The Role of Education Policy in United States Campaigns and Elections

by

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Middletown, Connecticut April, 2016
To Ms. Edye Caine

“If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking”
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A nation establishes a system of education in order to create an educated citizenry, which may provide benefit to the economic or general growth of a country. With this institutionalization of education, groups within a nation argue for how to best institute this novel system of instruction. Historically, this dispute on how to educate a citizenry is ubiquitous; taking place during the trial of Socrates in Ancient Athens to contemporary debates in China about the accuracy of history textbooks. In the United States, this argument has taken several forms including quarrels between partisan groups on proper curriculum content to level of governments disputing the proper course for the future of education. The American federalist structure plays an interesting role in the discussion of education within the United States. With both levels of government and two major parties playing a foremost role in the implementation of education policy, the debate over how to educate our citizenry has development momentously throughout the American history. The role of the federal government in influencing American education is relatively new considering states have taken an active role in instituting a system of education dating back to the New England colonies, which were recognized as the primary states to create an education domain (Bankston III, Caldas, 2009). Today, the United States takes witness to an American education system intertwined with the principles of federalism and established within an intense era of polarization. A platform for the discussion of
education is the election, which serves as a stage for candidates to discuss their preferences for policy and how the government should be organized. Since public education is entirely controlled by government and elections serve as method to elect government officials, candidate campaigns should illustrate the how politicians discuss, explore, and debate education as a policy area.

With the rise of federal involvement in education and the historical authority of states to influence their systems of public education, I ask how and when do politicians discuss education? In this research, I hope to solve this question through several layers of analysis. Specifically, I study the 2012 elections to observe how candidates for office discuss education and when these political contenders talk about education in campaign ads. In the following sections, I will discuss why I study political ads, focus on the 2012 election and analyze the role education in campaigns.

*The Merits of Studying Political Campaign Ads*

Political advertising is considered the primary method in which candidates for office convey their preferences for policy and politics to candidates (Franz et. al, 2007; Fowler, Franz, Ridout, 2016; Trent, 2011). This method of utilizing campaign ads is the main form in which candidates reach voters and, may be considered the main way voters can observe candidates (Fowler, Franz, Ridout, 2016). The use of televised campaign ads offers several benefits to candidates. First, televised ads are able to reach the largest audience in one showing while allowing candidates to directly talk to voters, which is a main reason this strategy has been universally adopted by candidates (Franz et. al. 2007). In addition, campaign ads are considered to “rich in information content,” which indicates that candidates are likely to invest as much information as possible in each ad. Considering political campaign ads are a
prominent strategy in elections to relay candidate opinions about policy to the public, I will study campaign ads to find how political candidates discuss education in ads. Assessing campaign ads for mentions of education is best method to understand how politicians talk about education policy and reform because serve as the primary form of politician communication between voter and campaign, they are intended to speak directly with voters, are universal among campaigns, are considered rich with information and are the main form in which campaign communicate with voters (Franz et. al. 2007). Furthermore, almost all campaigns, state and federal, use campaign ads to illustrate their preferences and opinions of policies and politics (Niemi, Dyck, 2014). Therefore, I am able to assess candidates’ discussion of education for both levels of government through an analysis of campaign ads.

The 2012 Election

In order to truly understand how and when political candidates discuss education, I will focus campaign ads in the 2012 election as a case study for four reasons. First, I utilize the 2012 election because this election features the presidential election along with congressional, gubernatorial and state legislative campaigns. This will allow me to evaluate and compare levels of government and corresponding federal and state branches, which has not been accomplished in more recent studies of ads content. In addition, the presidential election generally have more effects on other races than non-presidential election years including increasing voter turnout and creating a presidential coattail effect (Jacobsen and Carson 2016). This is a positive aspect of using a presidential election year because voters may be more attentive to these elections, which may motivate candidates to create more ads. Secondly, the 2012 election witnessed a monumental increase in political advertising illustrating a “36.5
percent increase over 2008, when there were roughly 2.19 million airings in federal races” (Fowler, Franz and Ridout 2016). This gives my research a larger dataset to handle and more data to observe results.

Thirdly, the 2012 election is relatively recent and other studies have not focused on such this latest presidential race. Other scholars have focused on the 2000, 2004 and 2008 presidential elections, yet few have researched the 2012 election for the role of education in campaigns. The 2012 election is important in regard to development of education as a political issue because this presidential election is the first after President Obama’s Race to the Top initiative and establishment of the Common Core Standards. Therefore, my research will provide new insight into this field of analyzing education in campaigns. Finally, the 2012 election features education as a top ten issue. Referring to Figure 1.1, one can see that education composes around 300,000 of total mentions. If education was not a prominent issue in the 2012 election, then it may not be enough evidence to propagate a theory about education in campaigns.

The 2012 should be substantive example of how education is discussed in campaigns. The great amount of campaign ads will provide an accurate sample of political ads and the prominence of education as an issue area is important in order to truly recognize the role of education in campaigns. Furthermore, this relatively recent presidential election will provide novel insight on the discussion of education by political candidates as other studies have not analyzed the 2012 election in a similar fashion.
Why Education Rhetoric?

I analyzing the role of education mentions in campaigns for four reasons. First, education has increasingly developed as an issue intertwined with party politics and polarized partisanship. Both political party have developed dissimilar and congruent stances on education policy ranging from implementing free market reforms to extending governmental intervention in education (Spring, 2014). In some instances, parties have generally agreed on educational policy, yet may often disagree on curriculum content, implementation and enforcement. With polarization generally growing on a national scale, the role of education between the two party may greatly differ (Abramowitz 2010, Jacobsen 2014). A main objective of my research is to analyze if parties truly differentiate when discussing education and if polarization
truly plays a role in this dialogue of education in campaigns. Secondly, education has become increasingly entangled in American federalism as both state and federal government play a role in developing and influencing education. By studying the role of education between each level of government, I will be able to observe if these two entities illustrate similar views on education or are incongruent with one another. This part of my research has not been studied before as there has not been research that illustrates the difference between federal and state candidates in regard to their opinions and mentions of education policy in campaigns.

Thirdly, a main proponent of my research is to discover, not only how candidates discuss education, but when politicians refer to this policy area. As I will detail in the next section, I will analyze a number of factors to discern when education is mentioned by candidates. Because education is not only a role allocated to each of the fifty states, but also the federal government, attempting to ascertain when education is more likely to be discussed based on a number of variables can help future studies predict when politicians will talk about education. Finally, an important crux of this research is to determine if the other candidates hold politicians accountable for educational achievement. The release of performance data and public information about school performance might influence voters to support particular candidates. If school or states are not performing well, one would think opposing candidates would attack an incumbent during a campaign. If politicians are not held accountable, then I will offer some solutions to solving this predicament.

Outline of Chapters

In the subsequent chapters, I will attempt to answer my original question of how and when politicians are likely to discuss education. Chapter 2 will seek to detect
differences in mentioning education between parties and level of government during campaigns. Hence, I will analyze the different education references by Republicans and Democrats in all elections then observe education mentions between state and federal candidates. Finally, I will connect my prior two analyses by studying differences between parties in the two level of government. This will allow me to observe if certain partisan affiliation and governmental elections differ in mentioning education policy.

Chapter 3 will attempt to find a relationship between polarization rates and education issues typically associated with a particular party. As polarization has become an increasingly important factor in American politics, these extreme ideologies have permeated education policy. Since Republicans and Democrats both possess moderate and extremist views on education, I will attempt to see if these views are correlated with state polarization. This analysis will allow me to see if polarization plays a role in when education is discussed in campaigns.

Chapter 4 will attempt to observe a relationship between school or state performance data and the probability of mentioning education. This analysis will compare congressional and state legislative races to see if particular candidates are more likely to discuss education based on poor and proficient academic assessments. In regards to accountability, this chapter will observe if politicians are held accountable for poor school districts or rewarded by high performing districts.

Finally, I will summarize my results in my conclusion and make broad implications about my research. In this section, I will share how partisanship, state or federal candidates mention education in campaigns while concluding with how the intersection of these two analyzes may present interesting implication for further
study and for the role of education in campaigns. Then, I will disclose how and when politicians are likely to discuss education based on polarization or academic assessment. This research will help answer how and when politicians discuss education in campaigns and provide insight on if politicians are held accountable for based on performance in state or school district.
CHAPTER 2
EDUCATION, POLITICAL PARTIES AND FEDERALISM

The 2012 election exhibited a monumental increase in the amount of political advertising compared to more recent elections (Fowler, Franz and Ridout 2016). With education as a top issue in this election, as previously disclosed in the first chapter, I discuss the role of this policy area in political advertising specifically focusing on parties and level of government. In regards to both K-12 and higher education, education represents a policy area that is intertwined with the structure of the America’s two party system as well as incorporated into our country’s federal principle of government. This intriguing aspect of education allows me to research the differences in opinions on education between parties, levels of government and the intersection of these entities. First, both major parties, Republican and Democrat, have adopted dissimilar views on the best way to implement educational reform, which may stem from their fundamentally disparate stances on the role of government. Over the last several decades, the federal government has assumed power over education through the use of federal grants, yet state governments have consistently been the main agent for instituting educational policy in each respective state. Studying the 2012 election, I will analyze campaign ads to detect if particular mentions by both parties and level of government fall into expected party and governmental positions or policy stances on education.

First, I examine the difference in education mentions between Republican and Democrat campaign ads, which may shed new insights on the politics of education
and explain differences in how parties discuss educational policy. Second, I will study the differences in educational policy mentions by level of government. With the rise of federal education policy and the traditional power of states to directly control education, I intend to detect dissimilarities between state and federal candidates when mentioning education policy in campaigns, which will illustrate whether candidates for state or federal office are congruent in objective for education. For example, we may observe a majority of US senatorial ads espousing more standardized testing while State Senate campaigns tend to refute such testing standards, which would illustrate a disagreement between legislature of each level of government. Finally, I will observe the differences between parties at each level of government, which will show an intriguing connection between the two previous comparisons and illustrate whether there is a difference in education mentions between partisan groups at each level of government.

Literature Review

Scholars have observed the role of education between parties and levels of government in the context of both running for office and voting for or supporting particular policies. First, studies have illustrated contrasting claims about the role of education policies by partisanship in campaigns and have distinguished the differences between parties by their stances on particular education policies based on partisan values. In addition, the role of education in the American federalist structure is complex as both federal and state governments have developed vast jurisdiction over this policy area. The literature discussing the authority over education between state and federal government is large and I hope to decipher through this great amount of scholarship.
When discussing different stances on education policy between the two parties, scholars debate the validity of issue ownership in regards to education policy and discuss the implication of each parties’ political agenda on education. The theory of issue ownership expects “candidates to emphasize issues on which they are advantaged” based on their party identification (Petrocik 1996, p. 825). This idea proposes that particular parties are publicly perceived to better handle certain policy concerns and, as a result, are more likely to mention such issues. In regards to education, issue ownership theory would posit that Democrats are more likely to mention and discuss education in political campaigns because this party is publicly perceived to have a political advantage over this policy area compared to Republican candidates (Sides 2006). Furthermore, if Republicans are to mention education, this rhetoric would generally endorse agreeable goals like “improving education” or “better schools” (Sides 2006). On the contrary, studies have illustrated Republican Senate and House candidates in the 2004 election more often discussing funding of education as well as utilizing a broad variety of education funding frames as compared to their Democratic rivals (Arbour 2014). This study specifically observed issue frames, which are defined as “a way of presenting an issue or an idea in a message” in order to give weight to a particular aspect of an issue (Arbour 2014, p. 606). Education frames included “funds for education,” “make college affordable,” or “graduation rates” (Arbour 2014). In addition, scholarship has found that, in cases of competitive elections, candidates of both parties are more likely to converge on issues (Kaplan, Park and Ridout 2006). As one can observe, the scholarship behind the content of candidate’s education issue stances based on party affiliation is not in concordance with the role of issue ownership in elections as some scholars have
perpetuated the validity of this theory while others have provided evidence against this phenomenon, yet there has not been a more recent study that observes a contemporary election and analyzes the framing of education policy by candidates of different parties.

Scholars have also studied each party’s agenda and political goals in regard to education, which illustrates an in-depth analysis of differences between the parties on education. First, observing the cultural and political differences in both parties, Spring (2011) claims that Republicans have continually emphasized the necessity of implementing American and faith based values in education to demonstrate American exceptionalism while Democrats support government intervention in education while also postulating a mixed message about cultural values. In addition to the ideological differences between the two parties, their political agendas on education have shown both similarities and complete disparities on specific education initiatives. Particular scholars have maintained that, overall, these two parties have illustrated different agendas in regard to education policy (Spring 2011, 2014, Sulkin 2014, Vinovskis 2009). In campaigns since the 2004 presidential election, Democrats have emphasized a focus on preschool and early education programs that, they argue, will systematically combat poverty by granting opportunities to the least advantaged at a young age (Spring 2014, Vinovskis 2009). Compared to the Democrats, Republicans have put forth an agenda that protects traditional religious and American values, the free market, individual freedom from government, and contend that poverty is a result of poor character that can be alleviated through hard work (Spring 2014). Specifically, Republicans desire to create policy that reflects religious values like pro-life and abstinence education, using education as a tool to lift oneself out of poverty,
and supporting evolution over creationism in public education according to Republican party platforms. Even though, Democrats and Republicans fundamentally differ on how to create and implement a strategy towards a better education, both parties have supported national standards by the federal government since the 1980s (Spring 2014). This desire to create national standards was actualized with the passing of the NCLB, which achieved bipartisan support in Congress.

Higher education has also been a prominent education policy area between the two parties as both parties have traditionally supported federal funds for institutions of higher education (Spring 2014). In many contexts, Republicans tend to support performance based funding for universities, which Democrats oppose on the basis that it will create inequality among schools (Dougherty et. al. 2013). Democrats have also supported the Department of Education, which continues to provide students with college aid, yet this entity has been attacked by Republicans since its conception in the 1980s (Vinovskis 2009). Studies have also discovered that Democrats generally support increased funding for higher education, yet may rather fund initiatives to combat unemployment or prefer funding K-12 education (Dar 2012). Research has also discovered that Democrat representation in legislatures is positively correlated with increased funding for higher education (Dar and Lee 2014).

In addition to differences between the two parties in regard to education policy and implementation, scholars have considered the role of education within the United States federalist structure. The federal government has demonstrated a growing presence in public education, which is generally a policy delegated to the control of states, yet scholars have observed the various roles both federal and state government occupy in the American education system. Studies have found that education is a
growing issue in presidential elections since the 1976 election between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter (Hess and McGuinn 2002). Most scholars generally agree that the federal role in education has increased since the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Hess and McGuinn 2002, McGuinn 2006 Maranto and McChase 2012, Vinovskis 2009). Still, scholars have argued that states possess a wide range of agency in implementing these federal standards and creating their respective state’s education policy. Even though many agree that the federal role in education has increased since the 1960s, local school districts and states still have agency within the system as state governments can reconcile federal programs in education with local demands, which permits more agency for state governments than is accounted for in studies solely focusing on federal involvement in education (Reed 2014). Furthermore, states shape federal policies to their own discretion (Vergari 2012). In more recent policy matters, several states choose to not apply for the Race to the Top initiatives, which could grant states up to $700 million toward public education (Vegari 2012). Additionally, other scholars discovered that state governors are more instrumental in instigating education reform and policy in states than federal officials introducing similar initiatives (Mokher 2010). Regarding higher education, both levels of government are likely to provide funding and financial support to students attending institutions of higher education (Tandberg and Griffith 2013, Dar and Lee 2014).

