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**Surrogate-in-Chief: Did Bill Clinton's
Campaign Visits Help (or Hurt) Hillary
Clinton in 2016?**

<https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2020-2002>

Abstract: In this article, we examine the role that campaign visits by spouses and surrogates play in modern presidential campaigns. Specifically, we analyze the strategy and effectiveness of Bill Clinton's campaign visits in 2016. Given the former president's widespread name recognition and reputation as a legendary campaigner, we argue that he represents an ideal test case for determining whether the spouse of a presidential or vice presidential candidate can influence vote choice, via campaign visits. Our analysis indicates that Bill Clinton was, in fact, very active on the campaign trail in 2016 – making nearly as many visits as Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. However, Bill Clinton mostly followed in Hillary Clinton's footsteps on the campaign trail, giving him little opportunity to win over voters that she could not reach. His campaign visits also had no discernible effect on county-level voting, generally, in the 10 states to which he traveled. Yet, when we examine the effect of Clinton's visits within states, we find that he had a positive and statistically significant effect on Democratic vote share in the battleground state of Florida. He had no such effect in the two states to which he traveled most often, however (North Carolina and Ohio). Overall, we find very limited evidence that campaign surrogates – and candidate spouses, specifically – can influence vote choice via their campaign visits. We discuss the implications of these findings for future research on the role of campaign surrogates, and their relevance to the 2020 presidential campaign.

Keywords: presidential campaigns, campaign visits, vote choice, elections, Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton

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1 Introduction

Political scientists have long been interested in the effects of presidential campaigns during elections. One line of research in this area has focused on the impact of campaign visits on vote choice and voter turnout (Althaus, Nardulli, and Shaw 2002; Chen and Reeves 2011; Devine 2018a, 2018b; Devine and Kopko 2018; Heersink and Peterson 2017; Hill 2006; Hill, Rodriguez, and Wooden 2010; Holbrook 2002; Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Jones 1998; King and Morehouse 2004; Shaw 1999; Wood 2016). Not surprisingly, most of the work in this area has focused on the campaign visits of the presidential and vice presidential candidates (but see MacManus and Quecan 2008), and we now know a fair amount about the extent to which their visits impact elections. Wood (2016) summarizes the literature on presidential campaign visits by noting that “On balance ... campaign events are found to have only a modest effect on voter behavior, such that only in the most marginal elections would the pattern of campaign visits prove decisive” (118). It is worth noting, though, that the effects of campaign visits may vary across candidates and elections (Devine 2018b; Heersink and Peterson 2017; Herr 2002; Holbrook 2002). As Heersink and Peterson (2017) note, “... not all politicians are equally effective in connecting with voters during their visits” (50). For example, Herr (2002) found that in 1996 Bill Clinton’s campaign visits had a significant and positive effect on voting, while Bob Dole’s visits had no discernible effect.

But it is not just the candidates who make campaign visits. Indeed, during presidential campaigns, high-profile surrogates often hit the stump on the presidential candidate’s behalf, attracting large crowds of voters and substantial media attention. These surrogates typically include family members, celebrities, and national political leaders such as the incumbent (lame duck) president, former presidents, past rivals for the presidential nomination, and the party’s top state officeholders or national “rising stars.”¹ Without question, the most active and visible surrogate in most campaigns is the presidential candidate’s spouse. Whereas in past campaigns, spouses only appeared alongside the presidential candidate at rallies and other events, in recent years it has become common – if not expected – for spouses to hold their own, separate campaign events on the candidate’s behalf, and to appear frequently as a surrogate in news media coverage.²

¹ For instance, in 2016, Hillary Clinton’s campaign surrogates – who appeared together with her, or separately – included daughter Chelsea Clinton; musicians Beyoncé and Jay Z; actresses Elizabeth Banks and Natalie Portman; then-President Barack Obama; presidential rival Bernie Sanders; and Democratic rising stars such as Elizabeth Warren.

