MEDIA USE, DECISION STATUS, AND INFORMATION HOLDING IN TWO AMERICAN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

選票決定、選情認識與媒介使用

艾爾文
L. Erwin Atwood
Professor of School of Journalism
Southern Illinois University

曠湘霞
Sunshine Kuang
Associate Professor of
Department of Journalism
National Chengchi University

ABSTRACT

Voting studies have reported a positive association between attention to the media and levels of knowledge about political events and that decided voters know more than do those who are undecided. The literature also indicates, on a less substantive basis, that vote switchers have lower levels of political knowledge than do those who do not switch candidates. Many studies, if not most, have used measures of political opinions, interest, or involvement as measures of knowledge; other studies have lacked clear-cut tests of the relationships.

The present study employs reasons voters give for voting for or against specific candidates and reported voter perceptions of campaign issues as measures of political knowledge. Comparisons of the relationships between voting status and knowledge are made under two levels of attention to the campaign. The data were collected in a 1974 congressional campaign and the 1976 presidential campaign.

The findings support earlier studies regarding the differences in knowledge levels between decided and undecided voters for both candidate and issue knowledge. However, no significant difference in candidate knowledge levels was found between switchers and non-switchers in either the congressional or the presidential campaign. Those who did not switch candidate preference in the 1976 campaign reported higher levels of issue knowledge than did those who switched candidate preference. The relationship between knowledge level and attention to the campaign via the mass media varied with voting status and campaign.

摘　要

爲數不少的選舉研究指出，大眾傳播媒介的使用頻率與選民對政治活動的認識有正相關的關係。而各種文獻也曾指出，那些已決定投票對象的選民要比尚未作最後圈選決定的人，有較深刻的選情認識。本研究即在嘗試解釋媒介使用、圈票意向決定與選情認知三者之間的關係。

應用之資料分兩組。一組是於一九七四年美國國會選舉時在美國南伊諾州搜得之資料；另一組則爲一九七六年美國總統大選時在東南密蘇里州搜得之問卷資料。

結果顯示，已決定投票意向的選民對政見與候選人的認識是高過那些尚未作圈選決定的選民。而使用大眾傳播媒介較多的人，不論其是否曾改變圈選意願，都不比那些使用媒介少的人有較多的選情認知。

Assessment of knowledge levels among voters has shown that most people have only meager quantities of political information, and those who know the most are the most interested and committed voters who also have the highest levels of exposure to political materials in the mass media (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Converse, 1962; Greenberg, 1965; Preston & Becker, 1969; Atkin, 1971; Atkin, Bowen, Nayman, & Sheinkopf, 1973; Sears & Whitney, 1973; Atkin & Heald, 1976). For example, Atkin (1973) reported that almost two-thirds of the undecided respondents reported they had read nothing about either candidate.

Nimmo (1970) provides a typology of early and late deciders some of whom in each group are attentive to the campaign and some of whom are not. Late deciders who pay close attention to the campaign are prime targets for the candidates for these voters have not yet committed themselves and are accessible through the media. And in some instances indecision prompts increased attention to campaign advertising (Atkin, 1973). The remaining late deciders may not vote unless the campaign can motivate them, but since they pay little attention to the campaign they are difficult to reach. They may be the "know-nothings" (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947). Yet if these indifferent and uninformed voters can be reached they are the easiest to persuade because they have no candidate or party loyalties (Pool, 1963).

Within Nimmo's four-fold typology, information levels may vary depending upon level of attention to the campaign and decision status. The voting literature indicates that decided voters are more knowledgable and pay more attention to the media than do the undecided. But it is unlikely, as the typology indicates, that

all decided voters pay equivalent attention to the political content of the media while all the undecided voters ignore political material. Thus there may be differential levels of information holding between the decided and the undecided voters.

While the undecided voter is generally considered inattentive and uninformed, a more favorable portrait emerges when undecided voters are compared with the ticket-splitter who is more concerned with issues than with candidate images and who does not have strong party attachments (DeVries and Tarrance, 1972). The ticket-splitter is said to be a heavy media user in his search for a basis for making a vote decision.[2] This ticket-splitter description approximates Nimmo's description of the undecided voter who is attention to the campaign in the media but is at variance with the bulk of the voting research. If the ticket-splitter can be viewed as an undecided voter, in Nimmo's typology, who pays close attention to political events in the media, then substantial differences in information levels should exist between the two classifications of undecided voters.

