



The Election of 2004 – Collective Memory Project

Interviewee: Daron Shaw

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In 2004: Strategist for the Bush-Cheney 2004 Presidential Campaign

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Q: Daron Shaw, you wrote a book after the 2004 election called *The Race to 270*, and the subtitle is *The Electoral College and the Campaign Strategies of 2004*. It's a work of political science; it's a work of broader political analysis, but it's also, in a sense, got some aspects of a political memoir, and I wonder if we could start with that, and that is, trace back to whatever you think is the beginning of the story, but how did you end up with the two George W. Bush presidential election campaigns, trace that back to its beginning, and then get us up to the point at which you take on a role with those campaigns.

SHAW: I'd written my dissertation when I was at UCLA on presidential campaigns and their effects, and there's actually [00:01:00] a debate in political science about the effects that presidential campaigns have on voters, whether or not they're consequential, or whether they're somewhat ephemeral. So I'd been interested in campaigns, you know, all my academic life. I'd actually worked with a pollster named Fred Steeper of Market Strategies Incorporated.

In the 1989 mayoral races, I went out in the summer, worked the first Giuliani-Dinkins race [in New York], and a handful of gubernatorial elections, one in New Jersey, one in Virginia where Steeper was doing some polling. And I'd done some analysis, and was invited back out in '92 to work the presidential, the reelection of George H. W. Bush. And I had struck a deal with Fred to keep some of the polling data, which I then used to write up my dissertation, and became the foundation of a couple of articles that I'd



written, as first -- I guess I had approached them as a grad student, but sort of formulated them as an assistant professor at the University of Texas.

So I was here in Austin, at [00:02:00] UT, and lo and behold, in '97 or '98, I was walking down the street, and a friend of mine, colleague Bob Luskin, who's a professor here, was walking with Karl Rove, on Guadalupe, the main drag here at the university, and Bob arranged introductions, and said, you know, you all should have lunch, and shook hands, and subsequently, Karl called me a couple times. We began having what amounted to a monthly, or every six-week lunch where we'd talk about my research interests, and he'd pick my brain on some things. At that point, Karl was finishing up his undergraduate degree, which he had started, I think, in Utah when he was sort of famously in college and working with the College Republicans, but I think Karl's political career took him away from finishing his undergraduate degree, so he was sort of surreptitiously finishing his college degree here at the University of Texas, and was taking a seminar with Luskin, which is how they met. [00:03:00]

I began talking with him in '97 and '98, and then I believe it was early in 1999, that I had one of these lunches with Karl, and he had asked if I would entertain the prospect of working with President -- Governor George W. Bush's kind of burgeoning presidential campaign. So this was about, I suppose, a year and a half, maybe a little more than that, out from the 2000 election. And I asked Karl what he had envisioned, and he had a couple of assignments. He and I had had a conversation about some work I'd actually done with Fred Steeper on modeling the Electoral College, and prioritizing states, and Karl was interested in that. And he said, he would like me to come on board and do some of that research for Governor Bush.

I said, I think that would probably work, but I was concerned; I was an assistant professor here, and I had a full load of teaching obligations, and Karl said, "Oh, no, no, no. [00:04:00] Don't worry about that. We'll work around your schedule; it'll be fine. You know, there'll be no problem, and you know, so I naively thought, "Oh, OK, well, I can do this without too much of a problem." And Karl also had some other tasks. I remember, he was interested in establishing targets. We were talking about statewide targets, media market vote targets, vote goals, county vote goals, township in the New England and Mid-Atlantic state goals, and then precinct-level goals. And he asked if I would be interested in working with the team on that. And then I think there was a third task, which I believe was the Catholic vote, Karl was very interested in. I don't remember ever doing anything on the Catholic vote.

But those were sort of the tasks that Karl had outlined in this spring 1999 luncheon that we'd had. And I checked with the people here at UT, and they basically said, you know, so long as you're not using University of Texas equipment, or facilities, then it's



fine. You have to meet your teaching obligations, etc., but you know, I [00:05:00] checked that out and made sure I was -- you know, in compliance with everything going on here at UT, and I thought a lot of the research that I had done was already in the pipeline, for my case for promotion, and the stuff I had done drew on the 1988 and '92 presidential elections, and a little bit from '96. I thought, if I'm going to be an expert on campaigns, if I'm going to teach this stuff, you know, I ought to know it. This is an opportunity in my backyard in Austin to participate in a presidential campaign. You know, I have sort of a personal/professional in. I'll be doing stuff that I'd be interested in. You know, I'd be crazy not to do this. And looking back -- I think I would have been crazy. I mean, the thought of missing out on that experience, and you know, the information that I had access to, the contacts and connections, and discussions and conversations, the exposure to what really goes on in a campaign really was pretty spectacular, and I was incredibly lucky to have that experience.

And the information [00:06:00] that I drew on in the book was almost exclusively provided by that experience in 2000, and then subsequently 2004 when I did work more at a distance. I stayed in Austin, but had a few tasks that the Bush campaign, the reelect and the RNC, asked me to take care of. And so, that's sort of the parameters of my involvement in 2000 and 2004.

Q: You know, university faculties are famously not Republican, and political science departments, or government departments, as you call it here, are famously stand back from politics, and observe it, rather than get in and into the game. So, did that provide any -- did those sort of cultural barriers within the profession affect you?

SHAW: It was a little bit of an issue. And actually, subsequently, I had some professors here at Texas and other places who held me accountable [00:07:00] for the Florida fiasco. According to a few of them, I'm personally responsible for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. That sort of conversations I find fairly tedious. But I don't know that -- the reaction amongst people who do public opinion voting research was almost universally positive. It was on the order of, wow, this is an incredible experience, how lucky you are to be involved. And I know a few friends of mine in the profession who were involved in the Gore campaign, and we've compared notes on what happened on their side of the aisle, which was very useful.

But I think those who actually write about voting, and do research in voting on campaigns and elections were extremely supportive, and it was nice after the election to have conversations with them, because they were as distant as I was prior to that. They knew things; they talked with people. They may have had, you know, maybe second-order involvement in campaigns, but to actually have a chance to be there and [00:08:00] see it unfold, really informed my research in a way that I couldn't have without that experience.



My favorite example is that after the election, there was a lot of conversation about why the Bush campaign had wasted resources in California. And I actually went to a couple of panels at the Midwest Political Science Association where people discussed this, and talked about how it made no sense, and a good friend of mine, Larry Bartels at Princeton talked about this as an example of how, you know, even supposedly good campaigns made poor resource decisions.

What actually happened was, is that because George H. W. Bush had raised so much money in California, and not spent any money there in 1992, the California Republican Party and California groups were extremely reluctant to open their wallets for George W. Bush, because it didn't look like California was going to be competitive in 2000. So, the Bush campaign at a variety of levels made assurances to people in California and the Republican [00:09:00] party that Bush would not leave California, hang them out to dry, that he would spend some resources there in support of statewide candidates, and would make a visit there.

Well, it's October, and Bush had committed I believe on the order of five million dollars in television advertising money to California. In October, the money was still kind of targeted for California, and the campaign -- I think Matt Dowd was a major player in this, and Karl Rove also -- decided that they would wrap the California expenditure up, and sort of present it as an example of Bush being on the offense. You know, they'd made this commitment, but they thought they should get some mileage out of it. And if you recall in the 2000 election, Washington and Oregon and New Mexico were all battleground states, and so Bush had a planned trip to the Pacific Northwest. He was going to hit Albuquerque or Santa Fe on the way back to Austin. So he figured, well, they'd stop in Los Angeles and Burbank, and they'd do a shot on *The Tonight Show*. They'd put [00:10:00] the money out there and buy, you know, five million dollars worth of ads in Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and Fresno in support of some of these candidates, and they would see if they could get an earned media hit, that the newspapers would pick it up as an example that Bush was kind of moving into Gore's territory and on the offense, and Gore was on the defense. And they'd dress it up.