² Indeed, Melania Trump’s decision not to campaign extensively on her husband’s behalf in 2016 attracted significant media attention (see, e.g. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/us/politics/melania-trump-campaign.html>).

Also, spouses are expected to deliver a major primetime speech at the national party conventions, usually on the night before the presidential candidate's acceptance speech. As MacManus and Quecan (2008) observed, in their analysis of the 2004 presidential election, "Never before has media attention been so heavily focused on the spouses. In fact, they have often been an equal, or in some cases, bigger story than the candidates themselves" (337). Subsequent campaigns have only underscored this point, particularly considering Michelle Obama's prominent role in the 2008 and 2012 elections, and, as we discuss here, Bill Clinton's prominent role in the 2016 election. Yet, despite the literature on presidential campaign visits, we know virtually nothing about the extent to which campaign visits by candidate spouses influence presidential elections.³

In this paper, we are interested in examining the effect of spousal campaign visits in the context of the 2016 presidential election. More specifically, we want to understand whether (and how) Bill Clinton's campaign visits impacted Hillary Clinton's performance in that election. Bill Clinton's campaign visits represent a particularly interesting test of the effect of the candidate spouses on electoral performance. Indeed, Bill Clinton was the first presidential candidate spouse who was also a former president. By virtue of being president for two terms, Clinton had a great deal of name recognition across the United States. If ever a spouse's visits were to have an effect, this would likely be it.

Analyzing Bill Clinton's campaign visits also is important because there has been considerable debate among journalists, pundits, and campaign strategists as to whether he helped or hurt Hillary Clinton's performance in 2016. As a twice-elected president and a legendary campaigner, it only makes sense that Bill Clinton would have helped to win over voters to his wife's campaign. Indeed, many close observers believed this to be the case. For example, Anita McBride, former chief of staff for first lady Laura Bush and assistant to President George W. Bush, said 'It's riveting. After all these years, in so many circles, he's just so popular. That's been a huge asset for her' (Dick 2016). Bill's performance even recalled, for some, the selling point from his 1992 presidential campaign that electing him – and now Hillary – president would give voters "two for the price of one" (Stevenson 2016). A story published by NPR also highlighted some of the benefits of having Bill Clinton campaign for his wife, noting that he "... has the ability to draw a crowd ... His speech at the Democratic convention was well received, as he described his wife's passion for service dating back to the time they met in law school. Clearly the

³ There is a political science literature on candidate spouses, but the bulk of research in this area focuses on public perceptions of spouses (and whether those perceptions are related to individual vote choice) rather than on the effects of spousal campaign visits (see, e.g. Burrell, Elder, and Frederick 2011; Elder, Frederick, and Burrell 2018; Elder and Frederick 2019; Mughan and Burden 1995).

Clinton campaign has determined that the rewards of having the former president out on the campaign trail outweigh the risks” (Keith 2016).

On the other hand, there is reason to believe that Bill Clinton may have done more harm than good on the campaign trail. For example, during campaign visits Bill Clinton often said and did things that later “created headline headaches for his wife’s campaign,” such as meeting privately with Attorney General Loretta Lynch while Hillary Clinton was under federal criminal investigation, and calling the Affordable Care Act “the craziest thing in the world” (Keith 2016).⁴ There was also concern that because some of the policies that Bill Clinton implemented during his presidency (e.g. financial deregulation and criminal justice reform) have come to be seen in an unfavorable light, his campaigning would tie those unpopular policies to Hillary Clinton. Finally, Bill Clinton’s sexual indiscretions as president and previous allegations of sexual assault may have also been a liability for his wife, especially given that her campaign scrutinized and criticized Trump for sexual misconduct.⁵ In fact, this was not the first time that critics had questioned whether Bill Clinton’s campaigning hurt Hillary Clinton’s prospects of being elected president; many of the same concerns had been raised during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries, particularly after the former president made comments that were widely viewed as dismissive of Barack Obama’s candidacy and even racially prejudiced.⁶ Given these competing considerations, it is quite unclear whether Bill Clinton was an asset or a liability to Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign in 2016. And, given the previous literature on campaign visits, it is also quite plausible that – like many candidates – he simply had no effect on vote choice. How, then, should we evaluate the electoral importance of Hillary Clinton’s “surrogate-in-chief”? Fortunately, the question of whether Hillary and Bill Clinton were, to borrow from Hillary’s campaign slogan, “stronger together,” is one that can be evaluated empirically.