A second group of voters who investigators have accorded a definition of uninvolved, uninterested, and uninformed is the vote switcher, the voter who changes candidate preferences during a campaign (Converse, 1962; Pool, 1963; Sears and Whitney, 1973). Katz (1971) has thus summarized the switchers, but he also noted that switchers are likely to attend equally to information from all parties rather than primarily to information from a preferred candidate or party. Key (1966) on the other hand, concluded that vote switchers did not "differ materially" from those who did not switch. Vote switching is generally considered a function of cross-pressures on the voter, a position supported by Macaluso's (1975) reanalysis of Survey Research Center data. He found "candidate dissonance" had the greatest influence on vote switching followed by "issue dissonance."

The traditional view holds that most switchers will reduce psychological conflict arising from cross-pressures by reducing their interest and involvement in the election. A contrary outcome, which also follows from dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), is that the voter caught in cross-pressures may increase his information search in an attempt to acquire sufficient information for a decision. Lanzetta and Driscoll (1968) reported that increased uncertainty resulted in increased information search. A third option for the voter under cross-pressures would be to misperceive the positions of the candidates and parties on the issues (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; McGrath & McGrath, 1962: Sherrod, 1971-72).[3] Referring these modes of coping with cross-pressures to Nimmo's typology one can speculate that those switchers who do not attend to the campaign

in the media have chosen the withdrawal mode while those who do attend to the campaign have chosen the information search mode of coping.

The supposition that vote switchers might easily be swayed by any material they receive from the media or through interpersonal communication is supported by findings from the Summit County study. O'Keefe (1975) reported that switchers exhibited high anticipation of media influence prior to the campaign and reported being influenced in their decisions by the media during the course of the campaign. Blumler and McQuail (1969) also reported finding a group of vote switchers who were influenced by party television broadcasts.

Obviously, some learning from the mass media does occur among some groups of voters during a political campaign. As Converse (1962) noted:

> In a presidential election, the public is so massively bombarded by information about the two presidential aspirants that only a remote and indifferent citizen could fail to absorb some few meaningful items of information about each. The actual flow of information about local candidates for the national Congress, on the other hand, is extremely weak.

If these cross-pressured voters have sufficient information to make a change, sometimes two changes, in candidate preference they may not differ significantly from the non-switcher in terms of amounts of information held about the candidates and the issues.[4]

Among the decided voters, those who have made their decisions on the basis of party loyalty or similar considerations and who do not attend to the campaign in the media are likely to have at a minimum the candidate's name and party and possibly one or two issues. Overall, the level of information may not be much different from that of the decided voter who attends to the campaign in the media. Among the undecided voters, those who do attend to the campaign in the media may have substantially more information about the candidates and issues than do those who pay little or no attention to the campaign. As noted earlier, the undecideds who attend to the campaign resemble the ticket-splitters who are said to follow the campaign quite closely.

In contrast, the undecideds who do not attend to the campaign may not even know the names of the candidates, to say nothing of being aware of the campaign issues. Thus, the differences in the amounts of information held by the two groups of undecideds should be significantly greater than the difference in the amounts of information held by the decided voters. To test this possible relationship:

H1: There will be differential levels of information holding about the (a)

candidates and (b) issues between decided and undecided voters as a function of level of attention to the campaign.

H2: Decided and undecided voters whose level of attention to the campaign is high will report significantly higher levels of information about (a) the candidates and (b) the issues than will decided and undecided voters whose level of attention to the campaign is low.

H3: Decided voters will report significantly higher levels of information about (a) candidates and (b) issues than will undecided voters.

Among voters who make a decision and do not change candidate preference during the campaign, a minimum level of information is necessary, if only party preference or a single candidate characteristic. The decision could also be based on a single issue consideration. Whatever, relatively large amounts of information are not necessary. In comparison, it seems that at least as much information is necessary to be a vote switcher, even among those with the least interest in political affairs. A candidate's anme and party, or some personal characteristic, or some issue position would seem to be required before the person could make the decision to switch from one candidate to another. Further, the voter who moves from a candidate preference to a position of indecision or from a position of indecision to a candidate choice needs some basis for that shift. Thus there seems to be no reason to assume that switchers necessarily will have lower levels of candidate information than will nonswitchers, although such an outcome is implied in most of the voting literature. Attention to the mass media is not a necessary consideration in assessing the levels of information held by switchers and nonswitchers since *any* source of information would be able to provide the requisite information to generate a vote switch. However, there is no reason to suspect that those who do not attend to the campaign via the media will report information levels equivalent to those who do follow the campaign in the media. In view of the foregoing, the following hypotheses are offered to assess the relationships between switchers and nonswitchers who do and do not attend to the campaign in the mass media.