But the commitment had been made, and the commitment was not one of strategy, except insofar as it was a strategy to raise money in California. So I had to go to these conferences afterwards and have political scientists puzzle over this bizarre decision on the part of the Bush campaign to spend resources in California. Well, that was the only way they were going to raise that money, or at least get the California party people to commit to funding the Bush campaign. But you know, I would have not known that, and you know, none of these political scientists had any opportunity -- only, if you'd been in the campaign you could know that. If you hadn't been, there's



no way you'd know it. And I don't know that the Bush campaign ever sort of openly talked about that. But it was -- you know, it was a decision that was [00:11:00] born of strategic necessity, but not the kind we were focusing on.

Q: Well, this kind of brings us to theme of your book, which is how candidates decide, how their organizations decide where to spend their scarce resources, especially money, and their own time. So, begin with that. I mean, what is it that goes into making those very important strategic decisions about where to spend time and money?

SHAW: I think the premise of the book is in some sense taken from econometrics. And I think a lot of what political science does is to beg, borrow, and steal from both economic and psychology, psychological theories. And I assumed -- walked into my research on campaigns assuming that candidates and campaigns are rational actors, that they have limited resources, and they have tangible goals that they're seeking to achieve. And so, [00:12:00] in the case of a presidential election, you're trying to get 270 electoral votes. That's the context, the constitutionally-prescribed context. And the question is, how do you do that?

And one of the things that had not been addressed in the literature before I started my research was the significance of, not just television advertising, but the structure of media markets across the country. This seemed to be something that political scientists hadn't really understood or come to grips with, that the proper unit of analysis, the level at which advertising is disseminated is the media market. So we had some stuff on states, which is appropriate given the Electoral College, some good stuff in the 1970s by Steven Brams, and [Colin Tony?], and Peter Ordeshook, some interesting things kind of modeling presidential campaign strategies. But it was a small conversation; it hadn't really gone out to the larger campaigns and voting community.

But this was something when you're in a campaign that's unavoidable, that the media market is a critical unit [00:13:00] of analysis, and if you go back and look at strategies all the way back into the Eisenhower days, candidates and their strategists think in terms of media market, with media markets being the building block for winning states. You know, how much advertising do we need in a particular market? What's the political and behavioral, you know, kind of structure in Fresno, Visalia, Monterey, San Diego, you know, if you're going to take on California.

And so I thought this was interesting. It's not a profound insight, and I think after the fact, everybody acknowledged that, well yeah, that makes sense, you know. But, no one had really done it at the time, and we certainly didn't have any data on spending on that level. So, a couple of conversations with media people or with campaign people will tell you that in fact, polling, any kind of good poll will break the electorate



down by media market, and they take a look at the structure of opinion, the nature of partisanship, sense of what's going on, [00:14:00] mood of the country, within each media market within a particular state, whether it's Ohio, or Florida, or California, or Pennsylvania, and that what you want to do is identify some set of states that you think are critical to your coalition, and then within the states identify media markets that you think need attention in order to get you to your goal of amassing 270 electoral votes.

And so, what quickly dawned on me was that there were a couple of decisions that were made by campaigns. Within the context of the Electoral College, you had to identify states that you thought were closest to that 270 cutoff point. In other words, you have your base states. You have states that you're probably never going to win, your opponent's base. And then there are states that could go either way. And you know, the strategy was fairly obvious, which is, you don't need to spend a lot of resources in mobilizing your very bottom base states, the states that are going to go with you no matter what. And you certainly don't want to spend any time in your opponent's base. But you want to concentrate [00:15:00] your resources on those states that could make the difference between 270 -- you know, winning 270, and not winning 270.

And that's an obvious observation; people had made that before. But it hadn't really been kind of set up or explored in a systematic way. And I wanted to do that. I wanted to make sure the campaigns were doing that. It turns out, they are. And I wanted to get a sense of, OK, well, that's sort of a loose strategic context, but is there more to it? And what seemed to be consistent was that states would do something like a fivefold classification system. They would have their base, and the opponent's base. And then they would have three middle --

Q: Campaigns would have the --

SHAW: Campaigns would have, almost universally, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan, Carter. You know, all the way through the Bush's, Clinton, and even up to the Dubya elections, George W. Bush, campaigns would have these five categories, with the two base categories on the ends. And then these three categories in the middle. [00:16:00] And they would have states that kind of leaned towards them -- you know, they wanted to shore up -- states that probably leaned towards the opposition, that might be worth taking a crack at, and then states that really seemed to be determinative.

And what's interesting, I've had these conversations with some of my friends and how Electoral College strategy has changed over time, whether it's changed over time. And one thing that struck me is that even if you're on a campaign that has very little chance of winning, you know, the McGovern campaign in 1972, or the Mondale



campaign in '84, or the Dole campaign in '96, that you've got to figure out what your minimum winning coalition would look like, even if you may have a hard time -- if that's unlikely, you still need to figure out the combination of states that get you to 270. So even if you're George McGovern or Bob Dole, you've got a strategy. And you're going to concentrate resources in those states that get you to 270.

Now, if you're on the opposite side, if you're Reagan in '84, or Clinton in '96, you can expand [00:17:00] your strategy, but if -- at its core, that's an Electoral College strategy. And there's some consistency over time to this. Within -- so when you identify those small set of states that you think are going to be critical to getting to 270, then the question is, how do you allocate resources within that small band of states?

Q: Let me ask you this: how do you decide what -- and the term that's usually used for what you're describing is "battleground states," right?

SHAW: "Battleground states," or "swing states."

Q: How do you determine which those states are?

SHAW: Yeah, this has actually evolved over time. I've gone back and done some research in the Eisenhower elections, in the Kennedy and Johnson elections, Nixon elections, and a lot of it is based on previous electoral history. So you take a look at the last electoral map. And states that were close, you assume are going to be close moving forward.

Now, what we did in 2000 actually, and this actually a product of some of the work I had done with Fred Steeper, [00:18:00] is you can actually take states and look at their votes over time, compare election to election. And if you do something we do in political science fairly regularly and that's run a factor analysis, you actually find that the loading of states breaks down into two factors. Sometimes elections -- the structure of states, that is, the rank ordering, which states are most Republican to which states are least Republican -- has a structure that kind of loads on a similar factor, and on other instances, the structure loads on another factor. And if you look at the details, what you find is that in some elections, the southern states end up being really pro-Republican. They're at the top of the list, the Mississippi and the Alabamas. In another set of elections, Utah, Wyoming, Nebraska end up being at the top of that list. You know, this is all based on historical data.

But it occurred to -- I ran this with Fred Steeper in 1992. It occurred to Steeper that, and me [00:19:00], that some elections seem to structure more on ideological terms, that is the rank-ordering of states was a reflection of how conservative ideologically the states are. And those elections that loaded there were elections like 1980, and 1964. On the other factor, you saw elections in which the underlying party distribution in the state was the dominant factor in terms of rank order. And those



are elections like 1972, or 1976. What seems to -- and then there are elections that fall in that 90 degree space between those two factors.

But one of the things that Fred and I were interested in in '92, and one of the things I mentioned, and ran for Karl repeatedly in 2000 was, what kind of election were we looking at, in '92 or 2000? Is it an ideological election in which states -- you know, the Border South states for instance, become much [00:20:00] more Republican, or is it a party election, in which case the Border South states become battleground states like Kentucky and Tennessee? And we found in 2000, initially, that if you ran some of the various scant state polling data that we had in late 1999, or early, very early 2000, that the race looked like it was going to fall almost on a 45 degree angle, that it was not an ideological race, not a party race, but something almost right in between, a hybrid. And if you do that, it produced a hypothetical rank order of states, according to the Republican potential. And we used that list and updated it continuously. When we would get new polling information in, we would feed the polling information into the factor analysis to see if there was an adjustment in the vector that 2000 projected into.

Now eventually, you know, I mentioned and been obsessing with historical results. But eventually, you get enough polling information [00:21:00] that you can discard the historical data, except as a check, and use the rank order based on contemporaneous polling information. And what we ended up getting was, when enough state polling data had come in, we found that, essentially the rank order was very close to the vector we had projected.