Our objective in this article is to evaluate Bill Clinton’s role on the campaign trail in 2016. Specifically, we seek to determine how active he was, in terms of campaign visits; the strategic rationale behind those visits; and their effect on voting behavior. While our analysis focuses upon Bill Clinton, once more our broader goal is to provide evidence of the role that campaign visits by spouses and surrogates play in modern presidential campaigns – with the former president serving as an ideal test case for observing such effects, if they occur. To that end,

⁴ See: <https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/04/politics/bill-clinton-obamacare-craziest-thing/index.html> and <https://www.rollcall.com/news/bill-clinton-first-running-mate>.

⁵ <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/410534-hillary-clinton-discusses-comparisons-of-her-husbands-sexual>.

⁶ <https://www.politico.com/story/2012/09/bill-clintons-8-digs-at-obama-080728>.

we also provide parallel evidence regarding those campaign visits made by the Democratic vice presidential spouse, Anne Holton, in 2016.

This analysis proceeds in three parts. First, we provide descriptive data on the frequency and location of Bill Clinton's campaign visits. Second, we examine the political and demographic characteristics associated with Bill Clinton's campaign visits, at the county level, in order to make inferences about the campaign strategy underlying those visits. Finally, and most importantly, we estimate the effect of Bill Clinton's visits on county-level vote choice. Our analysis indicates that Bill Clinton was very active on the campaign trail in 2016 – making nearly as many visits as Hillary Clinton, in fact. However, Bill Clinton mostly followed in Hillary Clinton's footsteps on the campaign trail, giving him little opportunity to win over voters that she could not reach. Furthermore, his visits had no discernible effect on county-level voting, generally, in the 10 states to which he traveled. Interestingly, when examining the impact of Bill Clinton's visits *within* states, we find that he did have a statistically significant and positive effect on Democratic vote share in one major battleground state: Florida. But he had no such effect in North Carolina and Ohio, where he visited even more often in 2016. In that case, we find very limited evidence that campaign surrogates – and candidate spouses, specifically – can influence vote choice via their campaign visits. We discuss the implications of these findings for future research on spouses' and surrogates' roles in modern presidential campaigns, and consider how they might influence the 2020 campaign, in particular.

2 Where, and How Often, Did Bill Clinton Campaign?

Our empirical analysis draws upon an original database of presidential campaign visits from 2016. This database includes every campaign visit made by the Republican and Democratic presidential and vice presidential candidates following the announcement of the latter's selection, on July 15 for Republicans Donald Trump and Mike Pence, and on July 22 for Democrats Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine. Also, this database includes campaign visits made by the Democratic spouses: Bill Clinton, the former president and husband to Hillary Clinton, and Anne Holton, former Virginia Secretary of Education and wife to Tim Kaine. We do not include the Republican spouses, Melania Trump and Karen Pence, because they made very few campaign visits. In fact, Melania Trump held only one campaign event at which Donald Trump did not appear, and Karen Pence did not hold any such events. Therefore, we cannot meaningfully evaluate the

independent effect of the Republican spouses' campaign visits on voters. However, by including Holton in our analysis, we can compare the strategy and effectiveness of Bill Clinton's campaign visits to that of another candidate spouse, in order to determine whether his role in the campaign was distinctive and, in fact, uniquely important.

