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When the President Comes to Town

Examining Local Newspaper Coverage of Domestic Presidential Travel

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Domestic travel has become a common practice for modern presidents. Many claim local media cover these presidential trips more extensively and positively than the national media, yet no one has examined the validity of this assumption. We begin this examination with a study of local and national newspaper coverage of President George W. Bush's 2001 domestic travel. Our findings confirm that the local press covers presidential domestic trips both more comprehensively and favorably than the national press. We also analyze variations in local newspaper coverage of presidential visits, finding that the most important factor influencing both the amount and tone of such coverage is the level of presidential support within a community. Other factors discovered to affect either the amount or tone of local coverage include the availability of adversarial sources, whether a newspaper has a Democratic editorial bent, and whether a visit occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Keywords: *political campaigns; presidential travel; media coverage; newspapers*

Presidents today are engaged in a “permanent campaign” (Blumenthal, 1980; Cook, 2002; Edwards, 2007; Tenpas, 2000) for public approval generally (Brace & Hinckley, 1992; Cohen & Powell, 2005) and support for their policy proposals (Barrett, 2005; Edwards, 2003). Although “going public” is nothing new for occupants of the White House (Laracey, 2002), presidential domestic travel has risen sharply the past few decades (Hart, 1987; Kernell, 1997; Powell, 1999; Ragsdale, 1998). One of the broadly believed benefits of these trips is the extended positive coverage the president

receives from local media. For most cities and towns across the country, presidential visits are quite rare. When they occur, it is therefore believed that these events will dominate that day's local news and that they will be covered with a largely glowing, uncritical eye. Nonetheless, even though scholars, the press, and presidential advisors agree that presidential travel generates lots of positive local news coverage, this assumption has never been systematically tested. In truth, hardly any research has been conducted concerning local news coverage of an incumbent president.

To begin filling this gap in the existing presidency literature, we examine local newspaper coverage of George W. Bush's domestic travels during his first year as president. We compare this coverage to that of a national newspaper that maintains a reporter as part of the regular White House press corps (specifically, *The Washington Post*). We discover that the president indeed makes a big splash in local newspapers, receiving both extended and largely favorable coverage. We also examine variations in coverage across local newspapers. Our findings indicate that the president's level of political support within a community has important effects on both the amount and tone of local newspaper coverage. Such coverage of presidential domestic trips also is influenced by the availability of adversarial sources, whether a newspaper has a Democratic editorial bent, and whether a visit occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, among other factors.

The Permanent Campaign and Local News Coverage

Scholars have spent a lot of time examining the president's public activities during the past few decades. As a result, we have learned about the timing of presidential public speeches, particularly national ones, and their effects on opinion (Ragsdale, 1984). We know that presidents appear able to influence public concern for certain policy issues through the State of the Union Address (Cohen, 1997), but their public statements have only limited effects on the issues media cover (Edwards & Wood, 1999; Eshbaugh-Soha & Peake, 2005; Peake, 2001; Wood & Peake, 1998). Public activities that are deemed presidential often have positive effects on the president's popularity as well (Brace & Hinckley, 1992; Ostrom & Simon, 1985). Scholars also have addressed motivations for activities related to the permanent campaign, such as press conferences (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2003; Hager & Sullivan, 1994), and they have uncovered evidence that going public affects legislative outcomes (Barrett, 2004; Canes-Wrone, 2001).

We also have learned that domestic travel has become part and parcel to the permanent campaign. Presidents since Carter have traveled domestically much more often than their predecessors (Hart, 1987; Kernell, 1997; Powell, 1999; Ragsdale, 1998), with Clinton and G. W. Bush expanding on this trend (Cohen & Powell, 2005; Cook, 2002; Keen, 2001). Even though we know that domestic travel has increased as a public leadership strategy on behalf of the White House, presidential scholars have lagged behind in studying this phenomenon, seemingly happy to accept various assumptions about the effects of these trips without much systematic, empirical evidence. This is a common problem in presidency research according to Gary King (1993), who states that although presidential scholars examine interesting questions, they do not “always take sufficient time to verify the prior empirical claims on which these questions stand” (p. 393).

Perhaps the most widely accepted belief about presidential domestic travel is that it generates extensive positive coverage in the local media. Graber (2002), for example, asserts that national newsmakers, such as the president, “are eager to reach the hinterlands, where coverage tends to be gentler and more in tune with the newsmakers’ agendas” (p. 332). Roberts and Eksterowicz (1996) write of “the widely held perception that local reporters will be kinder and gentler than national reporters. In fact, many local news outlets . . . cover presidential speeches with almost no significant analysis of issues” (p. 69). Similarly, Cohen and Powell (2005) contend that local coverage of presidential trips “tends to be highly positive” and “highly visible” (p. 15).

In spite of the common assertion that local media coverage of presidential trips is largely plentiful and favorable, few scholars have bothered testing this claim. In fact, very little research has been conducted regarding local media coverage of the president at all.¹ The studies that exist focus primarily on local media coverage of presidential elections (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Danielson & Adams, 1961; Farnsworth & Lichter, 2004; Just et al., 1996; Patterson, 1980; Shaw & Sparrow, 1999; Stempel, 1961). For example, Wasserman (1999) examines news coverage of the 1988 presidential nominating campaign in 16 top-circulating state newspapers. Similarly, Kiobassa (1997) analyzes local television coverage of the 1992 presidential election and the 1996 presidential primaries in the Los Angeles media market. None of these studies systematically examines local media coverage of an incumbent president outside of his reelection efforts, however. In addition, a few researchers have used local media coverage to construct various measures in studies related to the presidency (e.g., Canes-Wrone & de Marchi, 2002, use local media coverage to measure issue salience), yet these works do not analyze local media coverage of the president *per se*.

Expected Differences in News Coverage of Presidential Domestic Travel

Despite the lack of empirical evidence, we agree with the general consensus that presidential domestic trips will receive extensive and predominately positive coverage from the local media, especially compared to the national media. First, presidential trips to most cities or towns are rare occasions, particularly to smaller states or rural regions. As such, these trips are deserving of extended local coverage. Conversely, the president's domestic travels are less newsworthy to members of the regular White House press corps who cover this type of presidential event often. Unless the president uses a domestic trip to announce a new proposal or policy, these trips are unlikely to generate large amounts of national coverage. In fact, as Cohen (2004) demonstrates, presidents are finding it increasingly difficult getting any of their activities reported by the national press.

Second, presidential domestic trips consist almost entirely of pseudo-events. Pseudoevents are events fully controlled by the White House and its allies for media consumption (Boorstin, 1961). These events allow the president to control the message and avoid uncomfortable questions from reporters (Bennett, 2005, p. 133). Given the staged nature of these events, they are likely to generate positive coverage, particularly in the local media for whom pseudoevents are quite novel and dramatic. Local newspapers also are less likely to cover these events critically because their reporters are less expert in regards to national policy and the resources available to them are more limited (Kaniss, 1991). Finally, local newspaper readers are more inclined to simply want to read about what happened, leading to coverage that is more descriptive and thus more susceptible to the positive nature of pseudoevents (Bogart, 1989). The regular White House press corps, on the other hand, should again find these events commonplace and less newsworthy and be less willing to glowingly report on them. After traveling with the president for a few months, these events will become routine and repetitive for most national reporters. For these reasons, we believe that presidential domestic trips will receive more extended and positive coverage in the local compared to the national media.