So, I think what's happened over time, this was becoming the case in 2000 and 2004, was that polling information almost supersedes historical results. The question is, so for instance, if you got a state that's gone Democrat five times in a row, like West Virginia, for instance, heading into 2000, but you get polling information, or modeling information that suggests maybe it'll go a different way this time, at what point do you believe it? At what point do you believe those data? And we did have a couple of cases with that. We had West Virginia, which consistently popped up as a pretty promising Republican state [00:22:00] with the polling data. And then we had a state like Tennessee, which we had initially written off because it was Al Gore's home state. But we kept having empirical evidence suggesting that it would be ridiculous to write it off.

So those are two examples, and I think as we move forward past 2000, 2004, you'll see states that pop up consistently in this manner that Republican keep going after even though they look tough. Wisconsin is one that comes to mind. Wisconsin hasn't



gone Republican a lot of years, but both polling data and the historical data, you know, and the structural data suggest that it probably ought to be on the target list.

By the way, I would suggest that, one state that, where there was a discrepancy was Pennsylvania. The Electoral College, historical factor analysis that I had run suggested Pennsylvania was not a good state. The polling data suggested it was. I kind of wish we'd gone with the historical data. (laughter) Because we wasted a lot of time and money [00:23:00] in Pennsylvania, and I'm not sure Pennsylvania was ever winnable.

Q: What did you learn from the experience of 2000, that you carried into 2004?

SHAW: I think we learned -- this is going to sound obvious -- but to trust the data, that dynamics do change from election to election. That states for idiosyncratic reasons -- sometimes it's population shifts, sometimes it's change in the political climate at the top of the state. But they move around a little bit. So while there is a rough structure, and a consistency to the rank order, things vary from year to year. In our election, West Virginia went from being a -- you know, a pie in the sky state, to being a cornerstone to the Republican coalition.

Later on in 2008, I think the Obama people probably had the same realization with Indiana, which was -- there was no reason for them to have targeted Indiana, except they kept having data showing that it was a pretty good target, and that was a reflection of the demography of Indiana, which has changed a little bit, the presence of an African American candidate [00:24:00] at the top of the ticket, and things of that nature. We had a couple of those realizations in 2000 that carried forward to 2004.

Mechanically, the other thing I would suggest, and returns to the question, the fundamental question I asked earlier about how do you target, and that is that what we ended up doing was, once we had identified a set of battleground states, the targeting actually shifted from state-focused to market-focused. So in other words, you were either a battleground state or you weren't. Once you were in the battleground state range, we listed all of the media markets within those subset of battleground states, and we allocated resources based on an estimate of cost per persuadable voter, so where could we get the most bang for the buck within that contest, and that was done almost with a blind eye towards the states themselves. It was, where was the most market efficiency within our universe of battleground states. That wasn't something [00:25:00] that occurred prior to the 2000 Bush campaign, I don't think. And I think it was critical as we move forward into 2004, that you know, you model at the state level to a point, but once you've got the states that you're going for, then everything else falls away. Even the state boundaries go away. You're no longer interested in Nevada versus Ohio or Florida. You're looking for market efficiencies within the subset of battleground states.



And you know, part of our calculation took into account electoral votes per market, and some other things. But you know, if the data told us to be in, you know, Dothan, or if the data told us to be in Reno, and if that was at the top of the list, that got the -- you know, that market got the resources, and we weren't as interested in Nevada versus Ohio versus Florida.

Q: Now, explain that to me, because if Ohio, and obviously it did in both elections, ends up on the list of states you've got to fight for, [00:26:00] how do you decide within Ohio Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati--what is it that makes advertising in one or more of those media markets efficient?

SHAW: Media market -- the price of advertising in media markets is driven not solely by population, which I think is something that people mistake. You know, they think, well, there's more people, so the cost is higher. It's actually, that is a factor, but it's the purchasing power of the individuals in the market.

So for instance, my example classically is that, I'm from San Diego. San Diego is a larger media market, at least it was, than San Francisco/San Jose. But San Francisco/San Jose is a pricier media market because the purchasing power of individuals within there is slightly higher than it is in San Diego. So, you know, it's more costly. The idea is, is that advertising, you know, is to people with dollars, and if the people have more dollars, it's more expensive to reach them. [00:27:00] If you move to politics, the inefficiencies occur at even a higher level, though, because you have a market like San Francisco, and there's very few persuadable voters in San Francisco. So not only are you paying a ton of money, but you're not going to reach many persuadable voters. So it becomes in that sense, an inefficient market.

In a state like Ohio, which is a great example, Cleveland is the dominant market. Now for Republicans, there are, you know, some targets, some people in that market who are persuadable, but you're paying a premium to reach them, as opposed to, say Toledo, or even Cincinnati, or Columbus. Columbus, I believe, in the last couple of elections has been a really efficient market, because it's priced according to population, right, so the price is lower than it would be in Cleveland. But the yield, that is the number of persuadable voters in the Columbus market is actually significantly higher than in Cleveland.

So, those sorts of market inefficiencies within a state come into play. So the question from a campaign's perspective [00:28:00] is, OK, how much does it cost to advertise in the market, and how many persuadable voters are in that market? Now that estimate comes from, you can generate some estimates based on previous election history, so you can take a look at election returns, and your voter list, which offers some data that can allow you to calculate persuadable voters, and/or polling information. And in the Bush campaign in 2000, the sophistication of the voter list wasn't what it is today.



We had pretty good voter lists, but we weren't confident about estimating the number of persuadable voters solely on the voter list in 2000. So we were relying mostly on polling information.

Q: Now, when you talk about a persuadable voter, are you talking about somebody that can be persuaded -- hasn't decided who to vote for, but you know they're going to vote, or are you talking about something maybe more like, mobilization where you know this person is for you, but your purpose is, in advertising, to get them to vote?

SHAW: It's a great question, the persuasion [00:29:00] versus mobilization. In the cost per persuadable voter, we're mostly, back in those days, talking about people who are assumed to be voters. So the question is, can we get them to show up and vote for, in this case, George W. Bush. Nowadays, and actually, really beginning in 2004, the mobilization factor came into play. So one of the main differences between 2000 and 2004 was we were very cognizant of a broader universe. We assumed that there were people who were predisposed to vote for President Bush for the reelect, but who may or may not show up to vote. And this was actually factored into the calculations and the cost of advertising.

And in fact, two places in particular, just to, you know, kind of put some flesh on the dinosaur, southern Ohio was a place where we thought that there were lots of Republican-leaning voters who needed to be mobilized, needed to be touched. Now there's a question about whether television was the best mode to do that, or whether [00:30:00] more personal content. And actually, the campaign spent more money on personal contact, and putting the president there, or surrogates there doing visits to get people out to vote, but even in the advertising strategy, that became a major factor. And that really was, in some sense.

Now, we were aware of that, obviously, in 2000. But most of the targeting was on classic persuasion, assume you're going to vote, and then which way would you go, whereas voting is obviously a two-step process, right? We have to convince you to show up, and then persuade you to vote for our guy. In addition to southern Ohio, the panhandle of Florida was a high-priority area in 2000, then even more so in 2004. So those were areas where they're sort of Republican-rich targets, but based on 2000, we thought we had underachieved; that we had left some voters on the table. And so, that came into play when we were establishing targets for 2004.

Q: Let's talk for a moment about the map [00:31:00] in 2004. What were the battleground states in 2004, and how was the math different from 2000?

SHAW: The main differences between 2004 and 2000 were that Florida had moved slightly down. Florida was still a high-priority target, or high-priority battleground state. But Ohio, which had been lean-Republican in 2000 became, maybe the battleground state in 2004. We continued to have Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, New Mexico. Nevada was a state that John Kerry had prioritized. We thought it leaned Bush, but it was also on



the radar screen. Iowa, which President Bush was very keen on, and had become a target, even though Iowa has a well-earned reputation of being very anti-war, and having serious reservations about the Republican Party when the criterion for evaluation becomes military commitment. But other things had shifted in a positive way, so that we thought Iowa [00:32:00] was some -- was a state that we could flip heading into 2004. New Hampshire, which in many ways makes it a standout amongst the New England states. It really is the only battleground state remaining, Maine to a much lesser degree. But, and then, you know, as I said, Pennsylvania continued to be on the radar.