H4: There will be no significant difference between switchers and nonswitchers in amounts of information held about (a) candidates and (b) issues.

H5: Switchers and nonswitchers with high levels of attention to the campaign will demonstrate significantly higher levels of information about (a) candidates and (b) issues than will those with low levels of attention to the campaign.

H6: There will be no significant knowledge differential between switchers and nonswitchers as a function of level of attention to the campaign for either (a) knowledge about can dates or (b) knowledge about issues.

METHOD

The data were collected during studies of the 1974 congressional election campaign in southern Illinois and the 1976 presidential campaign in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. In the 1974 study the basic sampling unit was the telephone number; in 1976 the basic sampling unit was the residential address. In both studies telephone interviews were conducted with the first available registered voter.[5] In the 1974 study the telephone numbers were selected by interval procedures in proportion to the population density of the county in the five-county study area. In Cape Girardeau the sample was an equal interval sample of all residential addresses in the city directory. An additional group of students from Southeast Missouri State University was drawn by interval procedures from an alphabetical list of students provided by the University Registrar. The students and townspeople are combined in this analysis.

In both studies the data were collected in mid-September and late October, in 1976 prior to the first and following the fourth debate. The present analysis includes panels of 141 respondents from 1974 and 295 respondents from 1976.

Knowledge about the candidates was obtained by asking:

> Is there anything in particular that would make you want to vote (for/against) the (Democratic/Republican) candidate (name of candidate) for (congress/President)?

Knowledge about the campaign issues was measured by asking:

> What do you think are the most important issues in this year's Presidential Election?

No issue question was asked in the 1974 study.

Data on interpersonal communication was obtained from this question:

> Have you had a conversation with anyone lately about (name of candidate) or this campaign?

If the answer was "yes," the respondent was asked about the number of such conversations and the discussion topics. Information on attention to the campaign in the mass media was obtained from a series of questions.

> Have you (read/heard/seen) anything in the (newspaper/radio/television) lately about (name of condidate).

If the answer was "yes," the respondent was asked about the number of such items and the content. Up to four responses were recorded for each of the open-ended questions.[6] Respondents were also asked for whom they intended to vote, and these responses were used to determine the respondent's status as decided/undecided and switcher/nonswitcher.

Nimmo's typology of voters who are early and late deciders and who are either

attentive or not attentive to the campaign neatly fits the analytic framework of the 2x2 factorial analysis of variance and provides explicit tests of the hypotheses stated above. Hypotheses 1-3 are tested using the decided/undecided classification as one independent variable and attention to the campaign via the mass media and political discussions as the second independent variable. Hypotheses 4-6 are tested using switcher/nonswitcher as one independent variable and attention to the campaign via the media and political discussions as the second independent variable. The attention variables were dichotomized by assigning respondents who could not give at least one item heard/read/saw to the Low Attention group and those who could give one or more items to the High Attention group. Respondents were defined as switchers if there was any change in their vote intent from first to final interview.[7] Respondents were classified as decided or undecided on the basis of their last reported vote intention irrespective of earlier reports.

For the 1974 data the sources tested were radio, television, newspapers, and political discussions. For the 1976 data television was not included since nearly all respondents reported at least one item from television and there were too few cases in the Low Attention cells for analysis.

FINDINGS

In 1974, 28% of the respondents (40 of 141) were switchers compared with 33.9% (100 of 295) in 1976. In 1974, 24.8% of the respondents were undecided (35 of 141) while in 1976 only 11.2% (33 of 295) were undecided. In the 1974 congressional election the winner was the Democratic candidate. In the 1976 Presidential race the winner in Cape Girarideau was the Republican candidate.

In 1976 there was no significant difference in the proportions of switchers (83%) and nonswitchers (89%) who felt the election was either important or very important (chi square=2.29, $p > .05$). A significantly larger proportion of the decided voters (88.4%) than undecided voters (73.3%) judged the election either important or very important (chi square=5.35, $p < .05$). The importance question was not asked in the 1974 congressional election study.