Beyond the amount and tone of coverage, we expect that local media reporting on presidential travel will differ from national reporting in terms of sources for attributed statements. Writing for a regional audience, local journalists are more likely to seek reactions to a presidential visit from community sources, particularly average citizens attending a presidential event, to fill their coverage with local flavor. Conversely, although they may occasionally

sprinkle their reporting with responses from local sources, most national journalists will want to direct their coverage toward a national audience, focusing on sources with national reputations, with a particular emphasis on what the president himself—the country’s elected leader—says during a domestic trip.

Last, we expect that local coverage of presidential trips will vary from national coverage in terms of the level of analysis, with national coverage providing more of it. When reporters who report on national politics cover local events daily, they are more likely to frame their stories around the national political context, increasing the analytical nature of their coverage. Conversely, local reporters who do not regularly cover national politics—and, therefore, lack an intimate knowledge of the political goings-on in Washington—should provide more “touch-down-to-take-off” coverage of presidential events. They will most likely focus on a description of what the president did while in town and local preparations for and responses to his visit.

Not only do we expect differences between local and national news coverage of presidential domestic travel, we also expect differences in coverage exist between local media. Local newspapers are businesses, concerned with profits and affected by market forces (Bogart, 1989; Kaniss, 1991). Most newspapers serve a different audience with different political leanings, which is likely to influence the coverage of presidential visits in predictable ways. To appeal to the majority of their readers, newspapers in communities supportive of the president should write more extensively and glowingly about his visits compared with newspapers whose readers largely politically oppose him. Likewise, media organizations differ with respect to their own political leanings, as evidenced by editorial endorsements, which could affect their coverage (Barrett & Barrington, 2006). The availability of local opposition politicians also varies from community to community. Newspapers serving locales where representation in national office by the president’s opposition party is strong are likely to give voice to those opposing partisans affecting the tone of coverage. These differences in local political atmospheres and markets should lead to significant differences in the coverage of presidential domestic visits. Generally, then, we hypothesize that local coverage of presidential visits will be more extensive and positive when the president travels to a community where the political atmosphere is more favorable toward him.

Collecting and Coding News Coverage

To examine local coverage of presidential domestic travel, we content coded local newspaper coverage of George W. Bush’s 2001 domestic trips.

We chose to examine trips from 2001 because it is the first year of the most recent administration, providing a clean slate between the president and the press and a clear start point for our analysis.² We focus exclusively on newspaper coverage primarily for methodological reasons. Newspapers provide an easily accessible record of coverage regarding events, and most cities have only a single major daily paper. Granted local television also is a target for presidential trips, yet content coding television coverage is quite difficult, as it is not easily accessible and the expense is prohibitive. Examining local television coverage of presidential trips is an important research topic, yet it is beyond the scope of our present study.

To identify presidential domestic trips, we used the *Public Papers of the President* and the following coding rules. First, we adopted a rule utilized by Cohen and Powell (2005). We include only trips made outside of the Washington, D.C., area (excluding trips to Maryland and Virginia as well) on which the president delivered at least one spoken public statement of at least 150 words. Adopting this coding rule eliminates several trips where Bush's travels were primarily for symbolic purposes, including trips to Milwaukee to open Miller Park (a new baseball stadium), to New York City to throw out the first pitch of Game 3 of the World Series, to Philadelphia to attend the Army–Navy football game, and to Boston to attend the funeral of Representative John Moakley. We also ignored four trips to Texas where the president made a public speech because Bush's home state newspapers are likely to cover him differently than papers from other states given that they had been reporting on him, the former state governor, more closely and for many more years, potentially biasing our results. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Bush traveled to New York three times in 2001. We exclude these trips as well (and the president's visit to Sarasota, Florida, the day of the attack) because they were made under such extraordinary circumstances, limiting their usefulness in developing a general theory of local media coverage of presidential travel.³ Our final sample of presidential visits includes stops at 61 different locations, totaling 49 separate days of domestic travel.⁴ See the appendix for a complete list of trips analyzed.

Some may argue that our choice of presidential trips suffers from an inherent sample-selection bias, as destinations for these trips may have been intentionally chosen by the White House because they were likely to result in favorable coverage of the president. Although the potential for this problem exists with any analysis of presidential domestic travel using a population of presidential trips, no matter the president, we believe the problem is minimized in the analyses presented below. In examining the list of communities

visited by President Bush in 2001, we find that those communities were only slightly more favorable toward him in the 2000 presidential election than the nation overall, averaging 48.3% of the vote compared to the national average of 47.9%. Moreover, Bush actually received a lower vote percentage than his national average in 31 of the 61 communities from our sample. Finally, in examining the local newspapers that covered the trips used in our analyses, we find that 22 of the newspapers have a Democrat-leaning editorial bias, 21 have a Republican-leaning editorial bias, and the remaining 18 newspapers are editorially neutral.⁵

Collecting Newspaper Coverage

To collect local newspaper coverage, we primarily used *Lexis/Nexis*, an electronic database that archives news coverage from dozens of media outlets. Regarding each presidential trip, we searched for articles related to that trip from the most local daily newspaper available for both the “day of” and the “day after” a presidential visit.⁶ For cities with two newspapers, we selected the highest circulating paper available.⁷ When the newspaper most local to a trip was not available via *Lexis/Nexis*, we either searched the Internet for individual newspaper Web sites that archived their own coverage or acquired microfilm copies of those newspapers. We also found archives of a few newspapers using *NewsBank* and *ProQuest*, electronic archives similar to *Lexis/Nexis*. See the appendix for a complete list of newspapers examined.

It should be emphasized that our study of local newspaper coverage includes only news stories related to presidential trips; other stories on the president from the days searched are excluded. We also only include stories written by a staff reporter, not those printed in a local paper from an Associated Press wire report or a similar news service. Finally, we exclude editorial and opinion pieces on a presidential visit.

To compare local with national newspaper coverage, we turned to *The Washington Post*, collecting stories on each presidential trip written by the paper’s staff reporters. We use the *Post* because of its national reputation for strong daily coverage of American politics, particularly the White House beat. Moreover, as we are interested in examining presidential trips outside Washington, D.C., focusing on the *Post* eliminates the possibility that this paper would be the most local to one of the presidential trips included in our analysis. Using *Lexis/Nexis* again, we identify any *Post* article that details the trips from our sample from either the day of or the day after a presidential visit.

Content Coding of Newspaper Stories

Once we collected stories from both the local newspapers and *The Washington Post*, we began our analysis of newspaper coverage of presidential domestic trips by simply counting the total number of trip-related articles included in each newspaper, separating those that appeared on the front page. We also counted the number of words included within each article. These simple counts allow us to examine the amount or extent of coverage given to presidential travels.

