ways to approach testing the multi-faceted approach as it is applied to national-level issue-based messages. However, I believe a Poisson regression model is more appropriate for testing the proposed theoretical model of candidate messaging on the na-
tional level. For example, if the model is estimated using OLS, and one candidate issued forty press releases, ten of which were about the issues of interest, and another candidate issued four press releases, with one press release about the issue of interest; the dependent variable for both candidates would be measured as twenty five percent. Specifically, I estimate the model via Poisson regression, and use the log of the total number of press releases issued by each candidate as an offset. This accounts for the variability in the total number of press releases issued across campaigns, which could have an effect on the number of press releases that individual campaigns publish about the relevant issues, and it is equivalent to modeling the ratio of national statements to all statements.\textsuperscript{11} For example, some campaigns issued far more press releases than others, while some campaigns issued far fewer press releases than others. Moreover, though the number of press releases campaigns issue appears to be entirely idiosyncratic, this may not be the case, and thus it is appropriate to control for it within the model.

\textsuperscript{11}Additionally, a series of Vuong Non-Nested Hypothesis Tests suggests that the Poisson regression model with the offset is a significant improvement over a Poisson regression model without the offset (-5.3, p-value 0.0001), a Zero-Inflated Poisson regression model (-5.9, p-value 0.0001), and a Negative Binomial regression model (-5.06, p-value 0.0001). Also, an OLS regression model, a Negative Binomial regression model, and a Zero-Inflated Poisson regression model reported similar results. Finally, tests for panel effects suggest that random effects are unnecessary.
The following is a formal representation of the model:

\[ y_{ct} \sim P(\lambda_{ct}) \]

Where:

\[
\ln(\lambda_{ct}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 d_{1c} + \beta_2 x_{2ct} + \beta_3 \ln(x_{3ct}) + \beta_4 x_{4ct} + \beta_5 x_{5ct} + \ln(x_{6ct})
\]

Where:

- \( y_{ct} \): The number of press releases about the top issues of Concern to voters on the national level issued by candidate \( c \), by month.
- \( \ln(\lambda_{ct}) \): The log of the expected number of press releases about the top issues of concern to voters on the national level issued by candidate \( c \), by month.
- \( d_{1c} \): A dummy variable indicating whether or not the candidate is a Democrat.
- \( x_{2ct} \): The national poll standing (measured in percentages) of candidate \( c \), by month.
- \( \ln(x_{3ct}) \): The log of financial resources (rounded to the nearest million) of candidate \( c \), by month.
- \( x_{4ct} \): The number of national news stories that mention candidate \( c \), by month.
- \( x_{5ct} \): The number of local news stories that mention candidate \( c \), by month.
- \( \ln(x_{6ct}) \): The model uses the log of the total number of candidate press releases for candidate \( c \), by month, as an offset.
Results

Before discussing the results for the model of national level issue-based campaign communications, it is instructive to evaluate some of the salient features of the dataset used in the study. Table 1 contains some of the important descriptive statistics for the dataset. As expected, there appears to be a high degree of variability within all of the variables of interest. Candidate statements about the top issues of concern to voters on the national level vary between zero and fifty seven percent, and have a mean of twenty percent, which indicates that, in general, candidates dedicate a significant percentage of their press releases to discuss issues of concern to the national electorate. There is also a high degree of variability in the frequency of individual statements dedicated to the top issues of concern to voters at the national level. Specifically, the number of press releases about the top issues has a median and mean of eight, and range between zero and twenty nine. Similarly, there is significant variation in candidate poll standings, and candidate finances. Unsurprisingly, the degree of difference between the numbers of national news stories versus local news stories is quite high.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Monthly Candidate Press Releases, Candidate Poll Standings, Candidate Finances, and News Stories about the Candidates in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 Invisible Primaries per month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Press Releases About the Relevant Issues</td>
<td>0-57</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Press Releases About the Relevant Issues</td>
<td>0-29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Candidate Press Releases</td>
<td>4-150</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate poll Standings (Percentage Points)</td>
<td>1-67</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Finances (in Millions of Dollars)</td>
<td>1-78</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of National News Stories About the Candidate</td>
<td>35-1096</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Local News Stories About the Candidate</td>
<td>27-329</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 contains the results for the estimated Poisson regression model of campaign issue-based communications of interest to voters on the national level. Counter to theoreti-
cal expectations, the coefficient for candidate finances is positive, and statistically significant. Since the coefficients of interest are the product of a Poisson regression model it is useful to interpret them by exponentiating the coefficients. Specifically, we expect that an increase of one in the log of campaign finances should increase the odds of a candidate publishing press releases about the relevant issues by a factor of 1.16, on average, ceteris paribus. In other words, we should expect to see a 16 percent increase in the number of press releases about the relevant issues, on average, ceteris paribus. This suggests that campaign finances do have a systematic effect on candidate press releases about the issues of concern to voters on the national level, but not as predicted by the multi-faceted approach.