The mean number of issues reported by nonswitchers in 1976 was 1.91 compared with 1.53 for switchers. (The statistical outcomes are given in Tables 1-3.) Decided voters reported a mean of 1.87 issues compared with only 1.12 for undecided voters. Overall, levels of knowledge about the candidates were somewhat higher. In 1974 nonswitchers reported a mean of 3.9 items about the candidates compared with 3.4 for the switchers. Decided voters reported an

average of 4.2 candidate items while undecided voters reported only 2.4 items, on the average. In 1976 the nonswitchers reported an average of 3.89 candidate items and switchers reported an average of 3.75 candidate items. The 1976 decided voter reported an average of 4.02 candidate items compared with only 2.42 items for the undecided voter.

Knowledge About Candidates

The significant outcomes of the analyses of knowledge levels about candidates in the 1974 congressional campaign are given in Table 1, and the significant outcomes for the presidential campaign are given in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1a. predicted differential levels of candidate knowledge for decided and undecided voters as a function of level of attention to the campaign. In only one of seven tests was a significant interaction detected. That outcome indicated that in 1976 the difference in knowledge level between undecided voters who had high and low levels of attention to the campaign via radio was significantly greater than for the decided voters. The difference between the undecided voters was 2.73 items while between decided voters the difference was only 0.03. However, on the basis of the preponderance of evidence H1a. is rejected; overall there was no significant knowledge differential between decided and undecided voters as a function of level of attention to the campaign.

Hypothesis 2a. specified that decided and undecided voters whose level of attention to the campaign was high would exhibit higher levels of candidate knowledge than would decided and undecided voters whose level of attention to the campaign was low. In three of the seven tests there was no significant difference in knowledge levels between those who gave high and low attention to the campaign; H2a. is rejected.[8]

Hypothesis 3a. specified that the decided voters would have a higher level of knowledge about candidates than would the undecided voters. In all seven tests the expected outcome was confirmed; H3a. is retained.

Hypothesis 4a. specified there would be no significant difference in candidate knowledge levels between switchers and nonswitchers. In all seven tests the expected outcome was confirmed; H4a. is retained.

Hypothesis 5a. specified that those switchers and nonswitchers whose attention level to the campaign was high would know more about the candidates than would those switchers and nonswitchers whose attention level to the campaign was low. In two of the seven tests there was no difference in knowledge levels between groups based on level of attention to the campaign; H5a. is rejected.[9]

Table 1. Mean References to Both Candidates for Levels of Vote Switching, Vote Decisions By Levels of Attention to the Campaign: 1974.

Vote Status	Attention Level		Row Means	F	pLT
	Low	High			
Hear About Campaign on Radio					
Not switch	3.45 (69)*	4.88 (32)	3.90	Rows = 1.13	n.s.
Switch	3.14 (28)	4.00 (12)	3.40	Cols = 8.33	.01
Col. Means	3.36	4.64		Int. = 0.34	n.s.
Decided	3.83 (75)	5.12 (31)	4.21	Rows = 18.56	.001
Undecided	1.77 (22)	3.46 (13)	2.40	Cols = 11.48	.001
Col. Means	3.36	4.64		Int. = 1.17	n.s.
Talk About the Campaign					
Not switch	3.56 (66)	4.54 (35)	3.90	Rows = 1.63	n.s.
Switch	2.54 (24)	4.69 (16)	3.40	Cols = 9.98	.01
Col. Means	3.29	4.59		Int. = 1.60	n.s.
Decided	3.71 (61)	4.89 (45)	4.21	Rows = 11.30	.001
Undecided	2.41 (29)	2.33 (16)	2.40	Cols = 5.53	.05
Col. Means	3.29	4.59		Int. = 1.24	n.s.
Hear About Campaign on Television					
Not switch	3.06 (31)	4.27 (70)	3.90	Rows = 1.54	n.s.
Switch	3.66 (9)	3.32 (31)	3.40	Cols = 3.26	n.s.
Col. Means	3.20	3.98		Int. = 2.12	n.s.
Decided	3.70 (27)	4.38 (79)	4.21	Rows = 14.13	.001
Undecided	2.15 (13)	2.55 (22)	2.40	Cols = 1.80	n.s.
Col. Means	3.20	3.98		Int. = 1.09	n.s.
Read About Campaign in Newspapers					
Not switch	2.95 (38)	4.50 (62)	3.90	Rows = 1.92	n.s.
Switch	1.92 (13)	4.11 (27)	3.40	Cols = 17.70	.001
Col. Means	2.69	4.38		Int. = 0.48	n.s.
Decided	3.27 (34)	4.65 (72)	4.21	Rows = 11.57	.001
Undecided	1.61 (18)	3.24 (17)	2.40	Cols = 13.07	.001
Col. Means	2.69	4.38		Int. = 0.20	n.s.