For all articles appearing on the front page of the first section of a local newspaper and all *Post* stories from the day after each presidential event,⁸ we coded a number of variables to gauge the tone of coverage, the sources of attributed statements, and the degree to which each story was analytical in nature.⁹ To do so, we use the statement as our unit of analysis rather than the word or sentence. A statement is defined as a group of words designed to communicate a single idea. We code statements instead of sentences because sentences vary in length considerably and many communicate more than one idea, ideas that sometimes contradict one another.¹⁰

To measure the tone of each story, we counted the number of statements that would be considered positive or negative from the White House perspective, excluding statements made by the president himself. Positive statements include descriptions of an applauding or enthusiastic audience, an upbeat assessment of the president's remarks by an audience member, or statements in support of the president by political allies.¹¹ Negative statements include descriptions of protests surrounding a trip, negative analysis of the president's remarks by a group representative or a political opponent, or statements that place the visit in a context that reminds readers of something negative related to the White House.¹²

To examine the possibility of source bias, we counted the number of attributed statements, defined as either a quote or paraphrase, included in each story. We coded each attributed statement into one of the following categories of sources: (a) the president himself; (b) other executive branch officials, such as the White House press secretary or the head of a cabinet department; (c) members of the president's party—any source identified by a newspaper as belonging to the same party as the president, including congressmen, local politicians, voters, or party officials; (d) members of the president's opposition party—any source identified as belonging to the opposition party to the president; (e) group or group representative—statements made by any groups, such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, or any representative from a group, such as the Sierra Club or a labor union; (f) expert—someone

presented by the newspaper as a neutral expert, including academics or representatives of think tanks; (g) nonpartisan local citizen—any source characterized as a typical citizen attending the presidential event with no party allegiance noted; (h) other—anyone who does not fit into one of the above categories, such as reporters themselves or unidentified congressional aides.

Finally, we coded each statement contained in front-page stories from local newspapers and any story from *The Washington Post* as either analytical or descriptive in nature. Analytical statements use political or electoral frames, offer perspective on a presidential policy (placing it into a broader context), or offer expert analysis. Descriptive statements focus on describing an event, the president's statements, local happenings related to a visit, or the general reaction of the audience.¹³

Local Versus National Coverage of Presidential Travel

The clearest difference between local and national coverage of presidential domestic travel is the amount of coverage. On the day following a presidential trip, the local newspapers printed 214 stories related to the 60 visits examined compared to only 45 *Washington Post* stories.¹⁴ In other words, local newspapers averaged 3.6 stories following each trip, whereas the *Post* averaged slightly less than one story (0.9), with only one presidential trip receiving more than one story in the *Post*.¹⁵ Similarly, the coverage from the *Post* averaged only 834 words per presidential trip compared to 2,499 words in the local papers, roughly three times more coverage. Not only did local newspapers provide more post-coverage of presidential trips, they also contained significantly more pre-coverage. On the day of a presidential visit, local newspapers printed an average of 1.5 stories. Only nine presidential trips received pre-coverage in the *Post*.¹⁶ When day of and day after coverage are combined, the local newspapers analyzed averaged 5.1 stories per presidential trip compared to 1.1 story for the *Post*. Unquestionably, newspapers local to the president's visits provided more extensive coverage of presidential domestic travel than did *The Washington Post*.

Given that local newspapers averaged four more stories per presidential visit, what aspects of these trips were covered by these papers that were ignored by the *Post*? A typical story found in local pre-trip coverage might detail expected traffic disruptions resulting from the president's visit or preparations made by the local hosts, interviews with participants in the day's events, or an analysis of why the president was visiting and what this visit meant politically, both locally and nationally. Local post-trip coverage

generally included separate stories on individuals protesting the president's visit and on side trips the president may have taken, in-depth coverage of local reactions to the visit, or an occasional expose on what the president had for lunch or on his hotel accommodations.

It is notable that the president received coverage in multiple local newspapers on days he made stops in more than one location, but all such multiple stop days of travel were covered by a single story in *The Washington Post* (if covered at all). For example, President Bush made appearances in both Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri, on February 20. His stop in Columbus generated four stories in *The Columbus Dispatch* (including two front-page stories), and his visit to St. Louis received four stories in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (including three front-page stories). Comparatively, *The Washington Post* printed only one story covering the president's entire day of travel, buried on page A15. There were 12 days in 2001 where the president made multiple stops on the same day, generating a total of 119 local newspaper stories (including 57 front-page stories) and only 10 stories in the *Post*.

Local coverage of presidential trips also was more prominently placed than national coverage, with a visit by the president generating an average of 2.3 front-page stories in the local papers examined. *The Washington Post* seldom gave a presidential trip front-page coverage, however. Only 10 of the *Post's* 45 trip-related stories from the day following such a visit appeared on the front page, with the average page placement for a *Post* story being 5.4.

Local newspapers also were more positive in their coverage than was *The Washington Post*. Of those statements in front-page stories from local newspapers that received either a positive or negative code, 60.2% were positive. Conversely, only 44.3% of coded statements in the *Post* were positive. Measured another way, front-page coverage from 63.3% of the local newspapers analyzed contained more positive than negative statements, whereas only 31.8% of *Post* stories contained more positive than negative statements. In only eight cases was the *Post* coverage more positive than the local coverage given the same trip. Clearly, coverage in the newspapers local to the president's trips was more positive toward the president than was coverage in *The Washington Post*.¹⁷

Another difference between the *Post* and the local papers concerns the use of attributed statements. We find that statements from members of the administration (including the president himself) make up a much greater proportion of all attributed statements in *The Washington Post* than in the local newspapers: 75.5% versus 47.4%. Local newspapers, on the other hand, were more focused on local reactions to presidential visits, as hypothesized. In particular, 20.4% of all attributed statements in local newspapers

came from nonpartisan local sources, compared to only 6.9% of all attributed statements in the *Post*. Local newspapers also were more likely to print reactions from other partisans, with 22.8% of all attributed statements in local newspapers coming from another identified partisan source (compared to only 11.1% in the *Post*). Combined, these figures indicate that the *Post* focused most of its coverage of presidential trips on what the president said, whereas local newspapers concentrated on the reactions of others to the president's remarks.

Finally, national coverage of presidential domestic travel was more analytical than local coverage. Specifically, 31% of all statements from *The Washington Post* were analytical, compared to 25% of statements from local newspapers. This is a relatively small yet statistically significant difference.¹⁸ Moreover, from our reading of the stories selected for this study, there also appears to be a significant difference between local newspapers and the *Post* in terms of the nature of their analysis. The *Post* coverage tended to place the president's visits in their greater political context, whereas local coverage often analyzed them from a local perspective. Local newspaper coverage thus offered less analysis than the *Post*, as we expected, and its focus had more of a local perspective. This difference likely contributes to the greater negativity of the *Post's* coverage, as analytical frames in political journalism tend to be more skeptical than descriptive frames (Just, Crigler, & Buhr, 1999; Patterson, 1993).

Examining Differences Across Local Newspaper Coverage

Although it is clear that newspapers local to presidential visits provide more extensive and positive coverage than the national press (as represented by *The Washington Post*), the findings above mask variations in local coverage. To illustrate, the amount of coverage in the local newspapers studied ranged from only 1 story per presidential visit to as many as 14. Similarly, the *Argus Leader's* front-page coverage of Bush's visit to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, generated 24 more positive than negative statements (76% positive), whereas the front-page reporting of the *South Bend Tribune* of the president's address at the University of Notre Dame's commencement ceremony contained 12 more negative than positive statements (29% positive).

To explain these variations in local newspaper coverage of presidential domestic trips, we constructed two separate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models, one for the amount of coverage and the other regarding

the tone of front-page coverage.¹⁹ In the first model, our dependent variable is the total number of words published by each local newspaper (across the total number of stories) related to a presidential visit. In the second model, our dependent variable is the number of positive coded statements from front-page stories minus the number of negative coded statements from front-page stories divided by the sum of positive and negative coded statements.²⁰

We include the following independent variables in both models to help explain variations in local newspaper coverage.