However, the coefficient for candidate poll standings is both negative and statistically significant, which conforms to theoretical expectations. We should expect that a one percentage point increase in candidate poll standings should decrease the expected number of press releases about the issues of concern to voters on the national-level by a factor of 0.98, on average, ceteris paribus. This suggests that we should expect to see a 2 percent decrease in the publication of press releases about the relevant issues, on average, ceteris paribus. This in line with expectations according to the multi-faceted approach.

As expected, The coefficient for the number of national news stories is both negative and significant. However, the coefficient for the number of local news stories is not statistically significant. This suggests, that campaign interactions with the national media, does pull the campaign off message, in that the campaigns will focus less on the issues of concern to voters on the national-level, but this does not appear to be the case as it relates to campaign interactions with state-level media outlets. Interestingly, the coefficient for the dummy variable for Democrat is both positive and significant.\footnote{To see scatterplots of the relationships of interest see Appendix A.}

The coefficient for candidate poll standings, and to a lesser extent the coefficient for financial resources do not appear to be substantively significant. However, since the model
Table 2: Estimated Poisson Regression Model of Monthly Presidential Candidate Statements on the Matters of Importance to Voters on The National Level During the 1999, 2003, and 2007 Invisible Primaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Z-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-1.74</td>
<td>0.1233</td>
<td>-14.125</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.0668</td>
<td>5.861</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Poll Standings</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.0037</td>
<td>-4.820</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Finances</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.0514</td>
<td>2.866</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of National News Stories</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
<td>-1.768</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Local News Stories</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0007</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Log-Likelihood: -362.5643, DF = 6, N: 143, Campaign finances are logged to control for outliers.
Null Deviance: 359.16, DF = 142, Residual Deviance: 219, DF = 137

is estimated using a Generalized Linear Model, a strict interpretation of the coefficients is not particularly useful. Instead, a visual representation of the results may be more instructive. Figure 2 contains the plots for the expected number of statements across the range of candidate finances and across the range of candidate poll standings with ninety five percent confidence intervals, and the covariates held at their means. According to Figure 2, as finances increase, a candidate is expected to steadily increase the number of monthly press releases about the issues of concern to voters on the national level. Specifically, a campaign with one million dollars in finances is expected to issue one statement on the issues of concern. As finances increase, a campaign is expected to steadily release more issue statements, and are expected to release sixteen statements when the candidate has seventy eight million dollars in the campaign coffers, on average, ceteris paribus. Additionally, as a candidate's poll standings increase, the campaign is expected to release fewer press releases about the issues of concern. A candidate that is one percent in the polls, is expected to release thirteen statements, and is expected to steadily issue fewer statements as poll standings increase, with a candidate releasing one statement if they are polling at sixty seven percent, on average, ceteris paribus.
(a) Plot for Candidate Finances  (b) Plot for Candidate Poll Standings

Figure 2: The Expected Number of Press Releases about the Issues of Concern to Voters on the National Level Given Candidate Finances, and Candidate Poll Standings in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 Invisible Primaries, with 95% Confidence Intervals.