The Kerry campaign, one of the difficulties of nominating a Massachusetts liberal, is that, whereas Al Gore had some Border South targets that he could look towards, Arkansas with Bill Clinton, Tennessee his home state, maybe even Georgia, you know, and Virginia were states that, you know, Al Gore could bring to the table, maybe be competitive in, we didn't think John Kerry had a shot in those places, even with a military background, because of some of the things that had gone on.

So, the map that ultimately transforms in 2008 and 2012, where there's some states like Carolina and Virginia [00:33:00] really come onto the scene as battlegrounds; we didn't consider them much of a battleground in 2004. The concentration was again on the upper Midwest. And then the Mountain West, where Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico had begun to be real targets of opportunity for the Democrats.

Q: Did you think it was odd that Kerry chose a North Carolinian, you know, John Edwards as his running mate, and then didn't make a play for North Carolina, much less anyone else in the South?

SHAW: Yeah, I think that, the conventional wisdom that, you know, Kerry would balance the ticket with John Edwards, that it would give him some strength in Carolina; it would give him some strength and credibility with the even stronger anti-war movement, because Edwards had been very vocal against the war. But I thought at the time, and I think this is right, looking back, that the real thing he wanted to do was to bring Edwards youth, and enthusiasm, and give the ticket a sense of energy [00:34:00] and commitment than I think had been a little lacking with John Kerry at the head of the ticket. So, I think even though it had the smell of a classic regional pick, or an Electoral College pick, I never really thought that was the case.

We didn't see anything in our polling information that suggested that Kerry/Edwards had a real strong chance of carrying North Carolina. Carolina had -- you know, when 9/11 happened, a lot of the Border South states, the South generally, but the Border South states in particular, I think moved towards the Republicans, that in addition to being socially conservative, the military presence and background put those out of reach for the Democrats. And so, I wasn't terribly surprised they didn't make a big



play for Carolina. I think, they spent a little bit of money there, I think trying to get a splash, and again to sort of create a perception that they were expanding the battlefield, but from our perspective, there was no way that the Democrats were [00:35:00] going to expand the battlefield much from 2000, you know.

Q: It's such a -- you know, the list of states in '04, and the list of states in 2000, certainly more alike than different. And I'm struck by that, because '04 was such a different election. You know, in 2000, Bush runs as a domestic policy candidate, compassionate conservatism, faith-based initiatives, education reform, and so on. In 2004, because of 9/11, because of the war in Iraq, it's really a national security election. And yet, it sounds like, on the ground in terms of which states were winnable, which media markets were most efficient, that didn't have -- the nature of the two elections really didn't seem that -- change the map very much, is that?

SHAW: I think that's an accurate assessment. The places that we were campaigning were very similar, 2004 to 2000. There were a couple of differences. I think by 2004, [00:36:00] the Pacific Northwest seemed gone. So whereas Oregon and Washington had very much been a part of the strategy in 2000, they were largely written off in 2004. There were a -- we had a long conversation, I remember, in 2000 about whether at the bottom of our battleground states, sort of at lowest priority, but still in the battleground state category, whether we should focus on Illinois versus New Jersey in 2000. And I remember one of my favorite conversations was with Ken Mehlman and Scott Douglas. Ken Mehlman was regional director, and was giving us a lowdown on Illinois, and Scott Douglas was in charge of New Jersey. And the conversation went roughly like this: Mehlman spent about 15 minutes talking about how Illinois is a disaster for Bush. There's no ground organization. Chicago is mobilized behind Gore. It just didn't look like a very good investment of resources. And he went on for about ten minutes. And then we turned to Scott Douglas and asked him [00:37:00] about New Jersey, and he said, "I agree with everything Ken said about Illinois, and it's still better than New Jersey."

Q: (laughter)

SHAW: So, by 2004, there was a realization that classic battleground states from the Reagan elections and before, like Illinois and New Jersey, had shifted away from the Republicans, and there was no chance that they were going to be on the map in 2004. Even Michigan and Pennsylvania, we'd spent a lot of time in 2000 talking about the relative merits of Michigan versus Pennsylvania as targets. Pennsylvania was clearly a target in 2004. Michigan was a little less so. I think that that dispute had been resolved in favor of Pennsylvania still being a battleground state, but Michigan not so much.

But the observation about the similarities, I think, is accurate. I think the way in which we campaigned though was very different. The context had changed. The president was running a reelection campaign, as a war president. [00:38:00] And whereas in



2000, persuasion was possible, Bush was known based on his family, but wasn't really known nationally. And the campaign had a lot of opportunities to introduce the candidate to the country. Everybody knew who Bush was by 2004. And so the opportunities for persuasion were minimal. And what was on the table was essentially identifying people who were predisposed to vote for the president, and turning them out to vote.

And I think the parallels from '00 to '04, in many ways are comparable to the '08 to '12 dynamics that President Obama faces. You know, you're not the fresh face. It's mostly about identifying people that you think are sympathetic to your agenda and turning them out. And as a structural matter, that meant we spent more time in places like southern Ohio, as opposed to, you know, Columbus. We spent more time in the Panhandle of Florida, as opposed to, you know, the I-5 corridor. So it made a difference in terms [00:39:00] of where we were, as well as what we were saying.

Q: Daron, it sounds so far we've been talking about, mostly about the application of your analysis, campaign decisions about where to spend money on television advertising. Could we talk about campaign decisions about where George W. Bush, where Richard Cheney, where they're going to actually show up to campaign?

SHAW: Right. The part -- half of my research agenda after the '00 and '04 campaigns was about television advertising allocations, and the other half, the companion piece, was about candidate visits, and what they do, and how effective they are. It's still the case that the media market, as it turns out, is the appropriate unit of analysis. You know, once again, the point of a presidential candidate's visit, or a VP's visit, is to drive local voters. And what you really want to accomplish with your visit -- [00:40:00] because the number of people that you speak to at an event, whether it's in an auditorium or, you know, an outdoor venue, is fairly limited, even for a president. But if you go there and you can drive local media coverage -- and of course the media coverage is disseminated largely by television and newspapers, and therefore the media market becomes the appropriate unit of analysis when you're trying to evaluate the effectiveness of the visit. So, there was a sense of overlap in my research, that whereas television was obvious, that television advertisements and their effectiveness ought to be measured at the media market level, it also occurred to me fairly early on that that was appropriate for candidate visits as well. Like, when you go to Austin, Texas, or if you go to Columbus, or Cleveland, that you're trying to drive, you know, local news media coverage, you know, and get that message out, and to mobilize people who are favorable, to persuade those who are amenable, and with doing limited collateral damage with respect to mobilizing those who aren't all that favorable towards you.

[00:41:00] We began a running tally of where the President -- where at that point, Governor Bush had been in 2000, and cobbling together polling information pre- and



post. We did the same thing for the vice presidential candidate, Mr. Cheney, as well as Gore and Lieberman. You know, it was difficult because we weren't going in with targeting polling, immediately before and immediately after, but we did have tracking polls across all of the battleground states. So we could isolate media markets in which the president -- the presidential candidates had appeared, and then looked at their pre- and post- performance, and once you aggregate enough data, you can begin to make statements about, you know, where he sits before, and where he sits immediately after a visit.

And what we found was that, you know, the effects tended to be on the order of a point or two. They weren't spectacular, but they were there. But what was interesting was that when a candidate went into a market, they would do a pretty good job of [00:42:00] mobilizing partisans. That is, Republicans would be significantly more supportive of Bush when he went to talk there, spoke there, but Democrats were less supportive, and more supportive of Gore in 2000. So you get a mobilization, and a counter-mobilization. In other words, you sort of alert all the partisans in the area that there's a race on, and they take sides. So what would happen is that the number of undecideds in a market would go down considerably, and there would -- if you were fortunate, and on the whole, both candidates were fortunate -- there would be a slight net positive to your visit.