1. Presidential support in community: The press is a business. Local newspapers must be mindful of audience preferences when reporting the news. News consumers in communities where the president has high levels of political support should be more eager to read about presidential visits than consumers from local areas where the president is less popular. In other words, we expect that the president will receive more extensive and favorable coverage in cities and surrounding communities where he has greater political support. To measure presidential support within a community, we calculate how well the president did in the 2000 presidential election compared to the national popular vote average in each of the communities serviced by the newspapers in our sample. In particular, we measure the simple difference between the percentage of the Bush vote in the county and contiguous counties where each newspaper is located minus the national vote percentage.²¹ Hence, we provide a measure that normalizes the president's community vote in much the same way others have used state-level election data to measure presidential support within a state (see Cohen & Powell, 2005, p. 17).²²
2. Availability of adversarial sources: Local journalists often look to local public officials for reactions to presidential visits, especially political opponents of the White House who are likely to criticize the president and provide the type of conflict journalists crave. When writing about presidential trips, journalists should be particularly interested in the response of local members of Congress who deal directly with the president and are often the target of his public appeals during his domestic travels. We therefore expect local coverage to vary depending on local political representation. This follows the indexing hypothesis that media coverage is biased relative to the number of differing viewpoints present among official sources (Bennett, 1990; Livingston & Bennett, 2003). We expect that coverage of presidential visits to states where the president's opposition party is well represented in Congress will be more extensive than coverage in states where the president's own party is better represented as journalists from the opposition party-dominated states have an additional and interesting angle to frame their coverage around. At the same time, we believe

that local newspapers in states with a higher proportion of members of the president's opposition party in Congress will be more negative in their coverage of presidential trips as these opposition party members are more likely to criticize the president than members of his own party. To measure the availability of adversarial sources, we simply code each state's congressional delegation in terms of the difference between the number of Democrats and Republicans in both chambers of Congress.

3. Editorial bent of individual newspapers: As a number of scholars have argued or shown, the editorial bent or political atmosphere of a newsroom may influence the coverage of political figures (Barrett & Barrington, 2006; Kahn & Kenney, 2002; Page, 1996; Rowse, 1957). To test this proposition, we developed a measure of the editorial bent of each local newspaper in our study using their endorsements of candidates in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, the two elections surrounding the year we examine.²³ In particular, we code those newspapers that endorsed the Republican candidate (Bush) in both elections as Republican papers. We code as Democratic newspapers those that endorsed the Democratic candidate (Gore or Kerry) in both elections. Finally, we code those newspapers that endorsed only once, endorsed candidates from both parties from 2000 to 2004, or did not endorse in either election as nonpartisan, or neutral, newspapers.²⁴
4. Post-9/11: It is possible that a changing national political context and/or mood may influence newspaper coverage of the president. The national context and mood surrounding the Bush administration certainly changed on September 11, 2001. Not only did the president become the centerpiece of a new war on terrorism that day, but Bush's approval ratings jumped from the mid-50s (where they had hovered for several months) to well more than 80% for the remainder of the year. Given such a dramatic shift in the national political context and mood surrounding the president, we created a dichotomous dummy variable to control for trips after 9/11.²⁵

In our first model examining variations in the amount of coverage, we included these additional control variables.

1. Size of newspaper: The amount of coverage a visit by the president receives may depend on the amount of available space a newspaper has to print stories. To control for this possibility, we coded the daily average number of pages printed in each newspaper as reported in the 2002 edition of the *Editor & Publisher International Year Book*.²⁶
2. Special events: We created two variables to account for two kinds of special events. First, presidents often visit local communities to participate in

an already scheduled event, such as a holiday celebration or memorial service, which is newsworthy locally in and of itself. Under these circumstances, we believe a presidential visit will receive less coverage as he must compete with the other goings-on. We control for eight such events, including the dedication of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Center, commencement ceremonies at Notre Dame, Yale, and the Citadel, celebrations of Memorial, Independence, and Labor days, and the championship game of the Little League Baseball World Series.

Most presidential visits from one community to the next are usually quite similar, with the president making a public speech, perhaps visiting a school, or meeting with local dignitaries. Occasionally, a visit by the president is extra special as an additional newsworthy element is added. When such a special element exists, we expect that a presidential trip will receive more coverage. President Bush had two such events in 2001. The president was accompanied by Mexican President Vincente Fox on his trip to Toledo, Ohio, as part of the first state visit hosted by the Bush White House, and he gave a televised address to the nation on the war on terrorism during a visit to Atlanta, Georgia. We coded two separate dichotomous dummy variables to control for each type of special event.

Finally, we included two additional control variables in our model regarding tone of coverage.

1. Focus on local citizen perspective: Coverage that focuses on the local citizen perspective and frequently quotes average people attending a presidential event is likely to be quite positive, as most locals will react positively to the novelty of a presidential visit. Moreover, most people attending a presidential event are already supporters of the incumbent, or they would probably not have bothered showing up. To measure whether a newspaper's coverage focuses on the local citizen perspective, we calculated the percentage of all sources of attributed statements that were non-politically identified local sources.
2. Analytical nature of coverage: Articles written from an analytical perspective will include more of a journalist's own judgments. As numerous scholars have found, reporters tend to have a negative or cynical view of the political process (Bennett, 2005; Patterson, 1993). We thus expect that the more analytical the coverage of a presidential visit (in other words, the more journalistic perspective offered), the more negative that coverage will be. We coded the analytical nature of coverage by calculating the percentage of all statements that were analytical in nature.²⁷

Table 1
Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis of
Variation in Amount of Local Coverage of
President G. W. Bush's 2001 Domestic Trips

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-Statistic	EV (Y)	Marginal Effect
Constant	5,017.09	840.26	5.97***		
Presidential support in community	45.47	32.01	1.42*	4,246	+344
Availability of adversarial sources	119.08	42.3	2.82***	4,475	+593
Democratic newspaper	-1,105.24	549.02	-2.01**	2,794	-1,088
Republican newspaper	-334.13	504.04	-0.61		
Post-9/11	737.43	704.48	1.05		
Size of newspaper	-16.19	9.29	-1.74**	3,446	-436
Coinciding major event	-890.87	573.57	-1.55*	2,993	-889
Major presidential event	3,931.58	1,152.12	3.41***	7,808	+3,926
<i>N</i>	60				
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.32				
Model <i>F</i> statistic	4.50***				
Baseline EV (Y)	3,882				

Note: The dependent variable is the total number of words published on all pages by each local newspaper related to a presidential visit, including coverage from the "day of" and the "day after" each trip. The April 25 trip to New Orleans is not included in this analysis because the size of the newspaper variable was unavailable. EV (Y) is the expected value of Y (words) when all Xs are at their mean values (or 0 if dummy) and the variable of interest is at its mean plus one standard deviation (or 1 if dummy). Baseline EV (Y) is the expected value of Y when all variables are held at mean value or zero if a dummy variable.

* $p < .10$, one-tailed. ** $p < .05$, one-tailed. *** $p < .01$, one-tailed.