The results for the estimated Poisson regression model do not entirely conform to the expectations of the multi-faceted approach. The results for candidate poll standings and the national media are in line with theoretical expectations, but the results for candidate finances and state media outlets are not. Specifically, it appears that candidates with lower poll standings do send out more press releases, which is how they are expected to behave if they are attempting to increase the perceived viability of their campaign. As expected, it is likely that interactions with the national media, and by proxy, the other campaigns, appear to draw a campaign’s attention away from national-level issue messaging. However, the results for the relationship between campaign funds and national-level issue messaging requires further exploration.

As it stands, it appears that that there is a different relationship governing the effect of campaign finances on campaign messages addressing the issues of concern to voters on the
national-level than what is theorized by the multi-faceted approach. Specifically, the evidence suggests that candidates with larger war chests release more press releases addressing the concerns of voters at the national-level. There could be several reasons for this. It could be the case that campaigns with greater financial resources maintain more of a focus on the issues of concern to the nation in hopes of perpetuating their financial superiority over their competitors, which can increase the likelihood of victory in the nominating campaign. It is also possible that well funded campaigns just do more of everything within their power to try and win the nomination. Another possibility is that this finding is the result of measurement error, given the bluntness of the measure used for testing the effect of financial resources. The results may also be a symptom of model misspecification, caused by things like omitted variables or incorrect variable formatting. If this is not the result of measurement error, or model misspecification, the expectations for the multi-faceted approach may require revision in light of the evidence. Further research is necessary to determine which, if any, of these possibilities hold the key to explaining the nature of the relationships in question.

Theoretical expectations aside, the results for poll standings, and the results for campaign funds, given their context in communications strategy, do make some kind of sense. In other contexts, namely voting behavior in the primaries, the effects of campaign viability and campaign funds tend to work together (Abramowitz 1989; Aldrich and Alvarez 1994). However, given that the particular relationship in question deals more with campaign goals, and not voting behavior, at least not directly, should we still expect the two factors to have the same effects? If the evidence presented here is any indicator, the answer appears to be no. However, there may be a starting point to build a theoretical bridge for explaining this anomaly. For example, the multi-faceted approach does predict that different candidates will use their communications with prospective voters for different reasons, given the poll standings and financial standings of the campaign. The evidence suggests that we should also expect that these two factors may have competing effects, or that campaigns may favor
one factor over the other given their unique circumstances as it relates to poll standings and campaign funds. In other words, bigshots and longshots (Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993) may be using their issue messages to pursue or prioritize different goals.

The results for the rest of the model are not entirely surprising. It makes sense that as national media coverage increases, campaigns have a harder time staying on their preferred message. However, this does not explain the null results for state-level media coverage. State-level media outlets dedicate more of their campaign coverage to issues, even though they are still influenced by the national media (Flowers, Haynes, and Crespin 2003; Haynes, and Murray 1998), and we would expect that this would have an effect on national-level issue messaging. It may be the case that state media outlets, though they do spend more time on issues, do not cover national issues as extensively, and campaigns keep this in mind when crafting their messages, and instead use these outlets to try and communicate exclusively with voters in these markets. Further testing is necessary to see if this is the case. Finally, the estimated model predicts that, on average, Democratic candidates are expected to discuss the relevant issues more than Republican candidates. However, explaining why we should expect this result is outside the scope of this paper, and would require a different theoretical perspective.

The results partially support the multi-faceted approach. It appears that candidates do use their messages addressing the concerns of voters on the national-level in a way that suggests that they are trying to increase the perceived viability of the campaign. The model also conforms to the unique nature of national-level issue messaging according to expectations for the interactions between the campaign and the national media. However, the relationship between national-level issue messages and campaign finances does not work as theorized, which suggests that the multi-faceted approach may need some revision. This must be addressed before further testing of the multi-faceted approach can proceed, and before research is expanded to different types of communications, and different audiences.
Conclusions