It also was the case -- and this helped Gore later on -- that Ralph Nader's support, the Green Party candidate's support, would really take a hit when Gore went into the market. In other words, liberals would flock to Gore and end their flirtation with Ralph Nader. Now, that was a little -- [00:43:00] that wasn't something I ever played up, because the data, you know, surrounding Ralph Nader's support weren't as robust. We didn't have as many Nader supporters to track how they moved. But I was convinced that that was a consistent enough pattern that it was what happened. And I think after the election, it was pretty clear that Gore was able to kind of deflate Nader's support when he actively engaged.

Q: And in '04, specifically, did you feel like, looking back on it, that Bush and Cheney's time was well-used in terms of having them appear in the places where they could do the most good?

SHAW: Yeah, this is something that was perhaps controversial at the time, but we had information suggesting that the vice president, in particular, and this honestly was true in 2000 as well, was a very polarizing figure. And that the counter-mobilization when Cheney went into certain markets was so great as to make the visit a wash, or even counterproductive. [00:44:00] That drove the decision in 2000 and especially in 2004 to concentrate the vice president's visits in Republican markets. So again, the Panhandle in Florida, southern Ohio, the more rural parts of Nevada, or New Mexico, or those battleground states. In those places, there was sufficient numbers of



Republicans that the vice president would mobilize those voters and, you know, the visit was productive. But it was a mistake, I thought, and I think the campaign thought, to send the vice president into Cleveland, or Miami, or places like that, where there was a real chance for counter-mobilization.

We also saw that a little bit with the president. At this point, you know, Bush had been, you know, the president who had responded to 9/11, who had sent troops into Afghanistan and Iraq, and he was a polarizing figure as well. And we knew that there was a large counter-mobilization that would happen when Bush went into a market like Cleveland, or Philadelphia, or Orlando. [00:45:00] And so his visits in those areas tended to be minimal, and they tended to be in particular parts of those markets. This actually caused a bit of a controversy in 2000. Bush spent -- ended up having about three weeks where he did not appear in Ohio, and NPR, I remember, ran a story, and it got -- maybe the *Times* drove an NPR story, or vice versa, suggesting that the campaign had written off Ohio, which wasn't the case at all. But the campaign was acutely aware that a personal visit was a mixed bag.

In fact, one thing though that I think became evident to me, and it's so obvious, but unless you're in a campaign, you're not -- it's not sitting -- staring you in the face, is that visits aren't simply meant to drive media and to drive voters. They're also meant to loosen up fundraising and to drive volunteers. So, you know, in the parlance of political science, there are multiple dependent variables [00:46:00] associated with a candidate visit. And candidates -- we found this was the case with all candidates in '00 and in '04 -- volunteer sign-ups go up when the candidate goes to the market. So you get a lot of people to commit time and energy to doing block-walking and the sorts of things that a campaign needs. You get contributions to go up when a candidate makes a visit, and those are ancillary benefits. So even if the visit is a wash, it's still the case that the campaign is going to commit that resource because there are these other things that it affects.

Q: One thing you say in the book is that the old stereotype of local news is basically, you know, fawning over a candidate who comes and campaigns, and give him all sorts of positive coverage. That's no longer quite the case anymore.

SHAW: Yeah, I think -- we found empirically -- Bat Sparrow and I did a piece [00:47:00] back in the late nineties, and it really carried over to my understanding of the campaigns where we looked at the congruence of media coverage between local, regional, and then the more nationally-oriented newspapers, and we found that as a pure, sort of mechanical feature of local news coverage, that a lot of the local newspapers run Associated Press, or Reuters, or *New York Times* wire service stories. So if you're grading their coverage, it's quite consistent with the national biggies because they're drawing on those stories. You know, they're picking up wire reports.



But even beyond that, local reporters now have access to information, have access to sources that we associated with only the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *LA Times*, or the *Wall Street Journal*. They're good, and they bring a level of sophistication, and even skepticism to their coverage of politics that's on par with that which we used to see at -- only with the big shots in the seventies [00:48:00] and in the eighties. So, I'd found pretty early on that if you go to Paducah, Kentucky, or if you go to, you know, Montgomery, Alabama, or to Fresno, California, and you expect the local media to be thrilled with your presence, that doesn't happen. They want to know, well, where are you on the water rights, and why haven't you been out here before, and why are you trailing in the polls. And I guess maybe the exemplar of this was early on in 2000 -- actually, it was back in fall of 1999 when George W. Bush did an interview with a New Hampshire reporter who hit him with the famous -- the famous foreign leaders question. "Can you tell me the leader of South Korea, Pakistan, etc.?" And that sort of journalism -- you know, you would never have expected that I think, 20 years ago, from a local media source, but now, it's absolutely what you expect, and you've got to be very attentive and very careful to try to get these men and women on your side, because you just don't get it by, [00:49:00] you know, virtue of gracing them with your presence in a local market.

Q: Writing about, sort of, major mistakes that both campaigns in 2004 made, let me ask you about some of those you discussed about. One was, John Kerry leave 17 million dollars unspent. How did that -- how does happen, when honestly, this was still a time when both Kerry and Bush, for the fall campaign were taking the federal money, which means they only had 75 million apiece to spend as campaigns. How does a candidate leave more than 20 percent of that unspent in a close election? And would it have made a difference if Kerry had spent that money effectively?

SHAW: Yeah, this -- to me, and I try -- you know, I have not just sympathy, but empathy for these presidential campaigns. [00:50:00] The leaving of the 17 million dollars on the table in 2004, I've never heard anybody tell me that that was incorrect, that in fact they had spent the money, or that they had allocated, so I think the facts are correct here. I think they're incontrovertible. The generous interpretation would be that Senator Kerry had locked in his TV spending early on, that they had made advance purchases, with kind of a decent strategic assumption, saying that hey, everybody knows where the race is going to be decided. So, let's get the lowest unit rate in places like Florida, and in Ohio early on. So they had essentially locked in advertising times back in late August, early September, for deep into October. So they'd committed their resources. And my understanding is, is that, you know, after that commitment, they still had 17 million dollars, you know, essentially from the advertising budget that was going to be used in reserve. I have no clue why, [00:51:00] two, three weeks out, that money was not reallocated, either for the ground game, or for a national advertising purchase that could have supplemented what they did.



Now, I've talked with some Kerry people who've said that they have had some budget like that committed for an after-election contest. But to me that makes no sense. If you had another situation like in 2000 in which the election was deadlocked, or there was a controversy surrounding the vote in say, Ohio, or Florida, you could raise that money in 10 seconds from Democratic sources to fight all of the legal battles immediately. It happened in 2000 -- I'm positive it would have happened in 2004. The idea that you'd save 17 million for that fight strikes me as absurd.

A more plausible but still puzzling argument is that there was no advertising to buy, that because the Kerry and Bush campaigns along with local candidates had essentially bought every available space in Ohio and in Florida for late October, [00:52:00] early November, there really wasn't anything to buy. OK, that tells me why you didn't make an additional buy in Cleveland, but it doesn't say anything about why you didn't use the money for other purposes, you know, whether that -- as a ground game investment, whether that's a national cable or national broadcast buy, or expand the battlefield, you know, take a chance on, you know, an eight-to-ten point state where nobody's really spending any money. Seventeen million dollars is a ton of money.

Q: By your analysis, if Kerry had taken that 17 million and spent in New Mexico, Iowa, and Ohio, he would have won the election.

SHAW: Yeah, I think if you run the numbers and use the regression coefficient estimates that I derived and simply taken the extra money and allocated it across some of those states, the effects that I'm talking about that I document in the book are significant, but they're not overwhelming. [00:53:00] They're on the order of a point or two. But if you pour the 17 million dollars and simply use the regression coefficients to estimate effects, you clearly would have influenced the outcome in those states which were very close. He ended up with about 100,000 vote, 120,000 vote spread in Ohio, and that would have done the trick.