**Theory and Expectations**

Regarding the literature comparing the different positions on education policies between parties and levels of government, I have developed several hypotheses. First, I believe that Democrats are more likely to discuss education in campaigns based on
the theory of issue ownership. I believe historically Democrats are considered better equipped to handle education policy and, therefore, will be more likely to discuss education (Petrocik 1996, Sides 2006). In addition, I believe Democrats are more likely to discuss education funding, early education programs, funding for higher education and state standardized testing because Democratic candidates have demonstrated their commitment to these positions on these policy positions in the past (Dar 2012, Spring 2014, Vinovskis 2009). Even though Arbour (2014) found that Republicans were more likely to discuss education funding, I am not convinced by his finding as other scholars, like Spring (2014) and Vinovskis (2009), illustrate that Democrats are typically more concerned about education funding. Furthermore, both parties will maintain positions on education policies that reflect their partisan values such as traditional American and religious values for Republicans or multicultural education for Democrats (Spring 2011).

Comparing education policy and elections between federal and state governments, there are many differences in the implementation of educational policy and the organization of campaigns. I hypothesize that state campaigns are more likely to mention education compared to federal campaigns because states have traditionally controlled this policy area and possess a great deal of agency in implementing change towards education (Reed 2014, Vegari 2012). Furthermore, I believe that state candidates are more likely to mention funding education because they are more likely to provide financial support to schools based on their ability to more directly influence state education (Reed 2014, Vegari 2012). In addition, I believe that both federal and state candidates are likely to mention funding for higher education
because both levels provide funding for these particular institutions (Tandberg and Griffith 2013, Dar and Lee 2014).

After analyzing education mentions between both parties and level of government, I will study the differences in top education mentions between parties in each level of government. Since education is a policy area influenced by both federal and state offices as well as discussed differently between political parties, this particular analysis should shed light on party disunity between state and federal candidates founded on partisanship. Based on this analysis, I believe that candidates on the state level are more likely to illustrate congruent preferences in education policy regardless of partisan affiliation because these candidates are more likely to respond to issues in their district. On the contrary, federal candidates will more likely diverge on particular education mentions because scholars have show a prominent increase in partisan polarization on the federal level (Abramowitz 2012). In addition, I believe that federal and state Democratic candidates are likely to diverge on top education mentions because federal candidates tend to possess more polarized beliefs about education. This will also hold true for Republican state and federal candidates.

Data and Methods

In order to assess campaign advertisements mentioning education, I use the 2012 election cycle, and specifically the presidential, gubernatorial, congressional and state legislative campaigns. Focusing on 2012 election, I hope to develop a broader scheme for educational policy in elections through the analysis of campaign advertisements. I focus on campaign ads because this form of communication is recognized as an important tool to study the stances and interest of candidates running for office (Trent 2011). Furthermore, campaign ads are the most utilized method for candidates to
communicate with voters (Trent 2011). Therefore, based on the importance of campaign ads as a communicative technique in campaigns, I will study the ways education is mentioned in campaign ads.

My data set is composed of over three million ads, yet only 373,311 of these ads explicitly mention education. In State Senate and Representative races, this data includes ads from both the primary and general election because often times state candidates are unlikely to have an opponent in the general election, but may have competition in the primary. In addition, these ads range in sponsorship from candidate, interest group, or party, yet I limited the data to include candidates that identify with the two major political parties.

In order to assess the role of education in campaigns, I developed a coding technique loosely based on the Wesleyan Media Project’s (WMP) codebook because the Wesleyan Media Project does not code for specific education mentions. Referring to Appendix A, one can observe which particular variables I coded for. In this particular analysis, I utilize my coding for specific education mentions in both federal and state elections. A main tenet of this research is the coding for education mentions. My analysis of education mentions reflects Brian Arbour’s (2014) research on issue frames, yet, whereas Arbour attempts to detect frames for a number of separate issues, I coded for just education mentions, which allowed me to find a broader range of issue stances on education. When this study discusses education mentions, this is defined as an explicit reference to education that may disclose a policy inclination for a candidate during a campaign advertisement. For example, if a candidate mentions they want “more education funding” then this may be studied within the context of issue ownership and illustrate a candidate’s policy position on public expenditures.
toward education. Referring to the end of the Appendix A, one can notice the amount of education mentions that were originally coded for, which could include “supporting School Choice” or attacking an opponent for “decreasing education funding.” While reviewing a total of 848 individual ads, if an education reference did not fit within one of these categories listed in Appendix A, then it was coded as “other” and analyzed later as an independent education mention, which allowed for flexibility and validity while watching and coding campaign ads.

For congressional, presidential and gubernatorial campaigns, I was able to use Wesleyan Media Project’s coding for partisan affiliation, which can be found in Appendix B. For state legislative elections, I had to code for these variables as the WMP does not code for state legislature campaign ads. The Wesleyan Media Project codes for partisanship based on the favored candidate’s partisan affiliation, which could be coded as Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green, Libertarian or other. For the purposes of my analysis, I will only look at the two major parties, Republican and Democrat, in order to study how these two separate political powers discuss education.

**Political Advertising Between Political Parties**

The 2012 election featured the most political advertisements with over three million airings between state and federal offices. Observing only federal races, the 2012 election featured “36.5 percent increase over 2008, when there were roughly 2.19 million airings in federal races (Fowler, Franz and Ridout 2016, p. 41).” In this section, I will discuss the differences in total advertisements, total ads mentioning education, and top education mentions between the two parties. Furthermore, I shall
test my hypotheses on which party is more likely to mention education and dissimilarities in top education mentions.

Observing the total amount of ads in presidential, gubernatorial, congressional and state legislative election issued during the 2012 election, Republicans aired 1.9 million ads compared to Democrats, who issued 1.6 million campaign ads. These numbers include outside group contributions and both primary and general election. Limiting my data to only the general election, Democrats control the ad race contributing 1.4 million ads during the general election while Republicans aired 1.3 million. This difference between the general election and the combination of both primary and general election is probably contributed to the competitive Republican presidential primary that President Obama did not experience in the Democratic primary as the President was unopposed. Focusing on total amount of ads in the 2012 election including both state and federal offices, Republicans issued about 300,000 more ads than Democrats did, which may bias the data to indicate that Republicans are more likely to employ education ads.

Referring to explicitly education ads across the 2012 elections, I find that Democrat ads mentioning education outnumber Republican education ads by 14.29 percent. In Democrat campaigns, education ads consist of 18.08 percent of all ads whereas education ads in Republican campaigns compose 3.79 percent of total ads. These ads are not only sponsored by the parties and candidates, but include outside group supported ads as well. Moreover, these numbers entail Democrats and Republicans across all executive and legislative elections including both federal and state offices. My hypothesis that Democrats are more likely to produce education ads is supported. The frequency of Democrat’s education ads fits within the framework of
issue ownership, which postulates that Democrats are more likely to mention education as this party is publicly perceived to “own”, or better handle, this policy area (Petrocik 1996). Whereas the Republicans issued about 3.79 percent of their ads towards discussing education, Democrats had 18.08 percent of their ads mentioning or discussing education. This study implies that Democrats definitively aired more ad mentioning education compared to Republicans.

*Top Mentions by Party*

As I discovered that Democrats issued more ad mentioning education compared to Republicans, I will now discuss the top education mentions by party as illustrated by Table 2.1. In this section, I will test two hypotheses:

1. Democrats are more likely to discuss education funding, early education programs, funding for higher education and state standardized testing (Dar 2012, Spring 2014, Vinovskis 2009).
2. Both parties will maintain positions on education policies that reflect their partisan values such as traditional American or religious values for Republicans or multicultural education for Democrats (Spring, 2011).

Table 2.1 includes all candidates in federal and state legislative and executive elections. Observing the top education mentions by both parties, partisan candidates often overlap on a number of issue mentions including discussing “better schools/education plan,” “increase vocational training,” “provide more education funding,” and attacking opposing candidates that “decreased college aid.” This provides an intriguing insight that invokes scholarly discussion on the politics of education. Both parties have different agendas regarding education policy. Whereas Democrats have emphasized multicultural, federal objectives to create a better system
of education, Republicans have stressed traditional American, religious values while
relying on free-market policies and allocating education to the control of the states
(Spring 2011). This categorization of party agendas does not necessarily fit within the
analysis of top education mentions by party.

Table 2.1: Top Education Mentions by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democrat Candidates</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease Funds**</td>
<td>17.12</td>
<td>Better Schools/Education Plan</td>
<td>21.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Schools/Education Plan</td>
<td>16.60</td>
<td>Provide More Education Funding</td>
<td>11.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide More Education Funding</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>Decrease Funds**</td>
<td>9.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease College Aid**</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>Education Creates a Better Economy</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Vocational/Technical Training</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>Make Education a Top Priority</td>
<td>5.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate Department of Education**</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>Increase Vocational Training</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate Tax Deduction on College Tuition**</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>Cut College Funding**</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund Smaller Class Sizes</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>Education is an Investment for the Future</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Creates a Better Economy</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>Increase Graduation Rate</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Quality Teachers</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>Make College More Affordable</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Believe in Small Class Size**</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** this mention is used in an attack against opposing candidate

The party platform framework may not necessarily fit within the analysis of top
mentions by party. First, both parties discuss educational funding in a large portion of
their ads mentioning education. In previous elections, Democrats established their
discontent over inadequate educational funding of NCLB and other federal
educational standards (Vinovskis 2009). Observing the top education mentions by
party in the 2012 election, Republicans and Democrats both mention funding, yet
Democrats still mention education more often than Republican candidates, therefore,
mention education funding more than Republicans. Hence, I can state that Democrats
both mention and discuss education funding more often than Republicans, which
supports the first part of my hypothesis. It is important to note that Republicans seem concerned with education funding as they dedicate about 25 percent of 70,229 education ads towards mentioning education funding. Secondly, even when coding for over seventy mentions, Republicans and Democrats rarely discuss any references that are tied into their party values, which refutes my second hypothesis. Republicans do not mention religious or Anglo-Saxon ideals in regard to education while Democrats do not illustrate any references supporting bilingual or multicultural education.

Even though generally these top mentions by party do not necessarily fit within traditional values of each party, I argue that particular mentions can apply to these party platforms. Within the top education mentions, Democrats and Republicans overlap on a number of issues. Funding higher education is referenced by both parties, yet Democrats still dominate Republicans in mentioning higher education policies, which is congruent with previous studies (Dar 2012, 2014). Furthermore, Democrats attack opposing candidates for proposing to eliminate the Department of Education, which is a federal department traditionally supported by Democrats while Republicans have focused on abolishing this federal entity and reducing overall federal involvement in education (Vinovskis 2009). Finally, increasing vocational and technical training is an important education policy area to both parties as Democrats and Republicans dedicate 5.22% and 5.02%, respectively, to mentioning this policy area. Since a Nation at Risk was published in 1983 warning the American public about the problems with the American education system, Democrats and Republicans have both supported vocational training in education policy and emphasize the
importance of preparing students for college and the workplace through public education (Vinovskis 2009, Spring 2014).

Mentions by each party both present supporting and contrasting results that may not fit within the study of party platforms. Both parties did not illustrate their respective values when mentioning education. Republicans failed to show support for religious or Anglo-Saxon based education policies while Democrats did not illustrate support for multicultural education initiative; opposing my second hypothesis. The lack of Democrat education mentions specifically referring to the implementation of multicultural education may be a result of this party’s conflict over losing a white traditional voting base (Spring, 2011). Even though parties did not display ideological values when referring to education policies, both parties illustrated partisan differences and similarities in education mentions. For example, both Democrats and Republican supported vocational training while Democrats supported higher education funding, and Democrats attacked opposing candidates for attempting to eliminate the Department of Education, which provides support for my first hypothesis.

**Education Rhetoric in Federal and State Elections**

Throughout the majority of American history, education has been a policy invested in the authority of the states. Since Brown v. Board of Education and the resulting federal encroachment in desegregating schools, federal involvement in education has increased over this sixty-year period (Reed 2014). The range of federal activity in education is immense, including implementing a system of standardized testing, allocating funds to states for public education, and enforcing early childhood
programs in states. Meanwhile, states have continued to have jurisdiction on public education, but this power is muddled by the overarching federal involvement.

Throughout the history of federal and state involvement in education, there has been extensive literature documenting the education initiatives of each governmental entity. Education has evolved into a policy area fused with the principles of federalism as both levels of the American government contribute major decisions to public education. With this convoluted system of maintaining public education, I will attempt to assess the differences in the discussion of education between the levels of government, state and federal, in the context of elections. Therefore, I shall try to gauge the differences between levels of government in regard to education ads and mentions. I hypothesize that

1. State campaigns are more likely to mention education compared to federal campaigns because states have traditionally controlled this policy area and possess a great deal of agency in implementing change towards education (Reed 2014, Vegari 2012).

2. State candidates are more likely to mention funding education because they are more likely to provide financial support to schools based on their direct ability to influence state education (Reed 2014, Vegari 2012)
   a. Both federal and state candidates are likely to mention funding for higher education because both levels provide funding for these particular institutions (Tandberg and Griffith 2013, Dar and Lee 2014).

In this section, I will identify the amount of education ads mentioned by each level. Second, I will assess the top mentions by level of government. This analysis
will illustrate if each level of government is discussing similar or incongruent education initiative.

*Political Advertising Between Levels of Government*

Scholarship discussing the development of education as a policy area stated that education is traditionally kept under the jurisdiction of state control, yet federal involvement in education has grown since the 1950s. In regard to elections, most federal races tend to spend more money compared to most state races especially presidential campaigns that, in the 2012 election, combined in spending over $1 billion (Currinder 2014). In conjunction with this grandiose amount of campaign spending, federal elections also featured larger amounts of campaign ads compared to state campaign. Focusing on education ads, the federal races issued 253,433 ads mentioning education, which is more than twice as many education ads compared to state elections that issued 100,456 education ads. Even though there is a large discrepancy in amount of education ads, I expect that a larger amount of state campaign ads will mention education compared to federal races because educational policy is traditionally delegated to the authority of the states.

Using Wesleyan Media Project’s and my data, I find that state elections air a higher percentage of ads mentioning education compared to federal campaigns. Whereas state campaigns demonstrate about 19 percent ads mentioning education, federal races show that about 8 percent of their campaigns reference education. This finding upholds my first hypothesis since states have maintain prominent authority over education policy as a principal issue area (Vergari 2012).