Findings Regarding Variations Across Local Newspaper Coverage

The results from our OLS regression models explaining variations in the amount and tone of local newspaper coverage of presidential domestic trips are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Let us begin by discussing those independent variables included in both models. First, the coverage of President Bush's trips was both more extensive and more positive in communities where he had higher levels of political support. As shown in Table 1, the president's visits received on average 45 more words of coverage per percentage point of the vote he received in a community above his national

Table 2
**Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analysis of Variation in Tone of
 Local Coverage of President G. W. Bush's 2001 Domestic Trips**

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-Statistic	EV (Y)	Marginal Effect
Constant	0.097	0.143	0.68		
Presidential support in community	0.014	0.006	2.24**	0.305	+0.11
Availability of adversarial sources	-0.016	0.009	-1.78**	0.116	-0.08
Democratic newspaper	0.101	0.111	0.91		
Republican newspaper	-0.026	0.112	-0.24		
Post-9/11	0.205	0.144	1.42*	0.402	+0.21
Focus on local citizen perspective	1.272	0.286	4.45***	0.418	+0.22
Analytical nature of coverage	-0.680	0.347	-1.96**	0.099	-0.095
<i>N</i>	61				
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.50				
Model <i>F</i> statistic	9.66***				
Baseline EV (Y)	0.194				

Note: The dependent variable is the number of positive coded statements minus the number of negative coded statements, all over the sum of positive and negative statements in front-page stories, including coverage from the “day of” and the “day after” each trip. EV (Y) is the expected value of Y (tone) when all Xs are at their mean values (or 0 if dummy) and the variable of interest is at its mean plus one standard deviation (or 1 if dummy). Baseline EV (Y) is the expected value of Y when all variables are held at mean value or zero if a dummy variable. * $p < .10$, one-tailed. ** $p < .05$, one-tailed. *** $p < .01$, one-tailed.

vote average in the 2000 presidential election. Thus, a visit by the president to a locale where he received 8 percentage points more of the vote than his national vote average (about one standard deviation above the mean value) would result in 360 more words of coverage.

Similarly, the higher the percentage of the vote Bush received in 2000 within a community, the more positive coverage he received from local newspapers, as shown in Table 2. For example, the coverage in a community where 56% of the voters chose Bush in 2000 (about one standard deviation above the national mean) was significantly more positive in tone than a community at the national average (+.11 on a measure ranging from -1 to +1). Together, these findings support our expectation that newspapers will cater to the views of their readers, providing both more comprehensive and more favorable coverage of the president when he is politically popular within a community.

The availability of adversarial sources was statistically significant in both models as well, increasing the amount of local coverage yet making the tone of that coverage more negative. As demonstrated in Table 1, the greater the number of Democrats representing a state in Congress, the more coverage a presidential trip received in the local press. Specifically, there were 119 additional words of coverage for each additional Democratic congressperson more than the number of Republicans. This finding was anticipated, as journalists have another angle to write about in covering a presidential visit when there are a plethora of adversarial sources available to obtain reactions from. The tone of coverage was also affected by the availability of adversarial sources, as hypothesized. When local Democratic members of Congress were readily available to comment on Bush's visits in the local papers, the tone of coverage in these papers was significantly more negative.

Whether a newspaper had a Democratic editorial bent was statistically significant in the amount of coverage model but not the tone model. In particular, Democratic newspapers published more than 1,100 fewer words when covering a presidential visit than did papers without a clear partisan editorial perspective, as presented in Table 1. Given that the average number of words per story for all the local newspaper stories we analyzed was 669 words, this is a substantial difference. Interestingly, Republican newspapers did not give the Republican president more coverage than did nonpartisan papers. Combined, these results suggest that newspapers whose political bent contradicts the president's downplayed his visits, yet the president did not receive an increase in coverage from newspapers whose political perspective parallels his own. Editorial bent of the newspaper had no significant impact on the tone of coverage, however, suggesting greater balance in terms of the slant of coverage.

Following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the tone of coverage of presidential trips was more positive, yet there was no statistically significant impact on the amount of coverage. As shown in Table 2, President Bush received more favorable local coverage of his domestic travels as his popularity soared after 9/11.

Moving to variables only included in our model dealing with the amount of coverage, the size of each newspaper—as measured by the average daily number of pages—had a significant negative effect on the amount of coverage, which is in the opposite direction of what we hypothesized. A possible explanation for this surprising finding is that larger newspapers tend to be published in larger metropolitan communities, areas where presidential visits occur more often and therefore are not as newsworthy as in smaller towns where presidential visits are quite rare.

Presidential trips coinciding with other major local events were covered less by local newspapers, as hypothesized. As presented in Table 1, such trips received 890 fewer words than did visits where the president did not have to share the spotlight. Conversely, major presidential events increased the amount of coverage a trip received, with such an event increasing coverage by more than 3,900 words. Unfortunately, from the president's perspective, the White House can only occasionally increase the amount of local coverage by producing a special event or such events would lose their special quality.

Finally, there were two variables included only in our OLS regression model dealing with the tone of coverage, as presented in Table 2. As expected, the more a local newspaper included reactions of local nonpartisan-identified citizens in their coverage of a presidential visit, the more positive that coverage became. Most people will only attend one or two presidential events in their lifetime, making the event novel and exciting, and they will often only attend such an event when they support the incumbent president. Therefore, most local reactions to presidential events will be positive and lead to more positive coverage overall when these reactions are printed.

The level of analysis included in local coverage also affected tone. When greater levels of political analysis—as differentiated from descriptive coverage—were interjected by a reporter, the tone of the coverage was significantly more negative. As previous literature has shown us (Bennett, 2005; Patterson, 1993), journalists tend to have a negative or cynical view of the political process, and, as our findings demonstrate, the more a reporter's views become part of the coverage, the more negative that coverage becomes.

Explaining Variations in the Choice of Attributed Sources in Local Newspaper Coverage

Using our categories of source attribution discussed above, we constructed several additional models to explain variations in the choice of sources for attributed statements in local newspaper coverage. We consistently found that Republican newspapers were more likely to print statements from sources friendly to the president than were nonpartisan newspapers, but Democratic papers did not have a similar penchant toward sources unfriendly to Bush. These findings indicate that Republican newspapers treated visits by a Republican president somewhat more favorably than did other newspapers, contrary to the results presented above that demonstrate that such newspapers did not treat such visits differently in

terms of the amount or tone of coverage. Regarding other independent variables, the president's support within a community and the availability of adversarial sources had no apparent effect on variations in attributed sources. Only one other independent variable was ever statistically significant in these models. In particular, the coverage of presidential visits following 9/11 relied more heavily on Bush-friendly sources. Given the limited number of statistically significant variables and the quite low adjusted *R*-squared values these models produced (.17 or lower), we chose not to report these models in this article.

Conclusion

What have we found by examining local newspaper coverage of presidential domestic travel? First, presidential trips generate more extensive coverage in local newspapers than the national press. Specifically, the local papers analyzed averaged 5.1 trip-related stories per visit (including 2.3 front-page stories) compared to only 1.1 stories in *The Washington Post*. Second, local newspaper coverage of presidential trips was more positive than *Post* coverage. In particular, front-page coverage from 63.3% of the local newspapers contained more positive than negative statements, whereas only 31.8% of *Post* stories contained more positive than negative statements. Combined, these findings clearly indicate that domestic trips are a good presidential strategy for generating extensive positive coverage of the president in local newspapers.