* Cell frequencies in parenthesis.

Table 2. Mean References to Both Candidates for Levels of Vote Switching, Vote Decisions By Levels of Attention to the Campaign: 1976

Vote Status	Attention Level		Row Means	F	pLT
	Low	High			
Hear About Campaign on Radio					
Not switch	3.81 (79)*	3.94 (116)	3.89	Rows = 0.09	n.s.
Switch	3.26 (52)	4.27 (48)	3.75	Cols = 2.33	n.s.
Col. Means	3.60	4.04		Int. = 2.15	n.s.
Decided	4.00 (111)	4.03 (151)	4.02	Rows = 12.61	.001
Undecided	1.35 (20)	4.08 (13)	2.42	Cols = 1.44	n.s.
Col. Means	3.60	4.04		Int. = 9.42	.01
Talk About Campaign					
Not switch	3.48 (42)	4.00 (153)	3.89	Rows = 0.18	n.s.
Switch	2.57 (23)	4.10 (77)	3.75	Cols = 6.88	.01
Col. Means	3.15	4.04		Int. = 2.09	n.s.
Decided	3.63 (51)	4.11 (211)	4.02	Rows = 10.68	.001
Undecided	1.43 (14)	3.16 (19)	2.42	Cols = 4.27	.05
Col. Means	3.15	4.04		Int. = 1.90	n.s.
Read About Campaign in Newspapers					
Not switch	3.27 (22)	3.97 (173)	3.89	Rows = 0.19	n.s.
Switch	2.42 (12)	3.93 (88)	3.85	Cols = 5.05	.05
Col. Means	2.97	3.95		Int. = 0.81	n.s.
Decided	3.62 (26)	4.06 (236)	4.02	Rows = 11.49	.001
Undecided	0.88 (8)	2.92 (25)	2.42	Cols = 3.23	n.s.
Col. Means	2.97	39.5		Int. = 2.23	n.s.

* Cell frequencies in parenthesis

Hypothesis 6a. specified there would be no knowledge differential for switchers and nonswitchers based on level of attention to the campaign. In none of the seven tests was there a statistically significant interaction indicating such a differential existed; H6a. is retained.

In terms of voting status, the findings indicated that decided voters knew significantly more about the candidates than did the undecided voters, but there was no difference in knowledge levels for switchers and nonswitchers. While overall there was no effect of level of attention to the campaign, the following outcomes were found for the four sources of information.[10]

1. In both 1974 and 1976 respondents with high levels of political discussion knew more than those with low levels of political discussion.

2. In 1974 those whose attention level to the campaign via radio was high knew more than those whose attention level was low. There was no difference for radio in 1976.

3. In three of the four instances those with high attention levels via newspapers knew more than those with low attention levels. In 1976 there was no difference between decided and undecided voters with high attention levels and decided and undecided voters with low attention levels via newspapers.

4. Level of attention to the 1974 congressional campaign via television was unrelated to knowledge level.

Knowledge of Issues

The significant outcomes for the analysis of knowledge levels about campaign issues are given in Table 3. Because of the consistency of outcomes similar hypotheses will be reviewed together.

Hypothesis 1b. specified a differential level of knowledge about issues for decided and undecided voters as a function of level of attention to the campaign. Hypothesis 6b. predicted no such differential knowledge level for switchers and nonswitchers. The findings show none of the six interaction tests was statistically significant. H1b. is rejected and H6b. is retained.

Hypotheses 2b. and 5b. predicted that respondents whose level of attention to the campaign was high would know more about the issues than would those whose level of attention was low. All six outcomes indicated a significant difference in issue knowledge based on level of attention; H2b. and H5b. are retained.

Hypothesis 3b. predicted that decided voters would have a higher level of issue knowledge than would undecided voters while Hypothesis 4b. predicted there would be no difference in issue knowledge levels between switchers and non-

Table 3. Mean Issue References for Levels of Vote Switching and Vote Decisions by Levels of Attention to the Campaign: 1976.