Now there's a question about whether that time was there to be purchased, and my assumption is that it wasn't. But there were a lot of states that were close, as suggested. There's New Mexico; there's Iowa. There were a number of states where Kerry was within shouting distance. And that's not even considering the possibility that he would have invested the money in, you know, a ground game in some of those states, where he could have reached parity with Bush, say, in southern Ohio, whether he could have done a better job of turning out the vote in parts of Florida, 17 million dollars in reserve is unheard of. And I think it's the most glaring and obvious example of a campaign mistake, I think, in recent memory.

Q: On the other side, [00:54:00] you take President Bush to task for not really doing too well in -- especially in the first presidential debate with Kerry.



SHAW: Yes.

Q: What went wrong, and what were the consequences in terms of the campaign?

SHAW: We had done a lot of research on debate effects heading up to the 2004 election cycle. In fact, the two things I was tasked with in 2004, two of the main things I was tasked with, was writing a report on presidential conventions, and how they set the tone and effect the dynamic of the presidential campaign, and the other was debate effects. And we had found that one of the major determinants of the debate bounce, or the debate effect was whether a candidate had been under- or over-performing in the polls prior to the lead-up to the debate.

And -- what do I mean by under-performing or [00:55:00] over-performing? Well, given the state of the economy, given the level of presidential approval, you can develop a pretty quick model to predict presidential support. Political scientists do this sort of thing all the time. And by those standards, we thought that Bush had actually gotten -- had a lead that he probably was not entitled to, let us say. He was overachieving a little bit given presidential approval and the state of the economy. That set of conditions, that reality suggested that there were -- there was a lot of room for Kerry to improve. And so, there was a sense amongst many of us in the campaign that given Bush's uneven performance in 2000 -- he had done well in the first debate, and had done OK in the second and third -- but he wasn't an experienced or really polished debater. We had seen Kerry, and Kerry had dismantled [Bill] Weld in a couple of debates in Massachusetts Senate race. [00:56:00] There was a sense that Kerry had room to maneuver.

The campaign had a decision to make foreign policy the focal point of the first debate. It's water under the bridge, but I thought that was a mistake. The campaign thought that the president was more comfortable with foreign policy, would certainly have an advantage on issues involving national defense, or foreign policy compared to Senator Kerry. And so this was an opportunity to kind of play to his strength and set the tone for the subsequent debates.

I thought, and continue to think, that you never want to give the challenger an opportunity to appear presidential. And foreign policy is a way that a challenger has an opportunity to appear presidential, and to share the stage with the commander-in-chief, and hold his own, and that's exactly what Kerry did. You know, we've seen this mistake -- the irony is, we've seen this mistake at least three times historically; when John Kennedy more than held his own with Richard Nixon on foreign policy in 1960 [00:57:00] -- actually, three times -- it's now four, in 1976 when Gerald Ford made a couple of errant references about Eastern Europe and allowed Jimmy Carter to correct him, in 1976. In 2004, John Kerry took the president to task on some of the decisions he made, and then in 2012, Barack Obama had a really poor first debate



with Mitt Romney. When you allow the challenger to appear on stage with the president, with the commander-in-chief, especially in areas where, you know, he doesn't necessarily have any native credibility or standing, you close -- you know, you create -- you close the gap, the stature gap that exists.

And I think that's exactly what happened in 2004. The president looked kind of peevish, and small, and didn't look like he got out of the bubble, and didn't like criticism. Kerry showed he had command and mastery of facts. [00:58:00] And in that sense, it was similar to the 2012 debate, where the president looked like he'd been in the bubble, and wasn't used to, you know, sharing the platform, or hearing people say things that weren't, you know, "Yes, sir," on every particular matter. So I thought -- my personal reaction, it's not just hindsight. There are a lot of people in the campaign who told me they felt the same way. You know, I didn't think -- from what I'd heard, the president hadn't prepped the same way he had in 2000, which was a big deal. I didn't think foreign policy was the right way to go. There were a number of people who disagreed. They thought that you would set the tone with foreign policy, and it was where Bush was most comfortable. I thought it gave Kerry the greatest chance to grow, which was my concern. And then again, I think, you know, there were some particular choices with respect to formatting that I thought were a mistake as well.

Q: Such as?

SHAW: Well, the moderators, I've always -- you know, what happens in presidential debates these days is that the Presidential Commission on Debates [00:59:00] determines everything, essentially. Now, why this is the case, I'm not sure. They have just kind of been granted -- and it used to be the League of Women Voters, which made more sense to me, in some sense. But there's a deference to the Presidential Debate Commission which I've never quite understood. In fact, George W. Bush had challenged this in 2000, and had suggested -- you know, not signed off on the commission's recommendations, and had instead offered a debate every week. And Karl Rove, I remember thought this was -- you know, this was going to put Gore on the defense. And instead, the entire media story was, why is Bush not agreeing to the debates? You know, what's he ducking? The Republican perspective, Bush's perspective was -- is that, well, this -- this isn't mantra from God. I mean, this is something that's negotiated; we can do better. But it became a horrible story for the campaign.

Two thousand four came along, and there was just an utter deference to whatever the commission had recommended, both in respect to the venue, where the particular arrangement of the stage, [01:00:00] the moderators that were asked, etc. I thought that the foreign policy debate, which I believe was a more standard debate, I think it was with three moderators, I thought was probably not the best moderator for Bush. I think Bush actually does a little better with the town hall venue, and had



done more town halls in the run-up to 2004. But, there was acquiescence, basically about the format, the foreign policy debate.

There's also just, the commission has been reluctant to allow the town hall format into the foreign policy debate, which I'm not sure why that's the case. I think there's an assumption that, you know, if we're going to talk about domestic issues, and education, so if the people can ask questions on that, but they're not going to be as good peppering the candidates with questions on foreign policy.

Q: Our camp -- whatever it may be, when a campaign takes a hit as a result of an event, are there ways of adjusting the things that you've done [01:01:00] most of your work on? Are there ways of adjusting which states now are more or less in play? Which media markets are more or less efficient? In other words, are there ways of, in the middle of the fight, calling audibles and saying, well, now we need to put more money here instead of there to get out of this, probably create for ourselves, or do you send the president here instead of there to accomplish the same goal?

SHAW: Yes, I think in 2000 and 2004, they were fairly crude. And what I mean by that is that we were doing the tracking polls, and so, you would look to see if there was any differential reaction across your battleground states, and then the markets within your battleground states. And so, maybe something played in Peoria, but it didn't play in, you know, Reno. I think they're much more sophisticated about that now, in that they are more aware of the nature of the demographic and political characteristics of the persuadable and mobilizable voters within each media market. [01:02:00] We were taking broad snapshots, just aggregate reactions within the media markets, and I think they're better than that now. So, the short answer is, yes, you would always be looking to make adjustments and audibles to slightly increase the advertisements or potentially add a visit in a place where the data suggested you were hemorrhaging voters.

But I think nowadays, the information they have from the voter lists is much more sophisticated. So if you get polling information, even nationally, or within states that suggest certain sorts of voters have been particularly bothered by something the president said, you know that certain markets have those characteristics in abundance, and can make adjustments, and you may even have heard in 2008 and 2012 that there's sufficient feedback, sufficient numbers coming back from the voter list that you could actually get raw empirical data on that to verify whatever assumptions you had. So, we did a little bit of that in '00 [01:03:00] and '04. I think they do a lot more of it and a lot better job of it now.

Q: The exit polls turned out to be wildly off in '04. Can you account for that?

SHAW: There was a --



Q: And do you think it had -- the rumors of those polls that sort of made their way onto the *Drudge Report* and elsewhere during the day, do you think they had any effect on the actual voting?

SHAW: In 2004, I remember the Drudge or other people had leaked you know, the initial exit polls, and there'd been a few analyses after the fact. I think they tend to move in contradictory directions. Some people think that well, you know, the rumors where Kerry had a two-point lead, and that would elate the Kerry supporters and depress the Bush supporters. Well, it's possible that happened. It's possible the opposite happened, where it made Bush supporters mad or freaked them out, and the Kerry supporters were fat and happy. [01:04:00] I haven't seen much empirical evidence either way that the distribution of the vote over the course of the day changed much from what one would expect.