We also uncovered variations in the amount and tone of local coverage of presidential domestic trips, with such coverage not universally comprehensive or favorable. In particular, we found that local newspapers serving communities where Bush had high levels of political support provided both more extended and more positive coverage of his visits. We also discovered that the amount and/or tone of local coverage varied based on several additional factors, including the availability of adversarial sources, whether a newspaper had a Democratic editorial bent, and whether a presidential visit occurred following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, among other factors.

What are the implications of our findings? From the president's perspective, our results should encourage occupants of the Oval Office to continue the upward trend in the number of their domestic trips. When compared to national newspaper coverage, local newspapers extensively covered all aspects of Bush's domestic travels, with a largely positive tone.

As any president fights to shape public opinion and influence the lawmaking process, such comprehensive and favorable coverage is something difficult to pass up. Our findings also demonstrate that the amount and tone of local newspaper coverage of presidential trips varies, however, meaning that the White House must choose its destinations wisely to get the most out of the president's domestic travels. What are the best destinations for the president to visit? Is it better for him to primarily travel to communities where he is already popular to solidify his political support and where he is practically guaranteed both extensive and largely favorable local newspaper coverage (according to our results), or should he focus his travels on places where he is less popular politically to build new support, even though he is unlikely to receive the same amount and quality of coverage?

The answer to these questions is beyond the scope of this analysis. However, it is worth noting that one of President G. W. Bush's most extensive attempts at going public—his 6-month campaign to reform social security in 2005—failed. Although much of the local coverage generated as a result of the president's social security reform tour was positive (Eshbaugh-Soha & Peake, *in press*), it did not amount to much in terms of effects on public or congressional opinion (Edwards, 2007). Despite the positive coverage generated, going public locally could thus be a flawed strategy, given the inherent difficulties presidents face in shaping public opinion (Edwards, 2003).

From the perspective of presidential scholars, our findings indicate that more work on local news coverage of presidential domestic travel should be conducted, as our analysis has only scratched the surface of an avenue of research worth pursuing further. For example, presidents may receive more extensive and positive coverage in local newspapers, but does this coverage translate into increased presidential approval ratings within a state? Does this coverage increase support for presidential proposals pushed during a trip from members of Congress whose districts or states the president visited? How does local television cover presidential trips compared to local newspapers? Can presidential visits influence what policy issues the local media write about? How do the local media cover the president more generally, not just when he comes to town? These and many more questions must be addressed regarding local media coverage of the president. Nonetheless, as a first step, our study offers an empirical basis on which scholars can begin to build some general theory surrounding local news coverage of presidential domestic trips.

Appendix

President George W. Bush's 2001 Trips Outside the Washington, D.C., Area (Excluding Trips to Texas)

Travel Day	Stop Number	Date	Location	Local Newspaper Analyzed
1	1	2/12	Ft. Stewart, GA	<i>Savannah Morning News</i> (M)
2	2	2/14	Charleston, WV	<i>Charleston Gazette</i> (LN)
3	3	2/19	Oklahoma City, OK	<i>The Daily Oklahoman</i> (I)
4	4	2/20	Columbus, OH	<i>The Columbus Dispatch</i> (LN)
	5	2/20	St. Louis, MO	<i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i> (LN)
5	6	2/21	Townsend, TN	<i>The Knoxville News-Sentinel</i> (LN)
6	7	2/28	Beaver, PA	<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> (LN)
	8	2/28	Omaha, NE/ Council Bluffs, IA	<i>Omaha World-Herald</i> (LN)
7	9	3/1	Little Rock, AR	<i>Arkansas Democrat Gazette</i> (LN)
	10	3/1	Atlanta, GA	<i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i> (LN)
8	11	3/6	Chicago, IL	<i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> (LN)
9	12	3/8	Fargo, ND	<i>Fargo Forum</i> (M)
10	13	3/9	Sioux Falls, SD	<i>Argus Leader</i> (M)
	14	3/9	Lafayette, LA	<i>Baton Rouge Advocate</i> (LN)
11	15	3/12	Panama City, FL	<i>The News Herald</i> (M)
12	16	3/14	East Brunswick, NJ	<i>The Record</i> (LN)
13	17	3/21	Orlando, FL	<i>The Orlando Sentinel</i> (PQ)
14	18	3/23	Portland, ME	<i>Portland Press-Herald</i> (LN)
15	19	3/26	Kansas City, MO	<i>The Kansas City Star</i> (M)
	20	3/26	Billings, MT	<i>Billings Gazette</i> (NB)
16	21	3/27	Kalamazoo, MI	<i>Kalamazoo Gazette</i> (M)
17	22	4/3	Wilmington, DE	<i>The News Journal</i> (M)
18	23	4/11	Concord, NC	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i> (M)
	24	4/11	Greenville, NC	<i>Raleigh News & Observer</i> (LN)
19	25	4/18	New Britain, CT	<i>The Hartford Courant</i> (M)
20	26	4/25	New Orleans, LA	<i>The Times-Picayune</i> (LN)
	27	4/25	Little Rock, AR	<i>Arkansas Democrat Gazette</i> (LN)
21	28	5/14	Philadelphia, PA	<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i> (M)
22	29	5/17	St. Paul, MN	<i>Star Tribune</i> (LN)
	30	5/17	Nevada, IA	<i>Ames Tribune</i> (I)
23	31	5/18	Conestoga, PA	<i>Lancaster New Era</i> (LN)
24	32	5/20	Notre Dame, IN	<i>South Bend Tribune</i> (LN)
25	33	5/21	New Haven, CT	<i>New Haven Register</i> (M)
26	34	5/24	Cleveland, OH	<i>Plain Dealer</i> (LN)
27	35	5/28	Mesa, AZ	<i>The Arizona Republic</i> (M)
28	36	5/29	Camp Pendleton, CA	<i>The San Diego Union-Tribune</i> (LN)
	37	5/29	Los Angeles, CA	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> (PQ)
29	38	5/30	Sequoia, CA	<i>The Fresno Bee</i> (LN)

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Travel Day	Stop Number	Date	Location	Local Newspaper Analyzed
30	39	6/4	Everglades National Park, FL	<i>The Miami Herald</i> (LN)
	40	6/4	Tampa, FL	<i>The Tampa Tribune</i> (LN)
31	41	6/8	Dallas Center, IA	<i>The Des Moines Register</i> (M)
32	42	6/21	Birmingham, AL	<i>The Birmingham News</i> (LN)
33	43	6/25	Detroit, MI	<i>Detroit Free Press</i> (M)
34	44	7/4	Philadelphia, PA	<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i> (M)
35	45	7/10	New York, NY	<i>The New York Times</i> (LN)
36	46	8/14	Rocky Mountain National Park/ Denver, CO	<i>The Denver Post</i> (LN)
37	47	8/15	Albuquerque, NM	<i>Albuquerque Journal</i> (LN)
38	48	8/20	Milwaukee, WI	<i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i> (LN)
39	49	8/21	Independence, MO	<i>Kansas City Star</i> (M)
40	50	8/26	West Mifflin, PA	<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> (LN)
	51	8/26	Williamsport, PA	<i>Williamsport Sun-Gazette</i> (M)
41	52	9/3	Kaukauna/ Green Bay, WI	<i>Green Bay Press-Gazette</i> (M)
	53	9/3	Detroit, MI	<i>Detroit Free Press</i> (M)
42	54	9/6	Toledo, OH	<i>The Blade</i> (M)
43	55	9/10	Jacksonville, FL	<i>The Florida Times-Union</i> (LN)
44	56	9/27	Chicago, IL	<i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> (LN)
45	57	10/17	Sacramento/Travis AFB, CA	<i>The Sacramento Bee</i> (M)
46	58	11/8	Atlanta, GA	<i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i> (LN)
47	59	11/21	Ft. Campbell, KY	<i>The Leaf-Chronicle</i> (NB)
48	60	12/4	Orlando, FL	<i>Orlando Sentinel</i> (PQ)
49	61	12/11	Charleston, SC	<i>The Post and Courier</i> (LN)

Note: The source of newspaper stories is listed in parentheses: LN = *Lexis/Nexis*, NB = *NewsBank*, PQ = *ProQuest*, M = microfilm, I = Internet archive from individual newspaper.