Vote Status	Attention Level		Row Means	F	pLT
	Low	High			
Hear About Campaign on Radio					
Not switch	1.57 (79)*	2.15 (116)	1.91	Rows = 5.42	.05
Switch	1.48 (52)	1.58 (48)	1.53	Cols = 9.03	.01
Col. Means	1.53	1.98		Int. = 2.71	n.s.
Decided	1.65 (111)	2.03 (151)	1.87	Rows = 9.71	.01
Undecided	0.90 (20)	1.46 (13)	1.12	Cols = 8.44	.01
Col. Means	1.53	1.98		Int. = 0.18	n.s.
Talk About the Campaign					
Not switch	1.36 (42)	2.07 (153)	1.91	Rows = 6.89	.01
Switch	1.13 (23)	1.69 (77)	1.53	Cols = 15.62	.001
Col. Means	1.28	1.94		Int. = 0.31	n.s.
Decided	1.47 (51)	1.96 (211)	1.87	Rows = 8.09	.01
Undecided	0.57 (14)	1.53 (19)	1.12	Cols = 11.91	.01
Col. Means	1.28	1.94		Int. = 1.09	n.s.
Read About Campaign in Newspapers					
Not switch	1.23 (22)	2.00 (173)	1.91	Rows = 7.03	.01
Switch	0.67 (12)	1.65 (88)	1.53	Cols = 16.12	.001
Col. Means	1.03	1.88		Int. = 0.22	n.s.
Decided	1.27 (26)	1.93 (236)	1.87	Rows = 8.77	.01
Undecided	0.25 (8)	1.40 (25)	1.12	Cols = 12.96	.001
Col. Means	1.03	1.88		Int. = 0.86	n.s.

* Cell frequencies in parenthesis.

switchers. In all six tests there were differences between groups. Decided voters and non-switchers consistently reported higher levels of issue knowledge than did undecided voters and vote switchers; H3b. is retained and H4b is rejected.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes are both supportive of and at variance with previously reported findings. The finding that decided voters know more than undecided voters about both the candidates and the campaign issues fits the existing literature. However, the finding that there was no significant difference in knowledge levels about candidates between vote switchers and nonswitchers seems contrary to earlier reports. There are at least three possible reasons for this apparently deviant outcome.

First, as we argued earlier, there is no logical reason to assume that those who switch would have less information since those voters would need some information on which to base the switch decision. Further, the present analysis provides a direct test of the relationship rather than reaching a judgment based on inference. Second, the present analysis has used direct measures of political knowledge about specific campaign related candidates rather than inferring political knowledge from opinion measures or measures of interest of political involvement or more general "current events" type questions. Third, the present analysis has separated knowledge about candidates from knowledge about campaign issues. Previous measures of knowledge appear not to have tapped the candidate dimension of voter political knowledge. And, as the "new politics" writers argue, most voters are more concerned with candidate images than with issues. It seems likely that it is less difficult for voters to obtain candidate information—party, name, personal characteristics—than it is to obtain issue information.[11]

It might be tempting to explain away these findings by simply assuming a quirk of a particular election campaign. However, these findings occur in two quite different campaigns, a congressional and a presidential campaign, and in two different years and thus cannot be so easily disregarded. The studies were also conducted in different localities with different parties the winner. However, the basic methodology was used in both studies.

A second apparently anomalous finding is the lack of a consistent relationship between levels of knowledge about the candidates and levels of attention to the campaigns. The most consistent outcome was between knowledge levels and levels of participation in political discussion, a clear indication of a relationship with interest and involvement in the campaigns. For the mass media, the possible effects of

television may provide a partial explanation. In 1974 attention to the campaign via television was not related to knowledge level while in 1976 nearly all respondents could provide at least one item attributed to television and no test for television was possible. Television coverage of the 1974 congressional campaign was almost nonexistent, although respondents claimed to have followed the campaign on television. In 1976 there was heavy television coverage of the presidential campaign, and as may be seen in Table 2, all non-significant outcomes for radio and newspapers appear in the analysis of the presidential campaign.

Content analysis of a sample of local and network radio newscasts during the last two months of the 1976 campaign indicates that there was little to learn from radio. The best the voter probably could do was to learn the candidates' names, their party affiliation, and possibly their travel schedules. Since the lack of relationship between knowledge level and attention level to the campaign via radio occurred in both switching and decision status analyses, it seems likely that radio simply was not an important source of campaign information in Cape Girardeau, Mo., in 1976.

There was no lack of campaign information in the two newspapers published in the city, and we have no ready explanation for that outcome. This is perhaps the most unexpected outcome since use of print media has historically been reported to be related to high levels of political knowledge. The major exception we are aware of is the lack of association between newspaper exposure and political knowledge reported by Berelson, et al.