Even though federal campaigns air more ads mentioning education, states show a higher rate of education mentions within their total ads, which, compared to federal
campaign ads is ten percent more ads mentioning education. There may be a number of reasons for this finding that federal ads have a higher amount of education ads. First, federal campaigns may have more education ads because federal elections tend to spend more than state elections and can dedicate most of their resources to funding campaign ads, which is a very effective campaign tools (Currinder 2014, Herrnson et. al. 2014). Secondly, state elections do not always employ campaign advertisements as some still utilize old fashion techniques of door-to-door and face-to-face contract (Squire and Moncrief 2015). Finally, state elections are less likely to have contested competition or feature an opposing candidate, which means that campaign ads are not necessary since there is no competitive election.

**Top Education Mentions Between Federal and State Candidates**

Previously, I found that state elections possess a higher rate of campaign ads mentioning education compared to federal elections. This section will assess the top mentions by each level of government in addition to testing my second hypothesis that state candidates are more likely to mention funding education because states have more direct influence on state education while both federal and state candidates are likely to mention funding for higher education.

Referring to Table 2.2, one can see the top ten education mentions in ads between each level of government and the percent of each mention in contrast to the total number of education ads. Observing the top mentions between levels of government, the top three education mentions are the same for both state and federal campaign. “Better Schools/Education Plan,” “Decrease Funds” and “Provide Better Education Funding” are top mentions for both state and federal campaigns. This may
indicate that both levels of government are generally aligned on issues of creating better schools and wanting to secure more funds for education.

Table 2.4 Top Education Mentions by Level of Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better Schools/Education Plan</td>
<td>17.35</td>
<td>Better Schools/Education Plan</td>
<td>18.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease Funds **</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>Decrease Funds **</td>
<td>17.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Better Education Funding</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>Provide Better Education Funding</td>
<td>11.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease College Aid **</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>Education Creates a Better Economy</td>
<td>7.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Vocational Training</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>Make Education a Top Priority</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate the Department of Education **</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>Education is an Investment for the Future</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatize Education **</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>Support from Teachers</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund Smaller Class Sizes</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>Increase Vocational Training</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want Quality Teachers</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>Laid Off Teachers **</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Class Sizes are not Necessary **</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>Connect Community Colleges to Business</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** this mention is used in an attack against an opposing candidate

Analyzing the other topics mentions, I have developed two intriguing insights that provide a more holistic comprehension of education in each level of government’s campaigns. First, state candidates are not more likely to mention education funding compared to federal candidates, which refutes part of my hypothesis. Compared to 27.65 percent of federal campaign ads mentioning education, state candidate dedicated 28.34 percent of education ads mentioning funding. This is not a discernable difference between the two levels of government, which means my hypothesis is not supported as neither level of government mentions education funding more. Second, federal ads may tend to feature more negative attack mentions pertaining to education. Observing top education mentions for federal elections, five
of the top ten education mentions are attacks intended to confront opposing candidate on poor past performance or promises in regard to education. This is compared to the top education mentions in state campaigns that only show two negative education mentions. Finally, federal and state elections both possess mentions about higher education, which provides support for part of my hypothesis and is consistent with studies illustrating the both state and federal governments provide funding and financial support to student attending institutions of higher education (Tandberg, Griffith, 2013; Dar, Lee, 2014). Therefore, my hypothesis that state candidates are more likely to mention education funding is incorrect while my theory that both levels are to mention higher education funding is supported.

*Educations Mentions by Party in Federal and State Elections*

After analyzing the mentions of education between each party and level of government, I will now assess the differences in top education mentions between parties in each level of government. Based on my previous examination of parties and level of government, I found that parties diverge on particular education mentions while both federal and state candidates typically reflect one another in education mentions. In this section, I will see how the convergence of party and level of government play a role in mentioning education during campaigns. First, I hypothesize that candidates on the state level are more likely to agree on similar stances in education regardless of partisan affiliation because these candidates are more likely to respond to issues in their district. On the contrary, federal candidates of different partisan affiliations will more likely diverge on particular education mentions because scholars have shown a prominent increase in partisan polarization on the federal level (Abramowitz 2012). Finally, I believe that federal and state
Democrat candidates are likely to diverge on top education mentions because federal candidates tend to possess more polarized beliefs about education. This will also be applicable to mentions between Republican state and federal candidates.

Observing Table 2.3, one can see the top ten education mentions among Democrats and Republicans in state and federal elections. First, focusing on state Republicans and Democrats, I want to determine if these two parties issue similar education mentions on the state level. Between these top ten mentions, State Republicans and Democrats share six of the same education mentions. These include attacking opponent for “decreasing education funds,” creating “better schools/education plan,” providing “better education funding,” connecting good education to economic benefit, and making “education a top priority.” These six similar education mentions count for 60.72 percent of all Democrat education mentions and 67.92 percent of all Republican education mentions. Based on this seven percent difference, there is no discernable difference indicating that state Democrats and Republican greatly differ by top education mentions. As both these mentions are fairly similar in percentages, my hypothesis that state Democrat and Republican candidates are likely to mention similar education references is supported.

I also theorized that federal candidates of different partisanship were more likely to diverge on top education mentions. In Table 2.3, I find that five of the top mentions by each party on the federal level are the same. This mentions include attacking an opponent for decreasing funds for education, providing better education funding, connecting academic performance to a better economy, increasing vocational training and making college more affordable. For federal Democrat candidate, these five mentions compose of 54.19 percent of all education mentions while for Republican
candidates running for federal office these references are 56.63 of all federal Republican education mentions. Since a majority of education mentions are the same for Republican and Democratic federal candidates, I find that these two political parties do not differ in top education mentions as both illustrate a similar percentage and similar number of education mentions. As I hypothesized that these partisan groups in the federal government were likely to issue dissimilar education mentions, my analysis illustrates that my theory is not supported.

Finally, I wanted to assess if differences in education mentions lie between Democrats and Republicans in state versus federal races. First focusing on differences in education mentions between state and federal Democrat candidates, I find that these two separate levels share three top education mentions, which include attacking opponents for decreasing funds, showing a better education plan, and connecting a good education to a better economy. For state Democrats, these three education mentions are 38.02 percent of all education mentions while for federal Democrats, these mentions are 40.76 percent of education mentions. Their percentages of top mentions are obviously very similar, yet it is important to demonstrate that these are only three shared education mentions while seven of the top ten education mentions are exclusive to each level of government. Therefore, I do not think that Democrats on each level of government share education mentions because a majority of the top ten education mentions are not shared by either Democrats in state or federal elections.
**Table 2.3: Top Mentions by Republicans and Democrats in State and Federal Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Republican Mentions (%)</th>
<th>Democrat Mentions (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Make College More Affordable</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>Free College More Accessible</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>Future Employment</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>College Investment for the Future</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>Training Funding</td>
<td>4.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>Decrease Vocational Training</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>Better Economy through Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>Support from Better Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Education Credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>Make Education a Priority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>Education Credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>Education Funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>Better Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>Eliminate the College Loan Debt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table highlights the top mentions by Republicans and Democrats in state and federal elections, focusing on various aspects of education and its impact on future employment and economic policies.
Compared to federal and state Democrats, Republicans in federal and state elections illustrate very similar education mentions. State Republicans share 74.26 percent of their education mentions with federal Republicans, which allocate 64.36 percent of these shared mentions in their total amount of education mentions. As Republicans illustrate that candidates of both levels of government are likely to issue similar education mentions, Democrats of state and federal races were likely to illustrate different education mentions. This finding does not necessarily support my hypothesis that federal and state political parties were likely to diverge on education mentions as state and federal Republican candidates are likely to share similar education references.

*The Role of Education Ads Between Parties and Levels of Government*

In this chapter, I wanted to observe the role of education ads between parties and level of government because of the broad literature on these two topics. In regards to parties, Democrats have traditionally been perceived as the party best able to handle education policy due to their supposed ownership of the issue (Petrocik 1996, Sides 2006). Furthermore, Republican and Democrats have possessed widely different stances on a number of education issues particularly those rooted in party values or related to the role of government in education (Spring 2011, 2014, Vinovskis 2009).

Focusing on parties, I made three hypotheses about education ads. First, I stated that Democrats are more likely to discuss education in campaigns, which was verified by an analysis of total ads between the two parties. Democrat ads mentioning education outnumber Republican education ads by 13.66 percent, which illustrates that Democrats mention education more than Republicans. Secondly, I believed that Democrats are more likely to discuss education funding, early education programs,
funding for higher education and state standardized testing because these were traditional Democratic positions on education (Dar, 2012; Spring 2014; Vinovskis 2009). When assessing the top mentions by party, Republicans and Democrats both mentioned funding, yet Democrats possessed more total mentions of funding. This partially supported my hypothesis as Democrats did mention education funding more than Republicans, but did not necessarily discuss early education programs or standardized testing to a large degree. Furthermore, I ascertained that both parties would maintain positions on education policies that reflect their partisan values such as traditional American, religious values for Republicans or multicultural education for Democrats (Spring, 2011). This was not the case since both parties did not elude to their traditional values on education through education mentioning ads.

I also assessed the role of education campaigns between levels of government because education, as a policy area, has played a large role in both federal and state jurisdiction and the concept of federalism. Even though states have traditionally held power over their education systems, the federal government has increased their authority in mandating states to change education standards and implement particular initiatives (Hess and McGuinn 2002, McGuinn 2006, Maranto and McChase 2012, Vinovskis 2009). Based on the literature, I made several hypotheses about education in state and federal campaigns. First, I believed that state campaigns were more likely to mention education compared to federal campaigns, which was proven correct as state campaigns possessed about 19 percent of ads mentioning education whereas federal races showed that about 8 percent of their campaign ads referenced education. Secondly, I specified state campaigns were more likely to mention education funding because this level is more directly able to influence state education. I found that my
hypothesis was not supported as, compared to 27.65 percent of federal campaign ads mentioning education funding, state candidate dedicated 28.34 percent of education ads mentioning funding, which is not a discernable difference in percentage. Furthermore, I believed that candidates at both levels were likely to mention funding for higher levels of education because federal and state governments provide an abundance of financial support to such universities (Tandberg and Griffith 2013, Dar and Lee 2014). I did conclude that both federal and state elections possess mentions about higher education, which provides support for my hypothesis and is consistent with the studies illustrating the both state and federal governments provide funding and financial support to student attending institutions of higher education.

In addition, I compared federal and state candidates on top education mentions by partisanship. I first hypothesized that state Republican and Democrat candidates were not likely to elude to different education mentions. This theory proved to be supported as Republicans and Democrats issued a majority of the same education mentions. I also thought that Democrats and Republicans in federal government were more likely to illustrate different education references because of increase partisan polarization (Abramowitz 2012). I found that Republicans and Democrats in federal elections often mentioned different education references as only three of the top ten education mentions of each party were the same. Finally, I theorized that partisan candidates at the state level would mention different education indications than their fellow party members running for federal level office. After analyzing both Democrat and Republican candidates at each level of government, I found that Democrat candidates were more likely to issue different education mentions while Republican candidates were almost identical in reflecting one another on education mentions.
This particular finding may illustrate that Republican in state and federal office generally agree on similar education initiatives compared to Democrats in state and federal office.

**Implications and Further Areas of Study**

In this chapter, I can make three broad conclusions that provide insight to the study of campaigns and education policy. First, Democrats are more likely to discuss education in campaigns compared to Republican candidates. This finding fits within the framework of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996; Sides, 2006). Second, state candidates are more likely to mention education in elections than federal candidates, yet federal candidates possess more mentions of education due to their large amount of campaign ads. This provides interesting insight to the field of political science as previous scholarship has not compared both federal and state elections while focusing on education, a shared policy area. Third, Republicans in both state and federal elections are likely to illustrate similar education mentions compared to Democrats in each level of government.

With the knowledge portrayed in this chapter, further studies may delve into correlations between the implementation of education policy and education mentions during campaigns in order to see if candidates hold their promises from the campaign period. In addition, studies can further expand upon the differences between state and federal candidates mentioning education in campaigns as my research was unable to assess sponsorship or primary purpose of ads for state legislative campaigns.
CHAPTER 3
THE RISE OF POLARIZATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION IN ELECTIONS

Political polarization is a central topic in political science as Americans have witnessed the rise of disparate ideologies between the two national parties. This trend of polarization has increased since the 1970s when major party realignment occurred for both Democrats and Republicans. This development of polarization may be attributed to the racial diversification of the electorate, the advantage of redistricting, and ideological polarization of the electorate (Abramowitz 2012). Political polarization has several implications for this research on education in campaigns. If polarization varies among parties in state and federal elections, then education mentions are likely to change as parties are more prone to mention more ideological extreme positions on education policy.

Literature Review

The literature on polarization in the United States is vast due to this phenomenon’s recent growth as a topic of interest in the field of political science. Reviewing this scholarship on polarization, I find three major themes relevant to this study. First, there appears to be a discrepancy in the rise of polarization between the federal and state government. Second, polarization has several implications for elections. Third, parties do possess polarized beliefs on education.

The literature on polarization illustrates that candidates running for state and federal offices possess differing rates of polarization. On the federal level, polarization is generally recognized as an increasing trend in American politics since
the 1970s (Abramowitz 2010, Barber and McCarty 2015). With the rise of straight ticket voting, voting data on citizen preferences illustrate that voters have a strong partisan preference when selecting candidates (Abramowitz 2010). Thus, there is a broad consensus in political science that the federal government has become more polarized. This intense ideological polarization has not similarly swept politics at the level of state governments. Studies have found that ideological polarization has varied across states, yet, compared to Congress, a majority of state legislatures are less polarized, whereas fifteen state legislatures are actually more polarized (Shor and McCarthy 2011). Furthermore, based on a subset of a large survey displaying data on citizens’ policy preference in particular regions, research indicates that state legislatures appear to resemble Congress where there is a stark difference between Democrats and Republicans on policy preferences (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013). In addition, legislators in more ideologically extreme districts tend to have more extreme ideologies, which applies to both liberal and conservative beliefs, yet this is not necessarily true across every state (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013). The literature of polarization in both federal and state governments demonstrates that, even though the federal government has been increasingly polarized over an extended period, state governments vary in degree of polarization.

This increase in political polarization has facilitated several different trends in elections. First, voters generally use partisan preference as a heuristic to choose candidates (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). This strong partisan preference has resulted in an increase in straight ticket voting (Abramowitz 2010). Even though voters may identify as non-partisan, independents generally favor one party and are more likely to vote based on this partisan preference (Jacobsen 2014). Partisanship is also
important in state elections as strong partisan alignment is connected to higher rates of voting (Niemi and Dyck 2014). Furthermore, studying the results of the 2012 election, voters did not elect a new Congress that demonstrated less polarized beliefs, which, based on public opinion polls showing an unusual high rate of congressional disapproval, one would assume the public would desire less polarized Congress members (Jacobsen 2014). Partisan preference plays a large role in how voters select candidates. Therefore, polarization may have divided voters based on partisan preferences in both state and federal elections.