Notes

1. One exception is a recent study by Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake (in press), who examine local news coverage of President George W. Bush's domestic travel in 2005 in relation to his Social Security reform proposal. These authors find that such coverage tended to be more positive than national coverage. Their study is limited to a single policy issue, and they only examine a 5-month period, however.

2. Some may quibble with our choice of 2001, arguing that this year is uncharacteristic of most presidential years because it contains the president's honeymoon period and the tragic events of 9/11, which dramatically altered perceptions of the president. Yet there are also problems

associated with any other year we might choose from President Bush's first term in office. In 2002, a congressional election year, many of the president's domestic trips were for political rallies and fundraisers, introducing a complicating factor into our analysis, and 2003 is unrepresentative of most presidential years because of the Iraq War. Finally, 2004 is a presidential election year, bringing a myriad of obvious other factors into play. The solution to the problem of the unrepresentativeness of a single year is simple—expand the analysis to include multiple years and, even, multiple presidents. However, given the extensive amount of time that was required to code local news coverage of even one presidential year of domestic travel, we limit our analysis to 2001. We certainly encourage others to expand our examination to include other years and presidents, however.

3. Excluded are Bush's famous visit to Ground Zero on September 14, a policy address on terrorism on October 3, and the president's November 11 address to the United Nations General Assembly.

4. President Bush often made multiple stops on each day of his domestic travel. When these stops were located within the same city or area, we counted them as a single trip. For example, on August 15, the president made three appearances in Albuquerque, New Mexico, including a question-and-answer session at Griegos Elementary School, a speech to the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, and some remarks at a dinner honoring Senator Pete Domenici. Because all these stops were in the same city on the same day, we coded Bush's trip to Albuquerque as a single trip. On the other hand, when the president made multiple stops on the same day at locations further than 50 miles apart, we coded these stops as separate trips. On March 1, for example, Bush spoke in both Little Rock, Arkansas, and Atlanta, Georgia. We coded these stops made on the same day as separate trips.

5. One way of solving any potential selection bias problem from which our study may suffer is to conduct a much broader study of local newspaper coverage of the presidency across a longer period. Doing so would provide a more accurate picture of local coverage of the presidency. However, such a broad study is beyond the scope of this article.

6. Fortunately for our purposes, we were able to acquire most of the local newspaper coverage we needed online or by ordering microfilm. Yet we were forced to use a newspaper that was further than 50 miles from the location of a presidential visit in three cases. These cases include our use of the *Baton Rouge Advocate* for the Lafayette, Louisiana, trip (57 miles), *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, North Carolina) for the Greenville, North Carolina, trip (80 miles), and *The San Diego Union-Tribune* for the Camp Pendleton trip (56 miles). Excluding these three cases from our analyses had no significant effect on our final results.

7. For the two trips to Chicago included in our study, we analyzed the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the second highest circulating newspaper in the city, because the *Chicago Tribune* was not available on *Lexis/Nexis*.

8. We code only front-page stories from the first section of each local newspaper for two reasons. First, this narrows our analysis to a manageable set of stories (141 rather than 314 stories). Second, front-page stories attract the most attention of readers and usually offer the full local newspaper account of the president's visit. Granted, this varies across papers. Some newspapers include several front-page stories, with articles on local response to go alongside the main story. Others reserve front-page coverage for one story only and place all others inside the paper. Rather than subjectively selecting a single front-page story from each newspaper to content code, we code them all. In one case, we coded a story on page B1 (front page of the city section of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for the trip on July 4) rather than the story on page A1 because the B1 story focused on the president's visit and address, whereas the A1 story focused on the extensive Independence Day celebrations, for which the president's visit was just a part.

9. The coding duties were divided between the two authors, with one author coding the lion's share of the data. To test for intercoder reliability, both authors coded a sample of 19 local and *Washington Post* newspaper stories, representing roughly 10% of our full sample of coded stories. We compared our codes across three measures: the percentage of positive coded statements, the percentage of analytical statements, and the percentage of attributed statements made by Bush himself. Our codes for all three measures were highly correlated (the Pearson's r values were between .76 and .91), with each correlation statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level and each comparison producing an intercoder reliability statistic (alpha) between .86 and .95. In addition, we conducted third-party reliability tests on our count of positive and negative statements in our sample of articles. The reliability of our codes was again verified, as all the coders' counts were highly correlated (the Pearson's r values were between .71 and .91), with alphas between .82 and .90.

10. For instance, a journalist may write the following sentence: "While labeling much of Bush's education plan 'meritorious,' the National Urban League issued a statement criticizing vouchers as unsound public policy" (*The Columbus Dispatch*, February 21, 2001, p. A1). The sentence delivers both a positive image (meritorious plan) and a negative image (unsound public policy). We code such a sentence as two statements.

11. For example, when the president visited Kalamazoo, Michigan, the first sentence of a front-page story states, "George Kusmack couldn't have agreed more with President Bush's speech outlining plans to cut taxes during his 25 minute appearance Tuesday" (*The Kalamazoo Gazette*, March 18, 2001, p. A1).

12. For instance, when the president visited New Jersey, the first sentence of the front-page story states, "In his first visit since New Jersey voters overwhelmingly rejected him last year, President Bush touted his plan for sweeping income tax cuts Wednesday" (*The Record*, March 15, 2001, p. A1).

13. The following sentence in *The New York Times's* coverage of Bush's July 10 trip to New York City, for example, was coded as two descriptive statements: "George W. Bush paid his first visit as president to New York State yesterday, proposing ways to ease immigration and paying tribute to Cardinal John O'Connor." The *Times* article followed with the following sentence, coded as two analytical statements: "But Mr. Bush expressed something short of pure delight at being back in the state that he lost by nearly 25 percentage points last November" (*The New York Times*, July 11, 2001, p. A1).

14. When comparing local newspaper coverage to *The Washington Post*, we eliminated President Bush's September 10 visit to Jacksonville, Florida, from our analysis. We did so because the *Post's* coverage of this trip—available on *Lexis/Nexis*—had been rewritten to account for the events of September 11. The *Post's* coverage from this day is thus not typical of its coverage of presidential domestic travel in general.