I think, you know, what happened, of course, and this is not widely known -- and it is amongst public opinion experts, but it's not widely known amongst the public -- and that is, there tends to be a bias to the exit polls. And this is something that actually very much frustrated me in the aftermath of the 2004 election. There were a lot of political scientists and statisticians who went to calculate the chance that the exit poll was off by the amount it was, simply looking at the number of people that were involved in the exit polls; in other words, your margin of error as a function to the number of people that you sample. So, exit polls involve thousands to tens of thousands of respondents, and so these statisticians would come back on the Keith Olbermann show, for instance, and say, well, the chance that the exit poll is off is just infinitesimal; therefore, there must have been massive voter fraud in Ohio. Well, that's [01:05:00] a wonderful assumption, if you assume there's no other error to the exit poll, which is an asinine assumption. Exit polls, like all polls, have response biases. Some people are more likely to do them, and some people are less. And in the case of 2004, what we found was that Kerry people were more likely to agree to do the exit poll than were Bush supporters. So you get a slight response bias favoring Kerry.

And that's something we've seen -- you see in almost every election. In 2008, for instance, in the Democratic primaries, Obama supporters -- even though Hillary supporters were enthusiastic, and willing to take the exit poll, Obama supporters were even more. So there was always a slight pro-Obama bias to the exit poll, or slight error. Now, we kind of, after a couple of primaries, you know, the exit polls figured that out and you could make adjustments. But in 2004, you know, you can't really gauge the extent to which you're going to have those sorts of response biases heading in. You have to sort of see them on Election Day.



[01:06:00] But at that point, the networks didn't have a quarantine room like they do now, where there's a lockdown on information until five o'clock. So the first wave information gets out early. And I think it's possible that it had an effect on deploying resources. I'd heard, for instance, that the Kerry people were sort of having information fed to them on the exit poll, and diverted a helicopter with Jesse Jackson to Philadelphia because they thought they were down a little bit from where they wanted to be in Philly, and so Jackson was actually in the air, and they decided to have him land in Philadelphia. I don't know if that's apocryphal or not. I hope it's true; I love the story. (laughter)

So there's some suggestion that the election poll actually affected the Election Day allocation of resources, which brings up an interesting point. Prior to '04, and then '08 and '12, there really wasn't much of a prioritization or targeting of resources on Election Day, that is, [01:07:00] a dynamic one. You have your targets, and your active, and -- you know how far up or down you are from your margin based on the volume that's being reported. But they actually were using the voter list, and real-time updates of the voter list to make allocation decisions in 2008, 2012. There's a little bit of that in 2004, and that in fact is when people are talking about the Republican system breaking down in 2012, that's what they're referring to, that this real-time feed of data kind of crashed the system.

But that's -- you know, we talk about the strategic targeting. In the past, it had stopped on Election Day. On Election Day, you're just scrambling, it kind of -- everybody's going, you know, a hundred miles an hour. Even that day has become strategic now, all right. But as for the exit polls, you know, they were off by a couple points, and they were off particularly in some states. One of the things that [01:08:00] the national exit poll discovered after the election was that the distance that exit pollsters were forced to stand away from the polls had an effect on these response rates, and the two states where the distance was the largest were Arizona, where they had a significant error because they had to be like 100 yards away, and Ohio.

So, you know, these conspiracy theories about, you know, the vote, I've thought are utterly irresponsible. There are very, kind of obvious explanations for what happened, and part of was mechanical, you know, the way elections are administered in Ohio, and how far away the exit pollsters have to stand away, and it seems to be the case that, you know, Bush people were not as enthused about talking to people with, you know, these network exit poll badges on their chest than were Kerry supporters, and that reluctance was perhaps even exaggerated by the fact that Ohio has distance rules that are slightly more stringent than other states.



- Q: You mean, Bush people were reluctant because this is the mainstream media (inaudible) --
- SHAW: [01:09:00] I think so. If you ever see the exit pollsters, they're identified by these big badges that have the Consortium. The Consortium is Associated Press, ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, and CNN. And so, you know, there's a FOX label there, but there's also a CNN, and an ABC and NBC News, and yeah, I think there's probably a -- slightly less enthusiasm on the part of Republicans to respond to the exit poll than Democrats. And you know, that's something that's been fairly consistent over the last few cycles, I think.
- Q: You know, the title of your book and the thrust of your book, *Race to 270* might give one the impression that a presidential election is occurring in a void, that all the other elections that are going on that day are of no interest at all to the candidates running for president. And there is this quote from Bush to Mehlman, [01:10:00] or Bush to somebody that came out after the election, that he had told Ken Mehlman or others early in the campaign, "Don't give me a lonely victory," in other words, that he was interested in seeing the Republican Party do well up and down the ballot, especially in the Congressional elections. What about that?
- SHAW: It's an interesting point, and it's a complication. You know, in a race, as I suggested, that has all these different factors and variables that go in, it is the case that it doesn't occur in a void, that you have House races and Senate races and gubernatorial elections that are important, and that figure into the calculation of the campaigns. Now I think in close elections, those things are less consequential than they are in, you know, landslides. For instance, Ronald Reagan in 1984, Bill Clinton, 1996, has the opportunity to make [01:11:00] more than one trip to help candidates that they think are in tight races, and could be helped by a presidential visit.

In 2000, actually, George W. Bush, I believe two days out took a trip to New Jersey and actually campaigned for Republican candidates there. And I think that was one of things that Karl Rove identified as a mistake, that they felt comfortable enough to do that, and that they probably needed to have added another trip to Florida. But even in that race, even in that razor-thin race, the candidate was pulled and felt compelled to appear in a -- you know, basically a Congressional election venue.

In 2004, this was a major part of the strategy. There were a lot of efforts to look for overlap -- I believe in that election, there was something like the Dirty Thirty, that is the 30 Congressional seats that were competitive, [01:12:00] that would go a long way towards determining, you know, who was going to control the House, and there are two strategic questions, though. The first is, does it at all fit within the presidential strategy, or is it an outlier? Is it that you're going to have to go far away from a place where that gives you any value in terms of the presidential election? So that is a factor, and candidates are willing to do that sometimes, but it's got to be a



pretty compelling argument, that it's going to directly affect an important race, or that there are ancillary benefits, as I said, volunteers, or contributions, or commitments that have been made.

The other question is whether the president's going to be helpful in that race. There were races in 2004 where the president's presence would have been polarizing, might have counter-mobilized, might have brought money into the race, especially from anti-war forces, and so it was best for the president to, you know, kind of quietly step aside and not appear in a race like that. So these things do complicate the calculations.

[01:13:00] Now, in terms of targeting, and in terms of, say, rank-ordering media markets, or things like that, honestly, these things tend to be scored almost arbitrarily. In other words, we try to quantify them. So if I'm deciding between two media markets, and all other things are equal, but media market two has a hot Congressional race, that would be a deciding factor. And in 2000 we did award some - - not quite arbitrary, but certainly subjective weight to states or media markets that had competitive down-ballot races.

Q: I was thinking too about deciding to take the 75 million from the federal government, instead of going out and raising which really would have been more money than that, but some of the money might have been diverted from other Republican candidates. Any comment on that?

SHAW: Yeah, I think, this was a criticism, [01:14:00] actually, the Clinton campaign faced in 1996, where Bill Clinton took, you know, public funding, was -- '96 and 2000 are really the last races in which the public financing system was really in play. But there was a common criticism against Bill Clinton, and that was that he would go into these districts and these states and essentially suck up all the money -- and towards a race that really didn't look to be incredibly competitive, and that you know, rather than turn around and dispense some of those resources in tight Congressional or Senate races, they all went to the Clinton reelection campaign.

We didn't hear similar complaints in 2000, at least not many, but as I suggested, there was this residual resentment towards, especially the '92 Bush campaign, George H. W. Bush campaign, that the money had been raised in places, and then those places had been ignored [01:15:00] in the election campaign. And you know, this was absolutely the California Republicans' lament, that the national party, Dole, H. W. Bush and then Dole had raised all this money. And then, now Dole had targeted California, but had pulled out fairly late in the game, but that they were contributing disproportionately, and then their candidates were being left out to dry.