Finally, scholarship has illustrated that both parties possess party associated beliefs on education. First, based on cultural and political differences in both parties, Spring (2011) argues that Republican emphasize the implementation of American values while Democrats support more multicultural initiatives. This research has already discovered that Democrats and Republicans tend to not mention these values in campaign ads and, therefore, this chapter on polarization will not assess these party values in education. Furthermore, Democrats and Republicans have differed in their policy agendas for education. Democrats have supported early education programs federal standards for education, advancing more funding for NCLB and institutions of higher education (Dar 2012, 2014, Spring 2011, Vinovskis 2009). In contrast, Republicans support more free-market initiatives like school voucher systems and allocating school choice to parents rather than the government (Spring 2014). Furthermore, Republicans support delegating more control to the states, eliminating the Department of Education and rejecting federal funding for education while Democrats tend to support more federal initiatives in education (Vinovskis 2009).
Theory and Expectations

Based on the findings in the literature on polarization in American political parties, I will make three hypotheses. First, I believe that federal candidates will illustrate more partisan owned beliefs compared to state candidates because states are more likely to vary in degrees of polarizations whereas federal candidates tend to be more polarized. Second, I hypothesize that the more polarized a state legislature, the more likely elections will feature party owned education mentions in state campaigns. Similarly, I believe that the more polarized a state, the more likely the corresponding federal offices are to issue partisan education mentions, which will be more polarized compared to corresponding offices on the state level.

Data and Methods

In order to test polarization among states, I used a dataset developed by Boris Shor and Nolan McCarty (2011), which assesses polarization in state legislatures based on roll call data and survey responses from the NPAT survey (National Political Awareness Test). Using this political polarization index, I will attempt to find a connection between partisan ideology and traditional party mentions on education, specifically looking at differences between congressional and state legislative campaigns among polarization in state legislatures. Unfortunately, I am unable to compare executive branches of government because the Presidential race does not correspond to particular states compared to each gubernatorial race. Therefore, I will not be studying gubernatorial or presidential races for partisan affiliated education mentions as I would be unable to compare the two branches of government. This problem could be addressed in future studies if research is
completed over several elections, which would allow one to compare presidential races to corresponding polarization of congress by year.

In order to compare federal races using this polarization data from Shor and McCarty, updated in 2012, I had to create a new variable that took the average polarization between State House and State Senate (Shor and McCarty 2015). This average legislature variable ranges from 0, being least polarized, to 1.5, being most polarized. This variable derives from the original polarization data that held a polarization variable ranging from -1.5, most liberal, to 1.5, most conservative.

Referring to Figure 3.1, one can see the original range of polarized ideology in state legislatures with California, as the most liberal, and Oklahoma, as the most conservative, state legislatures on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Based on the previous literature illustrating that straight ticket voting is a prominent phenomenon in modern politics, I hold that state legislative polarization should be a valid predictor of polarized candidates in congressional races. If voters choose candidates based on partisan affiliation and parties in particular states tend to support more polarized candidates, then state legislature polarization should be a valid markers of congressional candidate’s polarization. In addition, based on the histograms in Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3, polarization among state house and state chambers are fairly dispersed, with a few outliers that illustrate higher rates of polarization. Therefore, state legislatures tend to have a normal distribution of polarization rating.
Figure 3.1 Scatterplot of Polarization among State Legislatures

Figure 3.2 Histograms of State House’s Polarization
In order to assess partisan owned education mentions and polarization rates in elections, I used previous research on partisan beliefs on education and polarized educational policies to determine which education references are partisan owned education mentions, which is available in Appendix C. I define a partisan owned education mention as a reference to particular education policy that is typically associated with one of the two major parties. As explained in Chapter 2, I coded 838 education ads for particular education mentions using coding system, which can be observed in Appendix A. These polarized mentions include both attacks and promotional education mentions ranging from criticizing an opposing candidate for wanting to eliminate the Department of Education to Democrats supporting their campaign by stating they are committed to fund early education programs. Certain
mentions were considered associated with a party based on three different aspects. The first proponent was whether this policy or initiative has been supported by a partisan group overtime. I was able to use several works to observe the historical positions that parties have taken in regard to education. Second was whether a mention fell within the traditional framework of how parties view the operations of government; specifically, the federal government’s role in education. As Democrats typically support federal intervention in education and Republicans have been historically more likely to allocate education decision making to the state, many partisan preferences mirror such beliefs (Spring 2011, Vinovskis 2009). Finally, I considered if scholars, in more recent years, have indicated that particular parties are likely to support particular education policies. For example, Dougherty, Nienhusser and Vega (2010) found that Republicans are likely to deny immigrant access to public education. Therefore, based on this information, I assigned the mention of denying immigrants public education, that was framed in a promotional tone, as a Republican mention. Referring to Appendix C, one can observe which education mentions are considered owned by each party as well as view the source or explanation that clarifies why a party position on education is designated as owned.

**Party Owned Mentions Between Federal and State Elections**

Based on the scholarship discussing polarization and the discrepancies in elections between federal and state governments, I hold that federal elections are more likely to reference party owned education mentions. This hypothesis is supported as federal elections feature 39.45 percent of their education mentions as party owned mentions whereas state elections illustrated that 16.19 percent of their education mentions were partisan affiliated. Since federal elections possess 39.45
percent of party owned education mentions, my hypothesis is reinforced. The reason behind this disparity in polarized mentions may be explained by two reasons. First, federal campaigns tend to receive more financing from parties and outside groups in particular presidential and Senate campaigns, which greatly outmatches the resources of their corresponding state offices campaigns. Furthermore, federal candidates are more likely to be polarized during the 2012 elections because this election created the most divided Congress in American history, at that point in time, as the US Senate featured a polarization of .976 while the US House demonstrated a polarization rating of 1.1, the highest ever observed (Poole 2015).

**Polarization, State Elections, and Education**

Based on the varying levels of polarization among state legislatures, I predicted that state campaigns are more likely to possess partisan owned education mentions when located in more polarized states. Utilizing Shor and McCarty’s 2012 data on polarized state legislatures, this section seeks to observe whether there is a trend between more polarized state legislatures and more polarized education mentions in campaigns. Therefore, I will assess party owned education mentions in State House and State Senate.

First, studying State House elections by the polarization of each State House chamber, State House elections occurred in twenty-four different states. Based on these State House elections in twenty-four states, 10.21 percent of education mentions in State House elections were polarized. Therefore, State House elections feature a low number of polarized education mentions compared to other elections. In order to assess the relationship between partisan polarization and party owned issues, I ran linear regression analyzing house chamber polarization (abs_hou_chamber) and
owned education issues (owned_ed_issue), yet controlling for partisanship (Republican). Based on Table 3.1, featuring the results of a linear regression between issue owned mentions in State House elections by polarization in house chambers, one can observe the low logistic coefficient of .088 between partisan owned education mentions in State House elections and polarization among State House chambers, which also shows a significant p-value below .01. This the coefficient illustrates that as average house polarization increases by one unit, owned education issue mentions increase 0.088. Even though the relationship between partisan owned education mentions and house chamber polarization is positive and statistically significant, this relationship is not necessarily strong.

Table 3.1: Linear Regression for State House Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>owned_ed_issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abs_hou_chamber</td>
<td>0.088**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-0.081**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(47.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>0.028**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>50,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01

Similar to finding State House elections, I ran linear regression for State Senate elections focusing on senate polarization by state rather than house polarization while also controlling for partisan affiliation. Focusing on Table 3.2, I found a small, yet statistically significant coefficient for senate chamber polarization with a p-value less
than .05. Even though this relationship is positive, so that as senate chamber increases by one unit, owned education issue mentions increases 0.003 units, the relationship between polarized education mentions and polarized senate chamber is very weak.

Table 3.2: Linear Regression for State Senate Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>owned_ed_issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abs_senate_chamber</td>
<td>0.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>0.017**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>149,607</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$

Based on my analysis of state elections and partisan owned education mentions, I can state that my hypothesis is not strongly supported by these analyses as all state elections did not demonstrate a strong relationship between polarization rates and issue owned education mentions, yet these relationships were all positive. Therefore, the more polarized a state legislature is, the more likely elections will feature polarized education mentions in all state campaigns.

Partisan Owned Education Mentions in Federal and State Election

Based on literature on polarization in federal and state government, I theorized that more polarized states are likely to hold federal and state offices featuring more partisan views on education. I already discovered that state elections possess a weak relationship between issue owned education mentions and polarization in State House
and Senate chambers. Now, I will compare state and federal elections of the same branch to discern if federal or state offices are more likely to be polarized in regard to education policy. I hypothesized that federal candidates will more likely air polarized education mentions in congruence with state legislature polarization because previous literature indicates federal offices are more polarized than state offices, which are erratically polarized.

Comparing State House elections to US House elections, I find an interesting insight. First, it is important to recognize that the US House demonstrates that 38.89 percent of education mentions are partisan affiliated education mentions, which is a substantial difference compared to 10.21 percent of education mentions in State House elections. Regardless, based on the regression displayed in Table 3.3, US House elections show a positive coefficient of .011 between owned education mentions and average state polarization, which is statistically significant illustrating a p-value less than .02. Compared to State House elections, US House elections possess a weaker, positive relationship with polarization in state legislatures, which may be explained by the general disparity in partisan beliefs among federal representatives or that US House members are not accurately portrayed using polarization in state legislatures.

Shifting towards comparing US Senate and State Senate campaigns, US Senate elections exhibit a weaker and non-statistically significant relationship between partisan affiliated education mentions and state legislature polarization, as depicted in Table 3.4. In US Senate elections, 41.18 percent of education mentions are partisan affiliated compared to State Senate elections that showed 11.56 percent of education mentions were partisan owned, which illustrates a significant difference in rate of
polarized education mentions between the two corresponding offices. Whereas State Senate elections reveal a coefficient of 0.003, US Senate elections show a correlation of 0.001, which is not statistically significant. Even though both relationships are relatively weak, the State Senate is more likely to issue partisan associated education mentions in more polarized states compared to US Senate elections, which does not display a significant relationship.

Table 3.3: Linear Regression for US House Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>owned_ed_mention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abs_average_chamber</td>
<td>0.011**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>-0.039**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(111.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>0.035**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(79.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>702,377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<0.05; ** p<0.01$

Based on the research between state legislature polarization and partisan affiliated education mentions in campaigns, my hypothesis that federal offices mention polarized education views more based on state legislature’s polarization is not supported. In regard to state and federal House elections, State House candidates are more likely to employ polarized ads with higher rates of legislative polarization. Between federal and state Senate elections, State Senate candidates are more likely to issue polarized views on education than US Senators would.
Table 3.4: Linear Regression for US Senate Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>owned_ed_mention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abs_average_chamber</td>
<td>0.001 (0.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>-0.049** (128.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_cons</td>
<td>0.060** (93.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>884,790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$

In all cases, the correlation of issue owned education mentions and higher rates of state polarization is weak. The reason for these weak relationships may be an issue with the polarized education mentions variable, which attempted to aggregate all polarized mentions based on past literature analyzing intense partisan beliefs in education. In addition, although it was supported by the well-documented increase in straight ticket voting and general polarization in the United States, comparing federal races to state legislature polarization may not have been the most powerful way to address my hypothesis, and further work could use a more nuanced measure of party specific education mentions.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I analyzed the discrepancies between corresponding branches in government, state polarization and education in campaigns. Previous scholars have found that polarization on the federal level is increasing, yet states vary in degree of polarization (Abramowitz 2010, Barber and McCarty 2015, Shor and McCarty 2011). Furthermore, education is a policy area that is influenced by both federal and state,
which, if studied, would provide an interesting insight into federalism and polarization. Finally, scholars have indicated that Democrats and Republicans have political beliefs on education policy that are typically associated with one party (Dar 2012, 2014, Spring 2011, 2014, Vinovskis, 2009).

Based on this knowledge, I proposed three hypotheses. First, I theorized that federal candidates would illustrate more polarized beliefs on education compared to state candidates because states are more likely to vary in polarization whereas federal candidates tend to be more polarized. This hypothesis was not supported, as based on my regressions, states illustrated higher coefficients associated with polarization rate and partisan affiliated mentions. Still, these relationships were very weak as each coefficients were very small. Second, I hypothesized that the more polarized a state legislature is, the more likely elections will feature polarized education mentions in state campaigns. Analyzing polarization rates across states and education mentions among state elections, I found polarized education mentions in all elections to be positively correlated with higher degrees of polarization, yet these positive relationships were weak and only some statistically significant. Finally, I postulated that the more polarized a state is, the more likely corresponding state and federal branches are likely to issue partisan education mentions, yet federal offices would be more likely to issue partisan beliefs on education. Based on the analysis between state legislature polarization and polarized education mentions in federal and state campaigns, my hypothesis that federal offices mention polarized education views more based on state legislature’s polarization is not support. State House and Senate candidates are more likely to employ polarized ads with higher rates of legislative polarization compared to US House and Senate elections. All of these coefficients are
weak, yet these relationships are positive, which illustrates that an increase in rates of polarization increases the amount of polarized education mentions in all elections.

Implications and Areas of Further Study

Based on my analysis of education mentions, state polarization and differences in level of government in elections, I will make several suggestions that show the value of this research. First, polarized education mentions greatly differ across states, yet polarization may provide an insight on which states are likely to possess polarized education policies. Even though the positive relationships between polarized education mentions and state polarizations are generally weak, I find that polarization still plays a predictive role in education during elections. Furthermore, I found that this research cannot affirm that federal candidates are more likely to employ partisan affiliated mentions compared to state level candidates. Even though states were more likely to mention partisan associated education mentions, all the relationships displayed in the regression tables were weak.

Finally, my research can be expanded upon in several ways. First, one could take my study and research across several elections, yet this method would have to analyze all education ads over a period of several election cycles for education mentions according to my codebook in Appendix A. This route of research would be helpful as one would be able to study executive polarization according to changes in congressional polarization, as well as overall changes in polarization over time. In addition, future studies could utilize a more precise measure of polarization of educational mentions in order to determine whether correlations between polarization of a state and polarized mentions are actually stronger than my work indicates. Finally, future studies could utilize similar methodology with another policy area
delegated to both state and federal governments like welfare policy. This particular study could detect polarized mentions of welfare between state and federal campaigns based on polarization rates among states.
CHAPTER 4
EDUCATION PERFORMANCE DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN CAMPAIGNS

The use of standardized testing can be traced to the early nineteenth century when educators and localities desired to test the academic achievement of students in a plurality of schools (Reese, 2013). With the adoption of the No Child Left Behind, which required math and reading/language arts academic standards and assessments in grade 3-5, 6-9 and 10-12, the federal government was able to mandate standardized testing on a national scale (Vinovskis 2009). A main tenant of NCLB was to create curriculum standards and accountability through standardized testing (Vinovskis, 2009) With the onset of Obama’s presidency, the Race to the Top initiative was created to ensure student test scores were connected to credentialing programs and served as an accountability measure for teachers and schools (Spring, 2014). In 2010, the Race to the Top initiative adopted the Common Core Standards developed by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which mandates that state and national test be aligned with the requirements of these new regulations (Spring, 2014; Vinovskis, 2009).