The findings also do not appear to support the comparison made earlier between the undecided voter who pays high attention to the campaign and the ticket-splitter. There was no significant knowledge differential for decided and undecided voters as a function of attention to the campaign. This does not support the argument that these undecided voters are late deciders because they are seeking issue information from television, newspapers, and interpersonal communication so as for radio, although it did occur for decision status and campaign issues.

These analyses, conducted with the limited framework of a four-fold typology, indicate these minimum interrelated needs.

1. A more precise assessment of voter knowledge of campaign issues and candidate characteristics rather than using opinion measures, involvement measures, or indicies of general knowledge.

2. Further assessment of the relationships between voter knowledge and content of the mass media; media content measures must be based on content analysis rather than on reports of what appears in the media.

3. Examination of the nature of voter attribution of content of the various

media. While reliance on perceptual data enhances the ease with which research is conducted, there is reason to suspect a substantial proportion of the public simply does not know the media source of most of its information.

NOTES

1. Polsby & Wildavsky (1971) indicate that if the inattentive, undecided voter does vote, possibly as a result of some get-out-the-vote campaign, he probably would either vote Democrat or simply vote for whichever candidate whose name seemed most familiar.
2. Atwood and Sanders (1975) found that Republican and independent ticket-splitters were heavy users of print media, Democrats were unrelated to media use, and all groups of straight ticket voters were negatively associated with print media use.
3. Since Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee (1954) reported that two-thirds of the voters misperceived to some degree the positions of candidates and parties, it is probably safe to assume that misperceptions are fairly common to all four on Nimmo's types.
4. The literature regarding the relationship between vote switching and knowledge of political affairs is sparse and confusing or contradictory, at best. Converse (1962) shed some light on the problem by noting that measures of involvement have sometimes been used as measures of understanding and knowledge. Converse assures the reader that this is a "fair assumption" because there is a "high correlation" between involvement and comprehension. The magnitude of the correlation is not reported, and little direct evidence is found to support the "assumption." Data presented by Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee (1954) for newspaper use shows no significant difference in the proportions (chi square = 1.22, $P > .05$) of respondents in high and low exposure conditions who could recall one or more political items in newspapers. Significant differences do appear for radio and magazine exposure. Neither Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee (1954) nor Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet (1944) provide direct evidence that switchers know less than non-switchers. That conclusion must be reached as follows. First, there is a positive association between media exposure and knowledge level. Second, non-switchers have higher media exposure than do non-switchers. Such a form of reasoning is dangerously susceptible to error, as anyone who works with partial correlations knows. Key's (1966) reassessment of the Survey Research Center data indicates no substantial differences in knowledge levels between switchers and non-switchers, although the switchers in 1960 appeared to be less well informed than those in 1948-1952. Atkin and Heald (1976) reported exposure was "moderately" correlated" with knowledge and interest; the correlations ranged from .20 to .42.
5. Interviewers asked the person answering the phone of he/she was (1) registered and (2) likely to vote in the election. If the respondent was not registered, the interviewer attempted to talk with someone else at that number who claimed to be a registered voter. In the second wave of interviewing in 1974 two call-backs were made before the respondent was dropped from the panel. In 1976 as many as four call-backs were made before the respondent was dropped. Because of the high mortality rate, nearly 75 per cent in each study, projections to the population of voters in southern Illinois and Cape Girardau are

unwarranted.

6. Summing the number of responses provides up to 16 possible items of information about candidates, four positive and four negative each for two candidates. The issue, discussion, and media questions provide ranges from zero to four items each. One could interpret the issue and media responses as nonevaluative cognitions and the items about the candidates as evaluations since they are things the voters liked and disliked about the candidates (Becker, McCombs, & McLeod, 1975).
7. These voters have also been referred to as "changers," "shifting voters," and "floating voters." The distinctions often include a change from one election to the next or across three campaigns as well as within a single campaign. The definition employed here includes all three groups Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet (1944) refer to as Crystalizers, Waverers, and Party Changers. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee (1954) reported that most of the changes in the intracampaign situation were the result of intercampaign defectors reverting to their original positions.
8. While four of the seven test outcomes were significant, our interest is in the overall set of outcomes, not in specific events for specific media. The probability of obtaining four significant outcomes in seven attempts is 0.50 (Siegel, 1956).
9. As is the case with Hypothesis 2a., the obtained number of significant outcomes in the set is not sufficient to permit Hypothesis 5a. to be retained. The probability of obtaining five significant outcomes in seven attempts is 0.773.
10. It may seem "obvious" that attention to the newspaper is related to knowledge level since in five of six assessments there was a statistically significant relationship in which those who were high on attention to the campaign via the newspaper knew more about both the candidates and the issues than did those who were low on attention to the campaign via the newspaper. However, the probability of obtaining five significant outcomes in six attempts is 0.981. Overall, for radio four of six outcomes were significant ($p = 0.656$), and for political discussion all six tests were statistically significant.