I'm from Texas, and this is the reverse complaint here. The Democrats -- Democratic Party in Texas contributes a ton of money, a ton of money, and you know, Barack Obama and other Democrats have been here to Austin, Houston, and Dallas. They take that money out, and that money has not been reinvested to build party infrastructure and to help candidates even in competitive races in Texas. This is a common complaint. And I think, you know, what you really had is not so much a strategic commitment to building parties in states like New York, California, or Texas that put up a lot of money, but aren't really competitive states, rather than a commitment to, you know a quid pro quo, which is, we'll help you raise the money [01:16:00] if you invest in infrastructure, it's basically been kind of ad hoc, to the extent the candidates have favored candidates, or a personal commitment to people within those states, they may return some of that money. Otherwise they don't. And there's nothing systematic that sort of facilitates. I think that's -- it's an issue.

Alan Abramowitz and I have had this conversation about these large states that used to be battlegrounds that really aren't anymore, Illinois, Texas, California, New York, and what's happened to them. And the minority parties have really withered on the vine in those states, and they still -- those parties, the Republican Party of Illinois, or California or New York, or the Democratic Party of Texas still have a lot of money, contribute a lot, but that money goes out of state; it goes to the national party, and it's not returned. And so this hyper-strategization that goes on in presidential and Congressional races, has exacerbated that.

Now is that, you know, an awful thing? [01:17:00] You know, I think it's something we ought to keep our eyes on long-term. I mean, you would think that robust two-party competition in the major states, all things being equal, is a good thing. I'm not sure I've thought that out well enough to make a comment on it, but on its face, it seems like something that probably is good, and it's certainly the case that I think there's some resentment built up over transfer of resources. You know, the California money, and the Texas money, and New York money, ends up in Florida or Ohio every two to four years.

Q: Daron, do we have time for two more questions?

SHAW: Sure.

Q: One is about '04, and that is were there down ballot races or ballot measures, like for example, a proposed constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Ohio, or were there popular candidate, Republican candidates for, you know, governor, or senator, say, where actually the presidential campaign is thinking, we might be able to piggyback on something [01:18:00] that's already happening in that state to our advantage?

SHAW: Right. I think the -- this is my recollection. There may have been some candidates that Bush wanted to tie himself to, but Bush was such an overriding feature of that election that, you know, he would overwhelm or overshadow any more localized



thing. There was a sense that we would take advantage of popular Republicans and use them as surrogates, which is standard. But, I remember when Bush was sort of absent from Ohio for a couple of weeks, that John McCain had campaigned in Ohio, that Arnold Schwarzenegger, who at that point was still very popular, had campaigned as a surrogate in Ohio. So there was a reliance on other kind of prominent Republicans to carry a little bit of the load.

Now with the defense of marriage acts that were popping up all over the place, I don't know how strategic those things were. I don't know whether there was anything on the White House that, yeah, we should sponsor these things, and that they will help us. [01:19:00] I certainly wasn't privy to any conversations of that sort. Did those things actually help Bush? There's some mixed evidence in political science on that. You know, I'm not sure how much of the mobilization of Bush supporters in southern Ohio, or in the Panhandle in Florida was a function of outreach versus message. I tend to think it was more outreach, and maybe I'm naïve on that. But, I think it was the personal contacting, and the personal contacting coming from people who were actually known to the subject, so there was a real effort to get neighbor-to-neighbor contacting, to get neighborhood association leaders and community leaders and opinion leaders to actually do the person-to-person contacting. So I'm somewhat of the opinion that it was the mode of contact and the scope of outreach, as opposed to the message. But was it possible that, you know, it was the defense of marriage act that -- [01:20:00] as a message that really motivated a lot of those people, and that worth a point in Ohio, or a point in Florida? Yeah, I think it's absolutely possible. I haven't seen a lot of strong evidence on that.

It's funny, fast-forward to 2010, and what we were finding in states, like California for instance, is that young people were showing up not to vote in the Senate or the gubernatorial election, but they were showing up to vote on the pot initiatives. I actually think that the possibility that younger voters will come to the polls to vote on marijuana initiatives is greater than the possibility that the social conservatives showed up to vote purely on the defense of marriage acts, right? What's the phrase, you know, "Up with dope, vote for hope?" That was our proposed slogan for the Democrats in 2010. (laughter)

Q: Well, your comment about person-to-person contact brings me to my last question. Your book was published in 2006, but [01:21:00] one of the observations you make by way of a prediction is that, traditional television saturation campaigning is likely to decline in importance relative to person-to-person contacts with a purpose of mobilization of voters who are -- to actually turn out and vote. They've already made up their mind, they're for you, but it's getting them to vote. Has that been born out by the election since then?



SHAW: I think there's a very real sense amongst political scientists and practitioners that person-to-person contacting is ironically the wave of the future. You know, in some sense, my thought was that the scholarship that we all as political scientists grew up on, the Columbia studies of the forties and fifties, and how information networks and [01:22:00] social connections would drive the communication of political ideas and ideology in elections, that was sort of part and parcel of how we learned that politics worked. And then of course, in the fifties and sixties and seventies with the rise and the absolute ascendance of television as a means of political communication, everybody in the Academy focused on TV, TV effects, how do ads work, and how do they persuade voters or not persuade voters, and does negative advertising demobilize voters?

It struck me in 2000 -- and a lot of people in the Bush campaign I know share this view -- that the field operation the Gore people put into place was what won him the popular vote, that it was worth a couple of points. Maybe not two, but it was worth a point, certainly. And it was enough to put him over the top in terms of the national vote, and I think it caught the Republicans absolutely off-guard. And in some ways it shouldn't have, because labor had begun re-investing in person-to-person contacting after 1996. You know, they got tired of just raising money for TV [01:23:00] and decided to do what labor does traditionally, knock on doors and get the message out. And I think that helped Clinton not lose seats in '98 after impeachment. And I think it got Gore over the top, at least, popular vote-wise in 2000. And it was the impetus behind the Republican 72-hour plan in 2004, this reemphasis on person-to-person door-knocking contacts. I think 2004 re-affirmed everybody's belief that this was kind of politics that needed -- that had enormous potential, that if the resources were there to commit to it, it would be ridiculous not to engage in this, and that coupled with smarter targeting, better voter lists, smart phones and social media, I think have all come together in a way that I -- you know, certainly didn't guess the particulars of this, but have come together in a way that's really reinvigorated the kind of face-to-face personalized contacting that used to be the core of American politics. [01:24:00] So we've gone back from, you know, sort of broadcast wholesale politics to retail politics. And I actually am very optimistic -- I think that's good for the system. There are some people who are cynical about, you know, the nature of the contacting, and you know, the lists that are out there, identifying personal preferences and things like that, and I understand those concerns. But what we've found consistently is that credibility of source matters, localized sources matter, so you know, if you could get somebody from the community to go out and spread the word for the candidate, that's effective. And I think that's something that ought to make us more optimistic. I think that's a good thing for American politics.



And the flip side of course is movement away. Now, no one's actually moved away from television. The money's even more than it was back in '00 and '04. But I think there is a sense -- and I'll be interested to see if a candidate has the guts to do this in the future -- [01:25:00] that we're piling on, with respect to TV commercials, that we're spending, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars now in presidential campaigns, let alone Senate and governors' campaigns, for advertising that's probably not all that effective. And I remember Matt Dowd told me, and I think it was in 2000, he said, at some point a candidate's going to lay down a base of about 1200 or 1800 points in a market, and they're just going to take the rest of that money, and use that on face-to-face contacting. And I thought that was a smart observation at the time, and I think we may actually see a presidential campaign that does that at some point. You know, just a kind of a minimum level of advertising to be president, and let's take that money and invest that in more innovative, localized, personalized outreach. And, we may be there in the next couple of election cycles.

Q: Back to the future.

SHAW: Yeah. (laughter) I know.

Q: Well, thank you, Professor Shaw. This has been very helpful.

SHAW: Oh, it's my pleasure, my pleasure. Thank you. All right.

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