Standardized testing has existed in the United States since the birth of our nation. In more recent years, school performance data has been a crucial aspect of educational initiatives from local to federal educational policies. From the beginning of implementation in the early nineteenth century, standardized testing has received criticism from a range of scholars and politicians (Reese, 2013). This remains true
today as members of both parties scrutinize the use of standardized testing arguing what particular elements should be in this standardized curriculum or that teachers will only teach to pass tests, limiting student capabilities (Manna, 2011). Meanwhile, supporters of standardized testing accolade the collection of performance data to hold schools and states accountable for underachieving schools (Manna, 2011). For an extensive period, these tests have been created and implemented by both levels of government, which may illustrate that both federal and state governments can be held accountable for underperforming schools. This leads me to question if candidates are more likely to mention education in campaigns based on their state or district’s school performance data?

Additionally, the history of standardized testing illustrates that these test have traditionally originated on the state or local level, yet have only recently been adopted by federal standards. Regardless of this federal intervention, states still hold significant agency in navigating federal programs (Reed 2014, Vergari 2012). For instance, only forty-two states have adopted the Common Core standards, while others have decided to disregard this federal initiative (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2013). Furthermore, in Chapter 2, I discovered that state candidates were more likely to mention education in ads. As state officials still possess a great deal of agency in implementing educational policy and are more likely to mention education in campaigns, I question whether state electoral candidates are more likely to mention education in campaigns based on school performance data compared to federal candidates?

As an accountability measure, school performance tests are used to focus on two elements: (1) measurement and transparency of results and (2) consequences for
performance (Manna, 2011). A main tenant of the NCLB was to hold school accountable for academic performance and thin the achievement gap across groups of students (Manna, 2011). Since school performance data was publicly released on a yearly basis, schools that performed poorly were thought to feel threatened by this detailed transparency and act appropriately to improve their scores. Considering a large proponent of the NCLB was the release of performance information to the public, I question the extent to which this performance data relates to political campaigns that mention education, specifically how politicians talk about education. Considering the public could acquire data on school performance, one may consider that the public holds politicians accountable for educational attainment in their state or district. Therefore, I question if political campaigns in a lower ranking states or districts are more likely to attack incumbents when mentioning education? Moreover, are politicians in higher ranking states or districts more likely to utilize support ads to promote incumbents for good performance records?

Standardized testing in education has grown over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Analyzing data on school performance and school expenditures, I hope to discover the function of performance data regarding the discussion of education policy in campaigns. First, I will identify the vast literature that criticizes, assesses and discusses the implications and practically of performance data and state expenditures as an accountability measure and its effect on campaigns. Secondly, I will develop hypotheses based on the literature. Thirdly, I will analyze school performance data to answer the above question while testing my hypotheses. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of my analysis and suggestions for further areas of study.
Literature Review

Standardized testing has permeated into the American education system since the early nineteenth century. Testing for school performance has only recently been bolstered by federal and state policies, which have greatly increased the amount of school performance assessments in the United States. A main function of these tests is to hold schools accountable for underperformance. Over the extensive history of testing and school finances, scholars have studied the effect of school performance data as an accountability measure. First, scholars have contributed to the broad topic of negative political advertising that is important to discuss in order to observe how candidate attack one another in campaigns. Secondly, past literature has identified how failed policies have contributed to voting decision on incumbents during elections. Secondly, scholars have observed the effect of school performance data on state politics, yet illustrate different findings in regard to knowledge about school performance and whether it is applied to judgments about government officials. Finally, studies have illustrated the relationship between school performance and candidate approval in local elections, yet this literature differs on which factors influence this association.

Scholars have indicated how attacks may effect campaigns and be utilized to attack incumbents. Negative advertising has been a prominent focus in the study of campaign advertising. Scholars have postulated that these negative attacks are more informative to voters because these ads often have citations for their attacks (Geer 2006). Furthermore, negative ads are more likely to receive public attention and focus on policy positions rather than personal attacks (Franz et al 2007, West 2014).
Generally personal attack ads are not used for fear that these personal onslaughts would influence citizens to believe a campaign is “mean spirited” (West 2014, p. 71).

In addition to how negative ads have been utilized by campaigns, scholars have indicated that particular policy outcomes are attributed to an incumbent’s record during an election. Observing how economic conditions may effect the chance of reelection for gubernatorial incumbents, one study found that, in conditions of poor economic circumstances, voters are likely to attribute blame based on partisanship (Brown 2010). In particular, if a governor is a Democrat, Democrats are less likely to blame this governor for poor economic conditions, yet Republicans are likely to attribute blame to a Democrat governor (Brown 2010). Another study focusing on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina discovered a similar finding that citizens are more likely to place blame on government officials based on partisanship (Malhorta and Kuo 2008). Furthermore, in regard to congressional campaigns, literature indicates that voter typically select a candidate based on partisanship, incumbency, and name recognition (Jacobson and Carson 2016). The author also finds that approval of presidential performance can effect voter preference, but only if political knowledge is high, which is uncommon (Jacobson and Carson 2016). The literature on how policy performance effect voter preferences and the reelection is confronted with many other variables including partisanship and political knowledge.

Scholars have also distinguished this role of accountability towards political candidates in elections. Observing the 2000 South Carolina school board elections, a study found that voters are likely to evaluate school board members on the basis of student learning trends (Berry and Howell, 2007). This study also observed that with the passage of time, voters did not evaluate school board members similarly based
upon recent student learning trends in the 2002 and 2004 elections (Berry, Howell, 2007). On the contrary a study analyzing Florida school board elections from 2006 to 2014 finds that receiving an A grade under Florida’s accountability system rather than a B, increases incumbent vote share in three of five electoral cycle (Barrows, 2013). Furthermore, this study found that performance information did not affect support for incumbents when performance grades were distributed or controversy occurred over calculation of school grades (Barrows, 2013). Similarly observing school board elections in California from 1995 to 2004, another study found that an increase in dropout rate is associated with lower reelection probability in addition to observing that the stronger a federal presence, including increase in federal funding or intense NCLB measures, the more likely local incumbents were defeated (Joanis, 2013). A different study focusing on education and vote share across elections in three levels of governments found that education policy is usually considered a policy area delegated to the mayoral position rather than attributed to either governor or senator (Arceneaux, 2006). The author theorizes that voters are able to attribute responsibility to the proper level of government when information is highly accessible (Arceneaux, 2006). Information to voters is crucial importance during elections as substantial information about policy outcomes can provide voters with a preference towards incumbents while information constraints reduce the ability of citizens to hold politicians accountable (Keefer, Khemani, 2005).

**Theory and Expectations**

Based on the literature on school performance data in campaigns, I will make several hypotheses in order to answer the question postulated in the introduction. First, I want to assess the role of school performance data in elections. More
specifically, I asked if candidates are more likely to mention education in campaigns based on their district’s or state’s school performance data? Scholars have often focused on how accountability effects local school board elections while focusing more on how voters are influenced by accountability data. I propose an analysis of candidate campaigns and if school performance data can predict whether a candidate is more likely to mention education, which would deviate from voter-centric scholarship. First, I hypothesize that candidates in higher-ranking states or districts are more likely to mention education. Therefore, as state education or school district rank increases, the more likely candidates in those states or areas are more likely to mention education. Furthermore, I believe that state candidates are more likely to mention education in campaign ads based on education ranking of state or school district because this level of government is more likely to be associated with education policy and the public tends to have an idea of which level of government corresponds to particular policy areas (Arceneaux, 2006).

Finally, I questioned how content related material in campaign ads mentioning education could be effected by school performance data or state education ranking. In particular, I hypothesize that opposing candidates in low ranking states or districts are more probable to attack incumbents when mentioning education, as they desire to undermine their opponent’s past performance in education and attempt to thwart them in an upcoming election. Therefore, the lower the educational performance ranking of a state or district, the more likely a candidate in the state or district is to use contrast or negative ads mentioning education. Furthermore, I hypothesize that incumbents in high-ranking states or districts are more probable to mention education in support ads because they want to illustrate and bolster their record on education. Therefore, the
higher educational ranking of a state or district, the more likely those state candidates will use promotional ads to discuss education. In addition, I believe that state candidates are more likely than federal candidates to promote incumbents in high ranking districts and attack incumbents in low ranking districts because state candidates are more likely resonate with local conditions in education.

My research hopes to analyze the role of performance data in campaigns for both federal and state elections. As previous literature on accountability measures focus on candidates of school board elections and mostly the role of the voters, I hope to find a relationship between these education standards and campaigns through the analysis of campaign advertisements. This research is important to the study of education accountability. If low performing states or districts possess incumbent politicians that do not discuss education, then how will voters choose the correct candidate to improve their schools. A major proponent of NCLB was the release of performance data to the public in order to hold schools and politicians accountable. Using this information, my study hopes to find a connection between education mentions in campaign ads and school performance data in order to assess if politicians discuss education on the basis of school performance and understand how they may discuss such a policy area in regard to particular education data. Hopefully, my research will provide insight on whether voters should hold politicians more accountable for the performance of schools based on the relationship between education mentions in campaigns and performance data. If there no relationship exists between mentioning education and performance data, voters may have to illustrate the importance of this issue to politicians whom should recognize local concerns on academic performance.
Data and Methods

In order to assess a relationship between education mentions and state or district education performance, I utilized data from Wesleyan Media Project, individual states’ Department of Education, the Anne E. Casey Foundation, the US Census, and my own coded data. Focusing on campaign ads from 2012 election, I concentrate on congressional and state legislative campaigns. I am unable to assess a relationship between performance data and presidential campaigns because the president is not accountable for individual state or school district performance. In addition, it is important to note that state legislature ads must include both primary and general election ads because state legislature races may have competitive primary elections, but not compete in a general election. Furthermore, state candidates often must rerun for office in a newly created district because a state may redraw district lines, which may facilitate a primary election between two incumbents of the same party. Therefore, in order to accumulate enough data to assess the role of performance data and incumbency in state legislature, I will include both primary and general election ads in my analysis of state legislative elections.

As previously disclosed in Chapter 2, I analyzed several variables from the Wesleyan Media Project, yet, in this chapter, I focus on both incumbency and advertisement tone, which can both be located in Appendix B. Ad Tone is coded into three mutually exclusive categories; positive, negative, or contrast (Fowler, Franz and Ridout 2016). For Candidate Status, the Wesleyan Media Project codes as Incumbent, Challenger of Incumbent, or Open Seat based on which candidate is sponsored or attacked in the campaign advertisement. For federal and gubernatorial ads, I was able to merge the master candidate dataset to my data in order to assess if incumbents or
non-incumbents were being supported or attacked in ads. In State Legislature campaign ads, I coded for candidate identity based on which candidate was supported or attacked. Referring to Appendix A, one can observe these variables, yet I had to do additional research to decide which candidates were incumbent or opposition to the incumbent. While watching state legislative campaign ads, I coded for which candidate was supported or attacked then research the candidate status to either code an ad for supporting or attacking an incumbent or non-incumbent. Unfortunately, not all state legislature ads were coded for candidate identity, which, even though is an error in the data, should not deter the validity of my results as there is still a substantial amount of observations.

A main tenet of my research is testing to find a relationship between probability of mentioning education and state ranking in federal and gubernatorial races, which are accountable to their respective states. More specifically, I will attempt to find if incumbents are more likely to be attacked in poorly ranked states and promoted in higher ranked states. The Anne E. Casey Foundation is a non-profit focused on improving the lives of children, families and communities in the United States. Using data from the sources disclosed in Appendix D, the Anne E. Casey Foundation creates an Education Domain Rank across all fifty states based on the attendance rate for preschools, fourth grade reading levels, eighth grade proficiency in math and high school graduation rate. I utilize this classification system as an accurate measure of ranking states because this data solely focus on academic achievement rather than also including student economic well-being and health. In order to compare between levels of government, this education measure by the Anne E. Casey Foundation

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1 Mission state of the Anne E. Casey Foundation, please visit: [http://www.aecf.org/work/](http://www.aecf.org/work/)
should only focus on academics since the performance data from school districts only focuses on student proficiency on academic assessments. Furthermore, the Anne E. Casey Foundation assessment of state ranking is comparable to other sources of state education classification since the Foundation utilizes equivalent sources for data. The main difference between the Anne E. Casey Foundation ranking and other sources is that the Anne E. Casey Foundation provides a list of all fifty states followed by their education rank and sources for the data whereas other providers of state education ranking may not provide an entire rank of all the fifty states or specify the sources from which they acquired their data. Therefore, the Anne E. Casey Foundation’s state education rank is the best measure to assess a relationship between education in elections and academic performance among the states.

To find data on state district performance, I found annual yearly reports on states’ Department of Education websites. In order to find which school district intersected with state legislative districts, I used U.S. Census TigerFiles to separately merge State Senate and State Representative Districts with State School District. State Senate and State Representative districts are not drawn to perfectly encompass each school district. Therefore, many state legislative districts overlap school district lines and many state legislative districts also hold a plurality of school districts. After finding which school districts intersects with each state legislative district, I acquire school performance data from Iowa, Illinois, Florida and Texas, which I was able to create a district rank based on performance data. I focus on Iowa, Illinois, and Florida in my analysis of State Senate campaigns and performance data because these states possess moderate polarization rate, different overall ranking in state education, and a significant amount of State Senate campaign ads. In State Representative campaigns,
I focus on Texas because I was limited by my data as many State Representative ads were not coded for incumbency. Texas as a case study in State Representative elections may provide relevant results because the 2012 Texas State Representative election featured 15 percent of all State Representative ads and possesses candidates from a wide degree of district ranking ranging from an average school district rank of 275 to 632. My calculations for district rank in each state can be found in Appendix D, yet this calculation usually entailed taking the average score on math and reading assessments by grade. I was able to merge data sets based on legislative district then take the average school district rank by legislative district.

*State Education Rank and Education Mentions*

I first hypothesized that candidates in higher-ranking states are more likely to mention education. Using state education rank, I tested to observe if there is a relationship between education mentions and higher state rank. I included federal congressional, gubernatorial and state legislative elections. In Figure 4.1, one may observe the graphical depiction of percent of education mentions by state rank. In this graph, percentages of education mentions are largely dispersed as there is no normal or skewed distribution. Testing the correlation between education mentions and state rank, I found a positive and statistically significant of 0.0542. Even though this correlation is positive, this test finds that as state rank decreases, education mentions increases because state rank ranges from 1, being the best rank, to 50, the lowest rank. Therefore, the correlation provides that as education rank decreases from 1 to 50, education mentions are likely to increase. The correlation is also weak and inconclusive. This finding does not support my hypothesis that education mentions are likely to increase as state rank improves.
Even though, overall this election featured an increase in education mentions with a decreasing state rate in education, I will further this analysis by distinguishing between federal and state elections. I also hypothesized that state candidates are more likely to mention education in campaign ads based on higher school district ranking because this level of government is more likely to be associated with education policy and the public tends to have an idea of which level of government corresponds to particular policy areas (Arceneaux, 2006). Therefore, I will assess a difference between federal and state candidates in particular observe the differences between state and federal legislatures.
Referring to Figure 4.2, one can observe the percent of education mentions by state rank in congressional elections. Testing the correlation between state rank and education mentions, I found a weak, positive correlation of 0.06. Even though this correlation is statistically significant, it presents a weak relationship. This correlation illustrates a similar finding discovered in Figure 4.1 that mentioning education in campaign ads is more likely to occur in lower ranking states.