Four domestic trips by President Bush in 2001 were briefly mentioned by *The Washington Post* yet were not detailed in a story of their own the day following those trips. Bush's visits to both Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Lafayette, Louisiana, on March 9 were only briefly described in the *Post*, which interviewed the president en route that day and focused its coverage on his comments made during this interview. Similarly, the president made appearances in both Kansas City, Missouri, and Billings, Montana, on March 26. Only his stop in Missouri was briefly mentioned in the *Post* in another story on the president's upcoming speech in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on the state of the economy. Bush's trip to Toledo, Ohio, with Vincente Fox, the president of Mexico, also was given barely a mention as the *Post* focused its coverage on the day's events with Fox in Washington, D.C. Last, the president's trip to celebrate

Memorial Day in Mesa, Arizona, on May 28 received only a one-sentence mention by the *Post* in a story on Bush's energy policies.

15. The only presidential trip to receive more than one "day after" story in *The Washington Post* was President Bush's November 8 visit to Atlanta, Georgia, where he made a nationally televised address on the war on terror. The second *Post* story dealing with this trip, however, merely focused on why only one of the major broadcast networks chose to broadcast the president's speech.

16. A number of these nine pre-coverage stories in *The Washington Post* only partially focused on the president's travels that day, with much of these stories discussing other issues regarding the president or a particular presidential policy proposal in more detail. In addition to these nine stories, there were five other instances where the *Post* mentioned a presidential trip the day it occurred. The president's trip was discussed in a sentence or less in each of these cases, however.

17. There is a positive correlation between the percentage positive statements in the *Post* and percentage positive statements in the local newspapers (Pearson's $r = .29, p = .068$). This is not surprising because objective conditions often lead to positive or negative press for the White House. For instance, when China released a naval flight crew that was being held prisoner on April 11, 2001, the news surrounding the president and his visit to Concord, North Carolina, was decidedly positive (in both *The Washington Post* and *The Charlotte Observer*), as much of it focused on the release of the Navy personnel.

18. All of the comparisons made in this section between local newspaper coverage and coverage from *The Washington Post* are statistically significant. Comparison of means tests yielded F statistics ranging from 4.5 to 94.5 (all significant at $p < .05$).

19. Ordinary least squares (OLS) is the appropriate model specification. Although the total number of words for the amount of coverage model is slightly skewed to the left and censored at zero (there are no observations at or below zero), statistics for skewness (1.005) and kurtosis (1.24) are well within acceptable standards. Our dependent variable measuring tone is normally distributed, with skewness (-0.256) and kurtosis (-0.405) scores near zero (George & Mallery, 2001). Visual inspection of each variable's histogram verifies the appropriateness of OLS.

20. The tone measure ranges from -1 to +1, with a mean value of 0.25. A weakness of this measure is that it does not account for the sum total of coverage or differentiate between coverage that, for example, has 25 positive coded statements and zero negative statements and coverage that has just a few positive and zero negative statements. To check for problems related to this difficulty, we ran the tone model dropping the cases where there were either zero negative or zero positive statements. The results remain unchanged when these seven cases are removed. We also tried a tone measure based on the difference between the number of positive and negative coded statements, with similar results. It should be noted that only 12% of the statements examined received a positive or negative code.

21. County-level voting data are drawn from the *USA Today* Web site, which reports county vote totals for each state (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/vote2000/abc/map.htm>). Looking at a state map, we identified the county in which each newspaper we studied is located and the adjacent counties. When the adjacent counties cross state borders (e.g., Kansas City, Missouri, or Omaha, Nebraska), we also included them, except for the New Jersey case where New York City counties are adjacent; it is very unlikely New York residents read the *Bergin Record*. We added up the total votes for each candidate in the counties and then determined the percentage of the community's vote that went for Bush. We finally subtracted Bush's national vote percentage (47.9%) from that total to create our final variable. The variable ranges from -18.99 (New York City) to 15.78 (Panama City, Florida), with an average score of 0.42.

22. Another option for measuring presidential support in a community is to use state-level data. The electoral college forces presidents to consider the electoral map based on states. Plus, state-level support data, which are easier to collect than county-level data, have been used in previous research (Cohen & Powell, 2005; Durham, Cohen, Fleisher, & Bond, 2003). Nonetheless, the political climate from one area of a state to another can vary dramatically. For example, support for Bush in the 2000 election was significantly higher in counties surrounding Kalamazoo, Michigan (52.8%), than in those counties making up the Detroit metro area (33.9%). Similar significant differences exist in other large states, such as California and Florida. We therefore chose to adopt a finer measure of presidential support at the county level for those counties contiguous to the newspapers we examined. We include in the measure contiguous counties because much of a newspaper's market includes surrounding rural and suburban communities. Another option we considered was to include congressional district-level data. Yet we rejected this option because congressional districts are often very oddly drawn because of gerrymandering.

23. We collected newspaper endorsements primarily from two Web sites located at the following URL addresses: <http://www.gwu.edu/~action/natendorse5.html> and <http://toys.jacobian.org/endorsements/>. We directly contacted by telephone those newspapers not listed on these Web sites to obtain the relevant endorsement information.

24. Although we believe using newspaper endorsements from the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections is a sufficient method for coding the editorial bent of individual newspapers, we concede that this technique is not perfect. Not every newspaper endorses presidential candidates, meaning that some newspapers that have a clear editorial bent may not have been coded as such. In particular, the *Los Angeles Times* has a reputation as a Left-leaning newspaper, yet it does not endorse presidential candidates. Under the coding rule we adopted, this newspaper was coded as nonpartisan. Newspapers also may go against their traditional political allegiances during a particular election, causing us to incorrectly code the editorial bent of a paper. *The Orlando Sentinel*, for example, has traditionally endorsed Republican presidential candidates, yet it endorsed John Kerry in 2004. We thus coded this paper as nonpartisan as well. Nonetheless, despite the problems with this coding rule, we found some statistically significant results regarding the editorial bent of individual newspapers discussed below. Moreover, when we remove nonpartisan newspapers from our analyses (the problematic category of newspapers), our results remain largely the same.

25. Alternatively, we could have included the president's monthly Gallup approval rating as a control variable. However, these data correlate highly with our 9/11 dummy variable (Kendall's tau-b = .96, $p = .000$), and thus doing so yields similar results.

26. We used the 2001 edition of the *Editor & Publisher International Year Book* to find the daily average number of pages for two newspapers in our sample, specifically *The Denver Post* and the *Charleston Gazette*. Unfortunately, we were unable to find the daily average number of pages for *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana) in any source. We therefore eliminated this newspaper from our model on the amount of local coverage.

27. President Bush often addressed policy issues during many of his domestic visits, such as his tax and education initiatives. We explored the effects of the policy area addressed by the president in our analysis, but coding domestic-, foreign policy-, and economic policy-related visits yielded no significant results and had no apparent effect on our other findings. In addition, following 9/11, most of the visits coincided with national security, thus plaguing our model with collinearity problems if we were to pursue this avenue of inquiry. Therefore, we do not provide a variable for type of policy addressed in the president's remarks during a visit in any of our models presented. We also hypothesized that the size of the community visited is negatively correlated with the amount of coverage, as presidential visits to smaller communities are likely to

be more newsworthy. In previous versions of the article, we included a variable for the size of the metropolitan area, but this variable was negatively correlated with our community support variable (Pearson's $r = -.68, p = .000$) and positively correlated with the size of newspaper variable (Pearson's $r = .72, p = .000$), introducing multicollinearity problems into the regression model. Hence, we dropped the measure.

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