For this analysis, we define a campaign visit as "any public appearance apparently organized or initiated by the campaign or its candidates, for the purpose of appealing to a localized concentration of voters" (Devine 2018b, 218). In other words, the purpose of these events must be to win over voters in a particular, strategically-chosen location. Therefore, we exclude any event that is closed to the public (e.g. press conferences) and/or the news media (e.g. fundraisers), as well as any events that are clearly targeted toward a national audience (e.g. national party or interest group conventions, debates, historical commemorations). Qualifying events include traditional campaign rallies or public speeches; publicized interactions with voters at commercial establishments such as businesses and restaurants, whether scheduled or impromptu; and public efforts to mobilize campaign volunteers or voters, for instance via appearances at campaign offices or early voting sites.⁷ In many cases, the presidential and vice presidential candidates, or one of the candidates and his or her spouse, participated jointly in a campaign event. In those instances, we credit each participating candidate with a campaign visit.

The Democratic candidates and their spouses made 381 campaign visits in 2016, according to the criteria described above. Table 1 presents the total number of visits made by each candidate or spouse, in each state that hosted at least one Democratic visit.

Bill Clinton was very active on the campaign trail, judging by the data presented in Table 1. In total, he made 90 campaign visits – 13 more than Anne Holton, and only 11 fewer than Hillary Clinton. However, Bill Clinton's campaign visits mostly were concentrated in five states: North Carolina (18 visits), Ohio (17), Florida (15), Pennsylvania (13), and Iowa (10). And he visited only 10 states – two fewer than Hillary Clinton, and four fewer than Tim Kaine and Anne Holton. In fact, Hillary Clinton visited every state that Bill Clinton visited except for Wisconsin, of course (which he visited only once). And in every state except Iowa she visited nearly as often as he did. Thus, while Bill Clinton was active on the campaign trail,

⁷ We confirmed the occurrence and location of each campaign visit using documentation (e.g. written accounts, photographs, videos) from multiple sources – usually from national or local news media outlets, but in some cases from campaign-related social media accounts. This method helps to ensure that we have not included events that were announced by the campaigns but did not end up taking place. And in many cases the candidates or their spouses participated in unscheduled events that we learned about through accounts of other events.

Table 1: Number of campaign visits by Democratic presidential and vice presidential candidates and their spouses in 2016, by state.

State	Hillary Clinton	Bill Clinton	Tim Kaine	Anne Holton
AL	0	0	1	0
AZ	1	0	2	0
CO	3	3	2	1
CT	0	0	0	0
DC	0	0	0	0
FL	23	15	30	9
GA	0	0	0	0
IA	5	10	5	15
IL	1	0	0	0
IN	0	0	0	0
LA	0	0	0	0
ME	0	0	0	0
MI	5	8	5	6
MN	0	0	0	1
MO	0	0	0	0
MS	0	0	0	0
NC	17	18	15	9
NE	1	0	0	2
NH	3	2	7	5
NM	0	0	0	0
NV	9	3	4	1
NY	0	0	0	0
OH	15	17	10	8
PA	18	13	17	8
TX	0	0	4	0
UT	0	0	0	1
VA	0	0	5	9
WA	0	0	0	0
WI	0	1	6	2
Total	101	90	113	77

at least at the state level he seemed to shadow Hillary Clinton rather than stand in for her in states where she was less popular than he, or in states that the campaign regarded as peripheral.

Bill Clinton campaigned extensively throughout these states, as well. This is evident in Figure 1, where we map his campaign visits by city. Figure 1 also indicates where he campaigned by himself, versus jointly with Hillary Clinton. Here we see that there were few such joint events, and they occurred only in two states: Pennsylvania and North Carolina. For the most part, Bill Clinton was on his own – but following in the footsteps of Hillary Clinton. This is in stark contrast to Anne