Finally, observing only state legislative campaigns as depicted in Figure 4.3, I find a stronger, negative correlation between education mentions in campaigns and average school district rank. Including both State Senate elections in Illinois, Iowa and Florida as well as the Texas State Representative election, I discovered a statistically significant correlation of -.2129. This correlation entails that as average
school district rank changes from a poor to better performance rank, candidates are more likely to discuss education. This provides support for my second hypothesis that state elections are more likely to mention education based on better performing school districts compared to the likelihood of federal candidates to mention education in higher ranked states. Furthermore, this correlation in state legislative elections is stronger than both my last analyses, which may illustrate that federal campaigns convolute the correlation between state rank and education mentions in my first analysis. This strong correlation also implies that higher ranking school districts may vote for candidates based on their frequency of talking about education. Because higher ranking school districts may have candidates that mention education more in campaigns, these higher ranked districts may also desire a candidate that values education and will continue to increase school performance more than lower ranked districts would.

Figure 4.3 Percent of Education Mentions by Average School District Rank
Incumbency and Education Ads

Another main concern in my research is how content related material in campaign ads mentioning education could be effected by school performance data or state education ranking. Therefore, I will analyze the role of incumbency in federal congressional and state legislative races to observe if there is a trend between attacking or promoting incumbents based on state or school district rank. First, I study if there is a relationship between attacking incumbents or non-incumbents based on state or school district performance data. I hypothesized that candidates in low ranking states or district are more likely to attack incumbents in order to strike their opponent’s past performance in education. Hence, the lower the education performance in a state or district, the more likely a candidate in the state or district is to use contrast or negative ads mentioning education to attack incumbents. A second tenant of this analysis is to observe a relationship between promoting candidates based on incumbency and state or district rank. I hypothesized that incumbent in high-ranking states or districts are more likely to be supported because incumbents want to connect their political record to being responsible for good academic performance. Therefore, the higher ranking of a state or district, the more likely those state candidates will use promotional ads to discuss education. Based on both my hypotheses, I maintain that state legislature elections are more likely to attack incumbents in poor districts and support incumbents in higher ranked districts compare to the probability of congressional races. I believe both incumbents and non-incumbents in state legislative races are more responsive to education in each analysis and therefore are more likely to respond to poor or impressive academic performance.
In order to find a relationship among incumbency and state or district education ranking, I ran several logistic regressions. Each finding was statistically significant illustrating a p-value less than .01. Furthermore, I assessed the probability of education mentions by incumbency based on state education rank in congressional elections and average school district rank in state legislative elections then subsequently plotted the margins for a graphical image of the probability of education mentions by state education rank and incumbency.

First focusing on the role of incumbency in attack education ads, I will observe the probability of attacking incumbents based on poor state education ranking in Congressional elections. First, looking at Table 4.1, the logistic regression ran to observe the relationship between attacking an incumbent based on state rank illustrates a significant value between attacking incumbents and state rank. Observing Figure 4.4, which illustrates the probability of education mentions attacking either incumbent or non-incumbent candidates, congressional elections are unlikely to attack either incumbent or non-incumbent in higher ranked states, yet are almost three times as likely to attack non-incumbent candidates in lower state rank compared to attacking incumbent candidates. Whereas the probability of attacking non-incumbents in the worse performing state is about 12 percent, the probability of attacking incumbent in the worse rank state is about 4.2 percent. Overall, the probability of attacking either incumbent or non-incumbent in congressional elections education ads is low, yet this result refutes my hypothesis that lower performing states are more likely to attack incumbent in lower ranked states. Rather, it appears that non-incumbents are much more likely to be attacked in low rank states, which may illustrate an incumbents advantage over non-incumbents.
Observing attack education mentions in state legislative campaigns, Table 4.2 shows the logistic regression output between attacking incumbents and average district rank while controlling for a number of variables. Based on this output, one can observe that the relationship between incumbency and state rank is significant, yet non-incumbency and state rank is not significant. Table 4.2 also shows that attacking incumbent is negatively related to school district rank. This means that as attacking an incumbent increase by one, school district rank decreases to a higher rank. Figure 4.5 illustrates the probability of attacking incumbents in education ads across state legislature campaigns. According to Figure 4.5, attacks against non-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ED_MENTION</th>
<th>0b.Attack_Incumbent</th>
<th>1.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Attack_Incumbent</td>
<td>2.074</td>
<td>(1.25)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state_rank</td>
<td>1.037</td>
<td>(4.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0b.Attack_Incumbent#co.state_rank</td>
<td>1.000**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.Attack_Incumbent#c.state_rank</td>
<td>0.967**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total_house</td>
<td>1.000**</td>
<td>(6.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.total_senate</td>
<td>1.000**</td>
<td>(3.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>0.212**</td>
<td>(14.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lb.ad_tone</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.ad_tone</td>
<td>1.408</td>
<td>(1.30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 1,096,199

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01
incumbents are more likely to occur in lower ranked states while attacks on incumbents are more likely to occur in higher ranking districts. In high ranking states, the probability of an education mentions attacking incumbents is about 94 percent where as attacking a non-incumbent in the same highly ranked district is about 71 percent. These high percentages are probably due to sample size of legislative elections, yet this analysis still provides insight on the high likelihood of attacking incumbents in highly ranked districts. Shifting back to my analysis of low ranked districts, Figure 4.5 illustrates that incumbents are more likely to be attacked compared to non-incumbents in low ranked districts as the probability of attacking incumbents is about 85 percent compared to probability of attacking non-incumbents is around 70 percent. Overall, incumbents tend to more likely to be attacked
compared to non-incumbents in poorly ranked districts, yet this probability does possess a margin of error that overlaps both incumbent and non-incumbent. Generally, my analysis that incumbents are more likely to be attacked in worse ranked school districts is supported.

Table 4.2: Logistic Regression of Attacking Incumbents by Average School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ED_MENTION</th>
<th>0b.Attack_Incumbent</th>
<th>1.Attack_Incumbent</th>
<th>Average_District_Rank</th>
<th>0b.Attack_Incumbent#co.Average_District_Rank</th>
<th>1.Attack_Incumbent#c.Average_District_Rank</th>
<th>total_house</th>
<th>o.total_senate</th>
<th>REP</th>
<th>1b.ad_tone</th>
<th>3.ad_tone</th>
<th>_cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.887**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.002**</td>
<td>-0.000**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.813**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.81)</td>
<td>(1.76)</td>
<td>(3.31)</td>
<td>(7.98)</td>
<td>(3.31)</td>
<td>(7.98)</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(9.56)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 8,041

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01

Comparing congressional and state legislative campaigns in regard to attacks based on incumbency, state legislative campaigns are more likely to attack incumbents in poorly performing school districts compared to congressional ads in
low ranked states. My first hypothesis is not necessarily supported by these two analyses as congressional campaigns are more likely to attack non-incumbents rather than incumbents in poorly ranked states, yet state legislature campaigns show incumbents are more likely to be attacked in higher performing school districts. These analyses do provide evidence for my prediction that state legislative campaigns would be more likely to attack incumbents in poorly ranked districts compared to congressional elections in lowly ranked states. The reason behind state legislative campaigns accountability towards incumbents in lower ranked districts may be attributed to the resonance of candidates with local conditions. This second hypothesis may be further bolstered by an analysis of incumbency based on promotional education mentions.

Figure 4.5 Probability of Attack Education Mentions by Incumbency in State Legislative Elections
I also want to observe the role of promoting incumbents by state rank. I hypothesized that incumbents were more likely to issue promotional education references in well performing states or school districts in order to bolster their record on education, yet state incumbents were more likely to have promotional education mentions compared to congressional candidates in well performing districts. Observing the role of promotional education mentions by incumbency in congressional campaigns, I ran a logistic regression controlling for total house and senate ads, partisanship, and ad tone. Observing Table 4.3, one can observe that the relationship between incumbency and state rank is not statistically significant. Regardless, plotting the probability of supporting incumbents by state rank, Figure 4.6 illustrates the probability of promoting a candidate based on incumbency by state rank. As one may observe, incumbents are almost just as likely to be promoted in higher ranked states compared to non-incumbents, yet the margin of error makes this analysis inconclusive. Both support for incumbent and non-incumbent overlap throughout different state ranks. Even though incumbents and non-incumbent overlap, incumbents possess a wide probability of being supported in these low rank states ranging from about 8 percent to 17 percent. Regardless, my hypothesis that incumbents are more likely to be promoted in high ranked states is not support by my analysis of congressional campaigns as both incumbent and non-incumbents are equally probable to be supported in high rank states based on a low probability ranging from 2 to 8 percent.
Table 4.3 Logistic Regression of Supporting Incumbents by State Rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ED_MENTION</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0b.Incumbent</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.Incumbent</td>
<td>0.616**</td>
<td>(5.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state_rank</td>
<td>1.011**</td>
<td>(2.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0b.Incumbent#co.state_rank</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.Incumbent#c.state_rank</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total_house</td>
<td>1.000**</td>
<td>(8.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o.total_senate</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>0.134**</td>
<td>(23.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.ad_tone</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.ad_tone</td>
<td>3.608**</td>
<td>(8.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.ad_tone</td>
<td>1.154</td>
<td>(1.43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 1,082,769

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01
Turning my attention to state legislative elections, Table 4.4 shows the logistic regression ran for supporting incumbents by average district rank. Based on the regression output, incumbents illustrate a significant relationship with average district rank whereas non-incumbent do not show a statistically significant relationship. Studying Figure 4.7, I find that non-incumbents are promoted in almost every education ad aired in a highly ranked district, yet incumbents also have a high probability of being promoted in education ads, but not to the same extent as non-incumbents. Even though the probabilities between incumbent and non-incumbent are very close, as depicted by Figure 4.7, non-incumbents are more likely to be supported in higher ranking states, yet this relationship between promoting non-incumbents along average school district rank is not significant. Therefore, this finding does support my hypothesis that incumbents are more likely to be promoted.
in higher ranked states and support my second conjecture that state candidates will more likely promote incumbents in higher ranking districts than congressional incumbents in higher ranking states. Compared to congressional campaigns, state incumbents are almost 90 percent more likely to mentioned in state legislature elections. This finding provide evidence that state legislature campaigns are more likely to promote incumbents in higher ranked districts compared to federal elections.

Table 4.4 Logistic Regression of Supporting Incumbents by Average State District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ED_MENTION</th>
<th>0b.Incumbent</th>
<th>1.Incumbent</th>
<th>Average_District_Rank</th>
<th>0b.Incumbent#co.Average_District_Rank</th>
<th>1.Incumbent#c.Average_District_Rank</th>
<th>total_house</th>
<th>o.total_senate</th>
<th>REP</th>
<th>1b.ad_tone</th>
<th>2.ad_tone</th>
<th>_cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-2.772</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.603</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.281</td>
<td>4.942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(7.45)**</td>
<td>(9.36)**</td>
<td>(2.91)**</td>
<td>(2.12)*</td>
<td>(2.12)*</td>
<td>(6.29)**</td>
<td>(19.87)**</td>
<td>(13.60)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 10,320*  
*p<0.05; ** p<0.01*
Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I sought to discover a relationship between education mentions and state or school district rank. The United States has instituted a number of accountability measures to keep schools liable for student achievement. Since the implementation of NCLB, school performance data has been publicly released on a yearly basis, which has, at times, resulted in criticism of elected officials. As past literature has mostly focused on how voters are influenced by performance data, I sought to find a relationship between the probability of mentioning education in campaigns and performance rank of states and school districts. Furthermore, I wanted to observe the role of incumbency and if these incumbent candidates were more likely to be promoted or attacked based on state or school district rank.
First, I observed if the correlation between education mentions and legislative or congressional races. I found that congressional campaigns hold a weak positive correlation between state education rank and education mentions. This implies that as state rank increases from 1, being the best rank, to 50, being the worst rank, education mentions are likely to increase. This did not support my hypothesis that candidates in higher ranked states or districts are more likely to mention education. This stands in stark contrast to my analysis of state legislative campaigns, which featured a strong negative correlation between education mentions and school district rank. In state legislative ads, as state district rank decreases from worse to better, candidates are more likely to mention education. This finding in state legislative ads supported both my hypotheses; the first being higher rank districts are more likely to mention education and the second, state candidates are more likely to mention education based on improving rank than federal candidates.

In the second part of my analysis, I wanted to find a relationship between promoting or attacking incumbency based on state or school district rank. First, I tested to see if incumbent candidates based on education is more likely in poor performing school districts. I hypothesized that incumbents in poorly ranked school districts or states were more likely to be attack based on poor education performance. In congressional campaigns, I found that non-incumbents were 9 percent more likely to be attacked in the worse performing states compared to incumbent. In state legislative campaigns, I discovered that incumbents were more likely to be attacked in poorly performing districts compared to non-incumbents, yet this probability was about 1.5 percent different that non-incumbents. My analysis of attack education ads in congressional and state legislative elections does not support my hypothesis as
congressional incumbents were not more likely to be attacked in poor performing states. Yet this research supports my conjecture that state incumbents are more likely to be attacked in poorly performing schools than federal incumbents.

Furthermore, I analyzed the role of promoting incumbents based on school or state education rank. I hypothesized that incumbents were more likely to be promoted in higher ranked districts or states because incumbents would want to bolster their record on high academic performance. In either congressional or state legislative campaigns, incumbents were not more likely than non-incumbents to issue promotional education mentions in higher ranking states based on probability, yet state non-incumbent candidates were not statistically relevant in my regression. Therefore, in state legislative campaigns, incumbents are statistically more likely to be supported in lower ranked districts. My hypothesis is not fully supported, yet my analysis provided evidence for my second hypothesis that state incumbent candidates are more likely to be promoted in higher ranking states than federal incumbents in higher ranked states.

*Implications and Areas of Further Study*

Based on my analysis of state legislative and congressional ads, I find that state candidates are more likely to be accountable for school district performance based on campaign ads. In both analyses of promoting and attacking incumbents, state candidates were much more likely to either promote or attack incumbents based on school district performance. In low rank districts, incumbents were more likely to be attacked, yet in high rank district, incumbents were more likely to be promoted than candidates in federal congressional races. In addition, state candidates are also more likely to discuss education in campaigns compared to federal candidates, which may
illustrate why state candidates are probable to mention education in campaigns based on district rank. My analysis may imply that state candidates may be more accountable for school performance in their respective district than federal candidates based on their state education rank. As I discovered, state candidates were more likely to be attacked in poor performing districts and supported in well performing districts than federal candidates, which indicates that state candidates may be held more accountable in elections for poor and good school performance.