REFERENCES

1. Atkin, C., Instrumental Utilities and Information Seeking. In P. Clarke (Ed.), *New Models for Mass Communication Research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1973, 205-243.
2. Atkin, C., How Imbalanced Coverage Affects Audience Exposure Patterns. *Journalism Quarterly*, 1971, **48**, 234-244.
3. Atkin, C., Bowen, L., Nayman, O., & Sheinkopf, K., Quality Versus Quantity in Televised Political Ads. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1973, **37**, 209-224.
4. Atkin, C., & Heald, G., Effects of Political Advertising. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1976, **40**, 216-228.
5. Atwood, L. E., & Sanders, K. R., Perception of Information Sources and Likelihood of Split-Ticket Voting. *Journalism Quarterly*, 1975, **52**, 421-428.
6. Becker, L. B., McCombs, M. E., & McLeod, J. M., The Development of Political Cognitions. In S. H. Chaffee (ed.), *Political Communication: Issues and Strategies for Research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1975, 21-63.

7. Becker, J. D., & Preston, I. L., Media Usage and Political Activity. *Journalism Quarterly*, 1969, **46**, 129-134.
8. Berelson, B., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & McPhee, W. N., *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.
9. Blumler, J., & McQuall, D., *Television and Politics: Its Uses and Influence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.
10. Campbell, A., Converse, P. E. Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E., *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley, 1960.
11. Converse, P. E., Information Flow and the Stability of Partisan Attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1962, **26**, 578-599.
12. DeVries, W. & Tarrance, V. L., *The Ticket-Splitter: A New Force in American Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972.
13. Festinger, L., *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row Peterson, 1957.
14. Grabor, D. A., Personal Qualities in Presidential Images: The Contribution of the Press. *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 1972, **16**, 46-76.
15. Greenberg, B. S., Voting Intentions, Election Expectations, and Exposure to Campaign Information. *Journal of Communication*, 1965, **15**, 149-160.
16. Hyman, H. H., & Sheatsley, P. B., Some Reasons Why Information Campaigns Fail. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1947, **11**, 413-423.
17. Katz, E., Platforms and Windows: Broadcasting's Role in Election Campaigns. *Journalism Quarterly*, 1971, **48**, 304-314.
18. Key, V. O., JR., *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Elections 1936-1960*. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.
19. Lanzetta, J., & Driscoll, J., Effects of Uncertainty and Importance on Information Search in Decision Making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1968, **10**, 479-486.
20. Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H., *The People's Choice*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944.
21. Macaluso, T. F., Parameters of 'Rational' Voting: Vote Switching in the 1968 Election. *The Journal of Politics*, 1975, **37**, 202-234.
22. McGrath, J. E., & McGrath, M. F., Effects of Partisanship on Perceptions of Political Figures. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1962, **26**, 236-248.
23. Nimmo, D. D., *The Political Persuaders: The Techniques of Modern Election Campaigns*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
24. O'keefe, G. J., Political Campaigns and Mass Communication Research. In S. H. Chaffee (Ed.), *Political Communication: Issues and Strategies for Research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1975, 129-164.
25. Pool, I., Public Opinion. In Ithiel de Sola Pool, et al., (Eds.), *Handbook of Communication*. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973, 779-843.
26. Pool, I., The Effects of Communication on Voting Behavior. In Wilbur Schramm (Ed.), *The Science of Human Communication*. New York: Basic Books, 1963.
27. Preston, I., & Becker, J. D., Media Usage and Political Activity. *Journalism Quarterly*, 1969, **46**, 129-244.

28. Sears, D. O., & Whitney, R. E., Political Persuasion. In Ithiel de Solo Pool, et al., (Eds.), *Handbook of Communication*. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973, 252-289.
29. Sherrod, Drury, R., Selection Perception of Political Candidates. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1971-72, **35**, 554-562.
30. Siegel, S., *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956, 250.