It does appear that candidates do utilize their national-level issue-based communications for strategic purposes. In simple terms, the evidence suggests that campaigns put out issue-oriented press releases, attempting to increase their financial resources, and improve their perceived campaign viability. This quest is mitigated by the dynamic nature of the horse race, as depicted by the national media. This is in at least partial conformity with the expectations of the multi-faceted approach. The results also suggest that campaigns use issue messages in a way that is more complex than the literature currently suggests. Specifically, candidates do appear to use their messages addressing the issues of concerns of voters on the national-level to increase campaign viability in accordance with the expectations of the multi-faceted approach. However, this does not appear to apply to the relationship between national-level campaign issue messages and campaign funds. This is not to say that campaigns do not strategically use their issue messages to raise funds. It merely suggests that if campaigns are strategically using these types of messages in an attempt to raise funds, they are doing so in a manner contrary to the expectations of the multi-faceted approach. Further research is needed to more clearly ascertain how this particular relationship functions, and to incorporate it into the multi-faceted approach, or to develop a new theoretical perspective.

This leads to an important point, this study is not without its limitations. For example, when candidates are observed by the month, it appears that there is a systematic foundation for national-level campaign issue messaging in the invisible primaries. This may not be the case if we observe campaigns daily or weekly. Additionally, this study cannot speak to whether or not the findings are evidence of a recent trend, or if campaigns have been behaving this way for some time. Nor should the multi-faceted approach, as it is currently constructed, be applied to the primaries themselves. Further research is necessary to determine whether or not the multi-faceted approach is only suitable for the invisible primary, or
if it also applies to the primary season.

Another deficiency in this particular approach to testing the theory is related to the different types of campaign communications. For example, further research is necessary for determining to what degree other types of communications vehicles like, phone calls, direct mail, email, television advertising, and microtargeting conform to the multi-faceted approach. It is possible that all of the different types of campaign communication tools fit within the confines of the multi-faceted approach to campaign messaging strategy. However, it is possible that only some of the tools are compatible, or that none of the tools are compatible. These are questions that need to be addressed in future research.

There are also limitations to the theory itself. As currently formulated, the multi-faceted approach only applies to campaign (policy) issue messaging. However, candidates do not solely discuss policy issues during their quest for the nomination. Campaigns also discuss valence issues, the campaign’s competitive standing, and the campaign’s financial strength. In the future, the multi-faceted approach should be reconfigured to take this into account, so that it not only applies to policy issue related campaign communications with different groups, but also applies to the various types of messages campaigns use when communicating with different groups.

Another area for which there is room for improvement is related to overall campaign strategy. The multi-faceted approach assumes that candidates will formulate their issue messages, and use these messages to communicate with different audiences as part of their strategy to win the party nomination. In doing so, it is also assumed that candidates integrate this approach into their overall nomination strategy. However, the multi-faceted approach as it is currently structured only implicitly incorporates the different types of campaign strategies not related to campaign communications. In other words, the multi-faceted approach does not have explicit expectations related to how a campaign’s communications strategy fits into the overall strategy for winning the nomination. It may be the case that their are different
forces governing how bigshots and longshots (Gurian 1986; Gurian and Haynes 1993) use their issue messages. Further research is necessary to tease out these nuances.

Finally, this should not be considered the last word on this subject. Hopefully, it is but the first of many steps that leads to a better understanding of how campaigns use their communications strategies to pursue their goals. Furthermore, though it is flawed, this approach does lead to some interesting insights, and it serves as a starting point for theory building, discussion, and debate. Due to the initial tests of the multi-faceted approach, we now have empirical evidence that there is a systematically observable pattern to national-level campaign issue messages. It is likely that further testing will build upon this finding and expand our collective knowledge of campaign communications. Future research should incorporate the aforementioned suggestions to build a more comprehensive configuration of the multi-faceted approach, and test it using data from different time periods, using different types of communications tools, different types of messages, and over the course of the nomination contest.
Appendix A: Scatterplots of The Relationships of Interest

(a) Candidate Press Releases by the log of Campaign Finances

(b) Candidate Press Releases by Candidate Poll Standings

Figure 3: Scatterplots of Monthly Candidate Press Releases about the Relevant Issues by Candidate Finances, and Candidate Poll Standings

(a) Candidate Press Releases by National News Stories Mentioning the Candidate

(b) The Log of Candidate Finances by Candidate Poll Standings

Figure 4: Scatterplots of Monthly Candidate Press Releases about the Relevant Issues by Candidate Finances, and Candidate Poll Standings
References