Furthermore, there are several areas of research that may be discovered based on my analysis. First, a study can further observe the role of incumbency in state elections using all state district information, which will allow for a full sample. Moreover, this study can look at performance district and state rank overtime which could observe a trend of either supporting or attack incumbents based on performance data over several elections. In addition, research could focus on the improvement in schools as a factor in promoting incumbent candidates, which would allow for an in-depth analysis of improving schools and candidate accountability.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Throughout this analysis of education mentions in the 2012 election, I have outlined several investigations and results for when and how candidates discuss education in campaigns. The purpose of these analyses was to observe how this overhauling development of education has become intertwined with the American federalist system and has been influenced by polarized partisanship in campaigns. In the Chapter 1, I discussed why this particular study was imperative to the future of education accountability, which has been a major focus on such monumental legislation like the NCLB and the Common Core Standards. With the public release of school performance data, I suggested that this information should play a role in campaigns specifically. In this thesis, I assessed the role of education in campaigns based on partisanship, election, polarization and school or state performance rank. These analyses featured different results and implications for the study of education in campaigns, yet will provide novel insights for how education is discussed based on several factors. First I will provide results for my analysis of education mentions between parties, levels of government and parties of each level of government. Secondly, I will reiterate my findings on polarization and issues in education that are considered “owned” by each party. Then, based on my analysis between school district or state education rank and probability of mentioning education, I will discuss whether candidates are more likely to attack or promote incumbents based on state or district rank. Finally, this section will conclude with a broad connection among my analyses and areas for further study.
Differences in Partisanship and Levels of Government

In Chapter 2, I assessed the differences in education mentions between parties and level of government. First, my hypothesis that Democrats were more likely to mention education in campaigns was supported as Democrats issued 14.49 percent more education ads than Republicans in the 2012 election. I expected Democrats to issue more education ads based on the theory of issue ownership, which states that Democrats are more likely to discuss education because this party is publicly perceived to better handle this issue (Petrocik 1996). Secondly, analyzing the top mentions between Republican and Democrats, I discover that Democrats discuss funding for both public education and higher education more than Republicans, which is consistent with literature on party platforms (Spring 2011, Vinovskis 2009).

Another interesting finding was that neither party was likely to mention traditional party values like school prayer for Republicans or instituting bilingual education for Democrats. This may indicate that both parties do not tend to indicate preferences for strong partisan values in campaign ads in order to avoid deterring voters. In the past, Democrats have avoided mentioning support for multicultural education initiatives in order to retain their traditional white voter base, which may also stand true for Republicans and their more culturally center opinions about education (Spring 2011). Generally, this analysis proved that Democrats and Republicans differ on particular education initiatives. Democrats would attack Republicans for attempting to eliminate the Department of Education or decreasing funds for higher education while both parties would support increasing funding for education.
Chapter 2 also sought to differentiate education mentions between federal and state candidates where I found that state candidates issued a higher percentage of ads mentioning education compared to federal candidates. This supported my hypothesis that state candidates were more likely to mention education in campaigns because states possess more direct control over their respective systems of public education than federal officials do (Reed 2014, Vergari 2012). Comparing explicit education mentions between the two levels of government, I found that federal and state candidates were both as likely to mention education funding as 27.65 percent of federal campaign education ads mentioned education finances while state candidate dedicated 28.34 percent of education ads mentioning funding. This did not support my theory that state candidates were more likely to mention education funding based on their more approximate authority over education since states campaigns issued less than one percent more education funding ads than federal candidates. Even though my hypothesis that state candidates were more likely than federal candidates to mention education funding was incorrect, I did find support that both levels of government were likely to discuss higher education funding as supported by previous studies (Tandberg and Griffith 2013, Dar and Lee 2014).

Finally, I compared parties between each level of government. On the state level, I discovered that parties issued similar education mentions, yet, between federal parties, I found Democrats and Republicans deviated in education mentions, which was expected since I thought polarization was going to play a role in federal elections compared to state elections. In addition, I analyzed differences between parties based on level of government. Observing the top ten mentions, I detected that federal Democrats were more likely to issue different education mentions while Republican
candidates in state and federal campaigns exhibited very similar education references. This last discovery may indicate that Republicans are generally more unified in their beliefs about education compared to Democratic candidates.

**Polarization and Partisan Associated Education Policies**

After analyzing parties and level of governments for particular education mentions, I wanted to take my analysis further by analyzing the role of polarization on education mentions in campaigns. In an age of growing polarization on the federal level, scholars have found that these increasing disparate ideologies have also permeated state governments (Shor and McCarty 2011). Furthermore, scholars have indicated that parties do possess traditional partisan beliefs about education. Therefore, I decided to analyze discrepancies in partisan education mentions between corresponding legislative branches.

Tracing partisan affiliated education mentions in campaigns by rate of polarization in state legislature, I found several implications for how polarization effects the role of education in campaigns. First, generally my analyses proved to illustrate weak relationships. I found that all elections show positive coefficients between partisan held education mentions and increasing polarization, yet these relationships were typically weak. Finally, I found that both State Senate and House were more likely to issue partisan affiliated education mentions compared to federal races, which presents an interesting finding as most scholars agree that polarization has increased at a greater rate on the federal level. This study could potentially be improved through the analysis of polarization by state. It may have not been the most comprehensible test to use state legislature polarization for federal races, yet this comparison did illustrate interesting findings.
The Discussion of Education in Campaigns based on Performance Data

School performance has been an important discussion, not only for my research, but for education policy in general. Federal and state governments have both instituted ways to hold schools and politicians accountable for academic achievement. Since this aspect of education has been prominent in the general discussion of education, I sought to analyze how this data played a role in the context of campaigns. Specially, I want to see if politicians were held accountable either for poor or exceptional performance data through the use of campaign ads.

First, I believed that states and school districts with higher education ranks were more likely to mention education. I postulated that these higher ranked school or states were more probable to discuss education as a policy area because they may value education more since they have better schools and want ensure the continued success of their system of education. First, I found that congressional, state legislative and gubernatorial races, in the aggregate, were not more likely to mention education based on high state rank. This analysis produced a weak correlation that did not illustrate a significant relationship. Analyzing only federal races presented a similar correlation, yet focusing solely on state legislative campaign demonstrated a stronger negative that provides support my hypothesis that higher ranked districts were more likely to show more mentions of education.

In my second round of analyses, I sought to find relationship between attack or supporting an incumbent based on state or school district rank. I figured that incumbents were more likely to be attacked in poorly ranked districts because they would be held accountable for underachieving school performance. I found that, in congressional campaigns, non-incumbents were more likely to be attacked on
education in poorly performing states while incumbents in state legislatures races were more likely to be attacked in badly ranked districts than non-incumbents. Furthermore, in higher ranking states or districts, candidates were more likely to post promotional ads, yet state legislative campaigns did not have a statistically significant relationship with supporting incumbent in higher performing districts. It is possible that this analysis could be improved through presenting more samples for state legislative races. A limitation of my analysis was the inability to use more state legislative ads, yet this addition of these observations may help with the accuracy of the analysis.

**Implications**

Throughout this analysis of education rhetoric in campaigns, I have presented three different stages of analysis that served to illustrate the role of education in campaigns. Education presents an interesting policy area to study in the context of campaigns because both levels of government influence this policy area, both parties possess ideological driven beliefs about this issue, and a main crux of education policy is to hold leaders in politics and school accountable. These three aspects have played a key role in my analysis. I discovered that theories of issue ownership still apply to education as Democrats discussed this policy more than Republicans. Democrats are also more likely to diverge on issues between state and federal candidates, while Republican candidates in both levels of government align on education references. After analyzing this role of which mentions each party stated in the election, I try to discover if polarization is a likely indicator of when partisan associated education mentions occur. Finding a weak relationship between polarization and particular partisan education mentions may indicate that polarization
does not play a substantial role in the discussion of education and may be an area of future study.

Finally, after discussing how and when candidates discuss education, the final chapter illustrates a potential reason why politicians might refer to education during a campaign. Using an important aspect of modern education policy, I attempt to find a relationship between when or why candidates may promote incumbents based on school performance data. This last chapter utilizes the policy of school accountability in campaigns in order to trace if incumbents are accountable for school performance. Generally, my analyses were weak, which may indicate that the public is not holding candidates accountable for poor education systems.

Based on these analyses, the future of education in campaigns may be shifted in two ways. First, due to growing polarization in the federal government, it is possible that government officials will start to further deviate over education policy. Even though my analysis of polarization data did not illustrate a strong relationship between partisan belief in education and state polarization, if polarization continues to increase for state and federal governments, then future candidates may demonstrate more polarized values in education. Secondly, candidates may want to start holding politicians accountable for poor education performance. My analysis illustrated that a weak relationship exists between attacking incumbents based on low district and state rank. Therefore, schools or district may want to disseminate information on performance ranking directly to voters in order to attempt to elect candidates more invested in local issues.
Work Cited


Appendix A:
US Educational Policy in Electoral Campaigns Codebook
Created by Kevin Winnie

Q4 What is the UNIQUE ID

Q11 AD_TONE In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack a candidate, or contrast the candidates?
- Contrast (1)
- Promote (2)
- Attack (3)
- Don't Know (98)
- Not Available (99)

Answer If AD_TONE In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack... Attack Is Selected

Q22 If the ad is an attack ad, which candidate is being attacked?

Answer If AD_TONE In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack... Promote Is Selected

Q23 If the ad is a promotional ad, which candidate is being supported?

Answer If AD_TONE In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack... Contrast Is Selected

Q24 If Contrast Ad, which candidate is being supported and which is being attacked?
- Supported Candidate (1)
- Attacked Candidate (2)

Q6 OFFICE Office at stake
- President (1)
- US Senate (2)
- US House of Representatives (3)
- Governor (4)
- State Legislature (5)
- State Representative (6)
- Don't Know (98)
- Missing (99)

If President Is Selected, Then Skip To “Does a Teacher Group” support this ad? If US Senate Is Selected, Then Skip To Does a Teacher Group support this ad? If Governor
Q1 ELEC_TYPE. Is the ad aired for a general election or a primary election?
- Primary (1)
- General (2)
- Don't Know (98)
- Missing (99)

Q3 PARTY Party of favored candidate
- Democrat (1)
- Republican (2)
- Independent (3)
- Green (4)
- Libertarian (5)
- Other (90)
- Don't Know (98)
- Missing (99)

Q5 INCUM_STAT. What is the seat's incumbent status? 1 'Open Seat' 2 'Republican Seat' 3 'Democratic Seat' 4 'Other (Independent Seat)'
- Open Seat (1)
- Republican Seat (2)
- Democratic Seat (3)
- Other Seat (Independent Seat) (4)
- Don't Know (98)
- Missing (99)

Q7 Candidate Status
- Incumbent (1)
- Challenger of Incumbent (2)
- Open Seat (3)
- Don't Know (98)
- Missing (99)

Q8 Gender of Candidate
- Male (1)
- Female (2)
Q9 Is the favorite candidate
☑ Not applicable (0)
☑ Mentioned in the ad (1)
☑ Pictured in the ad (2)
☑ Not identified at all (3)
☑ Both mentioned and pictured in the ad (4)

Q10 Is the favored candidate's opponent
☑ Not applicable (0)
☑ Mentioned in the ad (1)
☑ Pictured in the ad (2)
☑ Not identified at all (3)
☑ Both mentioned and pictured in the ad (4)

Q12 PARTY_MN Does the ad mention the party label of the favored candidate or the opponent?
1 Yes, Favored Candidate’s Party
2 Yes, Opposing Candidate’s Party
3 Yes, Both Candidates’ Parties
4 Yes, Favored Candidate’s Party but Only in Paid For By line
98 DK
99 NA
☑ No (1)
☑ Yes, Favored Candidate's Party (2)
☑ Yes, Opposing Candidate's Party (3)
☑ Yes, Both Candidates' Parties (4)
☑ Yes, Favored Candidate's Party but Only in Paid For By Line (5)
☑ Don't Know (98)
☑ Not Available (99)

Q13 PER_PLY In your judgment, is the primary focus of the ad personal characteristics of either candidate or policy matters?
0 Neither
1 Personal Characteristics
2 Policy Matters
3 Both Personal Characteristics and Policy Matters
98 DK
99 NA
☑ Neither (1)
☑ Personal Characteristics (2)
☑ Policy Matters (3)
☑ Both Personal Characteristics and Policy Matters (4)
☑ Don't Know (98)
☑ Not Available (99)
Q15 Does a Teacher Group support this ad?
☐ No (1)
☐ Yes (2)
☐ Don't Know (98)
☐ Not Available (99)

Q16 LOCATION Does the ad show the candidate in...
☐ School (1)
☐ Walking with Students (2)
☐ Reading to Students (3)
☐ Eating in the School Cafeteria (4)
☐ Pictures with Student (5)
☐ Don't Know (98)
☐ Not Applicable (99)
☐ Other (15) ________________

Q17 WROTE_ED Is “education” presented as a written word in the ad?
☐ No (1)
☐ Yes (2)
☐ Don't Know (98)
☐ Not available (99)
Q18 OTHER_MENTION Was another issue mentioned other than education?
- No (1)
- Yes (2)
- Don't Know (3)
- Not available (4)

Q19 ED_MENTIONS Which education issues does the ad mention?
- Better education plan/schools (1)
- Make education a top priority (2)
- Education as an investment for the future (3)
- Ignored Education/Schools (4)
- Provide better, improve, more education funding (5)
- Decrease funds for state public schools/education (6)
- Fund smaller class sizes (7)
- Laid off teachers (8)
- Cut drop out rate (9)
- Increase Furlough school days (10)
- School choice in positive aspect (11)
- School choice in negative tone (12)
- School choice (13)
- School voucher program (14)
- School voucher program - negative (15)
- School voucher program - positive (16)
- Race to the top (17)
- Student Centered Approach (18)
- Increase Rainy day fund (19)
- Decrease Rainy day fund (20)
- Improve STEM Education (21)
- Decrease STEM Education (22)
- Introduce STEM Education (23)
- Defunded STEM Education (24)
- Reject federal funding for schools (25)
- Support from teachers (26)
- Connect Public Schools to Colleges (27)
- Cut In-State Tuition (28)
- Increase Student Loan Rates (29)
- Decrease Student Loan rates (30)
- Increase College Loans (31)
- Decrease College Loans (32)
- Increase Rate Pell Grants (33)
- Slash Pell Grants (34)
- Increase rates at Community College (35)
- Connect Community College to businesses (36)
More classes for employment (37)
Increase Vocational/technical education (38)
Improve Academic Diversity (39)
advocate/support college/university (40)
Education creates a better economy (41)
Eliminating the Department of Education (42)
Voted Against the GI Bill - specifically veteran's education (43)
Voted Against the GI Bill (44)
Background in education - Teacher (45)
Background in education - Parent (46)
Background in education - School Board (47)
Background in education - made schools better (48)
Background in education - Association Leader (49)
Background in education - served on School Board (50)
Protecting or Creating Scholarship (51)
Failing in Comparison to other countries (52)
Increase College Aid (53)
Decrease College Aid (54)
Other (55) ____________________

Q22 LEGISLATION Is any specific legislation pertaining to educational policy mentioned in the ad?
Click to write Choice 1 (1)
Click to write Choice 2 (2)
Click to write Choice 3 (3)
Click to write Form field 4 (4)
Click to write Form field 5 (5)
Appendix B: Relevant Sample of Wesleyan Media Project Codebook

**Wesleyan Media Project Codebook**

**Page 1: Information**

**Provided by CMAG ADCODE** Unique ID number for each creative

**CREATIVE** Creative Name

**EST_COST** Estimated cost of airing (dollars), based on normal cost of timeslot within market

**PROGRAMN** Program

**FIPS** State FIPS code of race associated with creative

**PARTY** Party of favored candidate

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<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>other</td>
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<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**OFFICE** Office at stake

1  President
2  US Senate
3  US House
4  Governor

**STATUS** Candidate Status

1  Incumbent
2  Challenger of Incumbent
3  Open Seat

**GENDER**

Gender of candidate

1  Male
2  Female

**CAND_ID** Candidate name  [Drop down: Surnam_Firstname (State)]

Based on creative name above, select the favored candidate from the drop-down box. The favored candidate is the candidate whom the ad supports.

**Programming notes:**
- List should be triaged by race (e.g., only presidential candidates should appear for presidential ads; only senate for senate and only house for house).
- Other options should include:
  - No candidate mentioned
  - Favored candidate not mentioned/not ascertainable
  - Multiple favored candidates
  - Favored candidate not in list (please specify)

**CAND_TXT** [Text box] If the favored candidate is not in the list, please type the candidate’s name into the text field as follows: if favored candidate is Nancy Pelosi, please type “Pelosi_Nancy” using proper capitalization and an underscore between last and first name.

*Skip if AD_TONE=2.*

**TGT_ID** Candidate name  [Drop down: Surnam_Firstname (State)]
If the favored candidate is not mentioned or not ascertainable, but the ad targets/attacks a specific candidate or multiple candidates, please indicate the target(s) of the ad here.

Programming notes:
- List should be identical to CAND_ID except for the “other options” noted below, and should also be triaged by race
- Other options should include:
  o No targeted candidate
  o Multiple targeted candidates
  o Targeted candidate not in list (please specify)

TGT_TXT [Text box] If the targeted candidate is not in the list, please type the candidate’s name into the text field as follows: if targeted candidate is Nancy Pelosi, please type “Pelosi_Nancy” using proper capitalization and an underscore between last and first name.

SPONSOR Sponsor of Spot

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<td>Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinated between a candidate and party</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Interest Group/other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>DK</td>
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</table>

GROUP_NA Name of the ad sponsor (e.g. the specific political party, interest group, union, etc.). This can often be gleaned from the ad’s “paid for by” line.

AD_TONE In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack a candidate, or contrast the candidates?

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Promote</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Attack</td>
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<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Skip if $AD\_TONE$ $= 1$. **CNT\_PRP** If the ad is a contrast ad, what proportion of the ad promotes (as opposed to attacks) a candidate?

1. More Promote Than Attack
2. About Equal Attack and Promote
3. More Attack Than Promote
4. Only Contrasting Element is Brief Statement in Oral Authorization
99. NA

*Skip if $AD\_TONE$ $= 1$. **CNT\_FIN** If the ad is a contrast ad, does it finish by promoting a candidate or attacking a candidate?

1. Finishes by Promoting
2. Finishes by Attacking
98. DK
99. NA

*Skip if $AD\_TONE$ $= 2$. **AD\_CIV** In your judgment, are the attack portions of the ad mostly civil or mostly uncivil?

1. Mostly civil
2. Mostly uncivil
98. DK
99. NA

**PRTY\_MN** Does the ad mention the party label of the favored candidate or the opponent?

0. No
1. Yes, Favored Candidate’s Party
2. Yes, Opposing Candidate’s Party
3. Yes, Both Candidates’ Parties
4. Yes, Favored Candidate’s Party but Only in Paid For By line
98. DK
99. NA
**PER_PLY** In your judgment, is the primary focus of the ad personal characteristics of either candidate or policy matters?

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<td>2</td>
<td>Policy Matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Both Personal Characteristics and Policy Matters</td>
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<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the following, if any, are seen endorsing in the ad? (Check all that apply)

ENDORSE1
   L
   Law Enforcement
ENDORSE2
   P
   Politician
ENDORSE3
   L
   Labor Union
ENDORSE4
   In
   Interest Group
ENDORSE5
   T
   Teacher Group
ENDORSE6
   C
   Celebrity
ENDORSE90
   Other, specify

trait battery
 Are any of the following words used to describe the candidates featured in the ad?

Integrity/Lack of
  Integrity
  INTEG11
  . Honest
  INTEG12
  . Decent
  INTEG51
  . Dishonest
  INTEG52
. Corrupt
INTEG53
. Lies to
public

Are the any of the following issues are mentioned in this ad? (Check all that apply)

Economic Policy
ISSUE22 Economy (generic reference)
ISSUE10 Taxes
ISSUE11 Deficit/Budget/Debt
ISSUE12 Government Spending
ISSUE13 Recession/Economic Stimulus
ISSUE14 Minimum Wage
ISSUE15 Farming
ISSUE16 Business
ISSUE17 Union
ISSUE18 Employment/Jobs
ISSUE19 Poverty
ISSUE20 Trade/Globalization
ISSUE21 Housing/Sub-prime
ISSUE23 Economic disparity/income inequality

Law and Order
ISSUE40 Crime
ISSUE41 Narcotics/Illegal Drugs
ISSUE42 Capital Punishment
ISSUE43 Supreme Court/Judiciary

Social Welfare Issues
ISSUE50 Education/Schools
ISSUE51 Lottery for Education
ISSUE52 Child Care
ISSUE53 Health Care (not prescription drugs)
ISSUE59 ACA/Obamacare/Health care law, etc.

Social Issues
ISSUE30 Abortion
ISSUE31 Homosexuality/Gay & Lesbian Rights
ISSUE32 Moral/Family/Religious Values
ISSUE33 Tobacco
ISSUE34 Affirmative Action
ISSUE35 Gambling
ISSUE36 Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia
ISSUE37 Gun Control
ISSUE38 Civil Liberties/Privacy
ISSUE39 Race Relations/Civil Rights
ISSUE54 Prescription Drugs
ISSUE55 Medicare
ISSUE56 Social Security
ISSUE57 Welfare
ISSUE58 Women’s Health

Foreign/Defense Policy
ISSUE60 Military (generic reference)
ISSUE61 Foreign Policy (generic reference)
ISSUE62 Veterans
ISSUE63 Foreign Aid
ISSUE64 Nuclear Proliferation
ISSUE65 China
ISSUE66 Middle East
ISSUE67 Afghanistan/War in Afghanistan
ISSUE68 September, 11th
ISSUE69 Terror/Terrorism/Terrorist
ISSUE70 Iraq/War in Iraq
ISSUE71 Israel
ISSUE72 Iran

Environment/Energy
ISSUE80 Environment (generic reference)
ISSUE82 Global Warming
ISSUE83 Energy Policy

ISSUE84 BP Oil Spill

Other
ISSUE90 Campaign Finance Reform
ISSUE91 Government Ethics/Scandal
ISSUE92 Corporate Fraud
ISSUE93 Term Limits
ISSUE94 Pledge of Allegiance (restrictions on)
ISSUE95 Immigration
ISSUE96 Local Issues
ISSUE98 Government Regulations
ISSUE99 Government Shutdown
ISSUE97 Other
PROBLEM. There is a problem with this ad

PROBLEM_REASON Select if there is a problem with the coding of this ad
  1    Video doesn’t work
  2    Ad in Spanish
  3    Other problem, BE SURE TO SPECIFY BELOW
Appendix C:

Education Mentions Used to Create Partisan Owned Education Variable

(** denotes used in attack against opponent)

Below, I go through each coded education mentions. Citations after each education mention indicate which source these mentions were described as related to a political party. I base this categorization on three different proponents. First, does the issue fall within the historical support of the party or opposing party? Second,

Democrat Polarized Owned Mentions

• fund smaller class sizes (Spring, 2014, 16)
• school choice – negative** (Spring, 2011, 134)
• school voucher program- negative** (Spring, 2011, 134)
• race to the top (Spring, 2014, 8)
• cut in-state tuition (Dar, 2012)
• increase student loan rates** (Collinge, 2009, 114)
• decrease student loan rates (Collinge, 2009, 114, 115)
• increase amount of college loans (Democrat Party Platform, 2016; Mettler, 2011, 118)
• decrease amount of college loans** (Collinge, 2009, 67)
• slash Pell grants** (Doyle, 2010, 626)
• improve academic diversity (Spring, 2011, 119)
• eliminate department of education**(Hess, 2009, 7; Vinosvkis, 2009)
• increase college aid (Doyle, 2010, 640)
• decrease college aid** (McLendon, Hearn, Mokher, 2009, 701)
• increase tuition rate** (McLendon, Hearn, Mokher, 2009, 701)
• cut funding for college** (Dar, 2010, 2012; Dar, Lee, 2014; Doyle, 2010)
• committed/create early childhood programs (Spring, 2011, 142)
• created pre plus program (Spring, 2011, 142)
• make college more affordable (Dar, 2010, 2012; Dar, Lee, 2014)
• cut early education programs including early childhood programs, healthcare, after school programs** (Spring, 2011, 140, 142)
• eliminate tax deduction for college tuition** (Inglehart, 2007)
• restore collective bargaining rights for teachers (Spring, 2014, 8)
• privatize education** (Spring, 2014, 68)

Republican Polarized Mentions

• school choice – positive (Spring, 2014, 65)
• school choice (Spring, 2014, 65)
school voucher program (Spring, 2014, 65)
• school voucher- positive (Spring, 2013, 65)
• reject federal funds for schools (Spring, 2014, 65)
• failing in comparison to other countries (Spring, 2011, 121)
• deny illegal immigrants public education – support (Dougherty, Nienhusser, Vega, 2010)
• increase state control in education (Spring, 2014, 64)
• eliminate department of education – positive (Vinosvkis, 2009, 13; Hess, 2009, 7)
• lower in state tuition for illegal immigrant ** (Reich, Barth, 2010)

Non Polarized Education Mentions

I consider these education mentions as non-polarized for a ____ reasons. First, studies have shown that Republican rhetoric on education mostly employs references to agreeable goals like “improving education” or “increasing funds for public education” (Sides, 2006, 428). Democrats are also likely to mention similar agreeable goals in campaign ads, yet Democratic candidates are also likely to have more mentions of education in general as my research and other scholars have discovered (Petrocik, 1996; Sides, 2006). In addition, education mentions like “increase vocation/technical education,” general funding for education, connecting colleges to business, and more veteran education are goals that both parties strive to accomplish in education (Vinosvkis, 2009; Spring 2014). Thirdly, some mentions are clearly not polarized. For example, possessing a background in education does not illustrate an ideological belief on education, but illustrates a professional experience in education. Additionally, mentions like “protect or create scholarships” is not a politically polarized issue as neither Democrats or Republicans condemn the creation of scholarships for students. Finally, in regard to higher education, both parties have supported increase funding for colleges, yet, as depicted in the polarized education mentions, Republicans have decrease funding for student loans and other college payment programs (Tandberg, Griffith, 2013; Dar, Lee, 2014).

Better Education Plan or Schools
• Make Education a Top Priority
• Education is an investment for the future
• Ignored Education/Schools **
• Provide More Education Funding
• Decrease Funds for Public Education **
• Fund Smaller Class Sizes
• Laid off teachers **
• Cut drop out rate
• Increase Furlough School Days
• Increase Rainy Day Fund
• Decrease Rainy Day Fund **
• Improve STEM Education
• Introduce STEM Education
• Defunded STEM Education **
• Support from teachers
• Increase Rates at Community College
• Connect Community Colleges to Business
• Introduce more classes for employment
• Increase vocational/technical education
• Advocate/support for college/university
• Education creates a better economy
• Vote against GI bill - specifically veteran education **
• Voted against the GI bill **
• Background as teacher
• Background in education because they are a parent
• Background as School Board member
• Made School Better
• Background as an Association Leader
• Protect or create scholarships
• Increase graduation rate
• Student centered approach
• Make college more affordable
• Cut vocational/technical training **
• More veteran education
• Created overcrowded classrooms
• Decrease teacher's pay**
• Increase teacher’s pay
• Opponent believes class size doesn't matter **
• Opponent believes small class not necessary **
• Obama wants quality teachers
• Opponent does not offer solution to education funding **
• Wants to get kids to read
### Appendix D:
Sources for Education Ranking by State and School District

Anne E. Casey Foundation Education Domain Rank by State

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<th>State</th>
<th>Education Domain Rank</th>
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**Education Indicators used in Education Domain Rank**

- Children not attending preschool
  - Percentage of children ages three to four who were not enrolled in nursery school or preschool during previous two months
  - Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey
- Fourth graders not proficient in reading
  - Percentage of fourth grade public school students who did not reach proficient level in reading as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
  - Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- Eighth graders not proficient in math
  - Percentage of eighth grade public school students who did not reach the proficient level in math as measured by the NAEP
  - Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress
- High school students not graduating on time
  - Estimated percentage of entering freshman class not graduating in four years
  - Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress
School District Ranking

Florida School Districts
The Florida Department of Education provides information on school district performance on math and reading assessments from grade 3 to 10. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test 2.0 (FCAT 2.0) measures reading and math assessments providing information percentage of student in each achievement level by school district. The FCAT 2.0 has five levels with level 5 being the highest achieving level while level 1 is lowest achieving rank. In order to create a school district rank variable based on percentage of student achieving each level in math and reading tests, I utilized a formula disclosed below:

\[
(Average \text{ Subject Score}) = \frac{(Level5 \times 5) + (Level4 \times 4) + (Level3 \times 3) + (Level2 \times 2) + (Level1)}{5}
\]

\[
(Composite \text{ Score}) = \frac{(Average \text{ Math \ Score}) + (Average \text{ Reading \ Score})}{2}
\]

Based on the composite score, created by both the average math score and reading score, I was able to rank each school district. Districts that did not report math and reading level percentages were excluded from this rank, yet these district were not represented by state legislatures in my analysis.

Illinois School Districts
The Illinois State Board of Education’s Center for Performance provides information on reading, math and science assessments in the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) and Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Both test measures math, reading and science achievement, yet the ISAT is for grades 3 to 8 and the PSAE test 11th grade students. In order to create a rank based on this information, I took the average math and English score for each district. I eliminate the science measure in order to create a similar ranking system across school districts. Using the average scores of both English and math scores, I created an average composite score then based a school district rank based on new score. The school district with the highest
score was recorded as the highest rank whereas the school with the lowest composite score was ranked as the worse school district.

**Iowa School District**

The Iowa Department of Education provides Annual Yearly Progress reports for school districts across the state. In particular, they provide the percent proficient by grade and subject in each school district. I was able to collapse and average the proficiency ranking by district. From this average score, I was assigned a rank to each school with the best school district scoring the largest amount proficient.

**Texas School Districts**

The Texas Education Agency publicly releases assessment information on reading and math scores for 10th and 11th grade students. Based on this information, I made an average reading and math score by district then created an composite score based on these two scores. I then ranked each district based on the composite score.