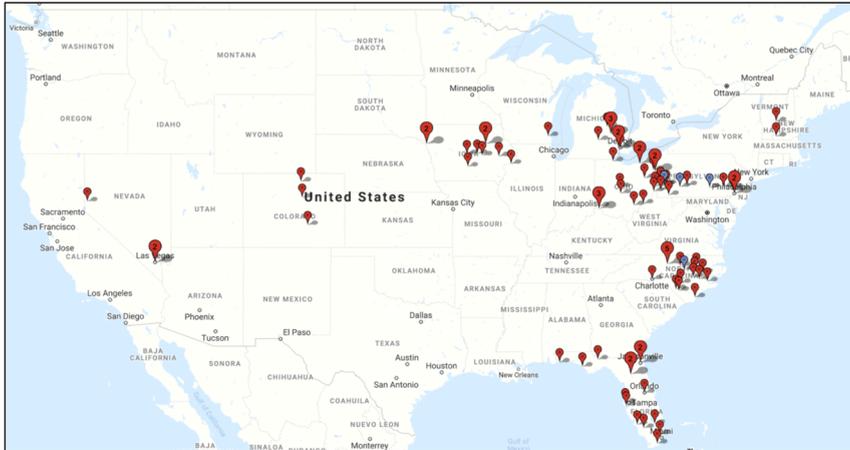


Figure 1: Location of Bill Clinton’s campaign visits during the 2016 presidential election. Notes: Visits are pinned based on the city of the visit. Red pins indicate visits where Bill Clinton appeared by himself; blue pins indicate visits where Bill Clinton appeared jointly with Hillary Clinton.

Holton, who visited each of the same states as Bill Clinton, while also trying to expand the electoral map to include states such as Minnesota, Utah, and Virginia, that neither Hillary nor Bill Clinton visited during the campaign.

3 What Was the Strategy Behind Bill Clinton’s Campaign Visits?

Political scientists often use campaign visits to make inferences about presidential campaign strategy. Indeed, Daron Shaw (1999) describes campaign visits and advertisements as “the most obvious and visible manifestations of the campaign” (347). He and several other scholars even have referred to these as the campaign equivalents of life’s most precious resources: time and money. Where the campaign allocates these resources therefore should tell us a great deal about its strategic objectives. Moreover, campaigns may choose which candidate or surrogate to send (most often) to a particular state or locale, and it is in the campaign’s interest to send those individuals where they are most likely to win over voters. Consequently, visit patterns should provide a good indication of how campaign officials view a specific candidate’s or surrogate’s role, strategically speaking. For instance, if the Hillary Clinton campaign perceived Bill Clinton to be a strategic

asset, it stands to reason that his visits would have been skewed toward the most electorally competitive, “swing” states and locales that could help to deliver an electoral victory. Conversely, if the campaign perceived him to be a strategic liability, his visits should have been skewed toward less competitive states or locales where he was less likely to affect the election's outcome.

This is the inferential logic that guides Chen and Reeves' (2011) analysis of campaign strategy in the 2008 presidential election. In short, they find that Republicans John McCain and Sarah Palin primarily campaigned in counties where their party base was strong, while Democrats Barack Obama and Joe Biden primarily campaigned in more competitive, “swing” counties. This suggests that the Republican and Democratic campaigns pursued different campaign strategies, focused on voter mobilization versus persuasion, respectively. Chen and Reeves derive their empirical findings from Poisson regression models predicting the number of times that each party's presidential and vice presidential candidates, combined, visited a given county within the leading battleground states in 2008. The independent variables in these models include numerous county-level political characteristics (e.g. party vote share in the previous election) and demographic characteristics (e.g. median household income; percentage of African Americans, Latinos, college graduates, and seniors). Evidence of a mobilization, or “base,” strategy includes campaigning in counties where the party in question won a higher percentage of the vote in the previous election, or in counties whose population skews toward groups more favorable to that party (e.g. African-Americans for Democrats, higher-income households for Republicans). The opposite patterns are indicative of a persuasion, or “peripheral,” strategy, according to Chen and Reeves. Devine (2018a) conducts a similar analysis of campaign visits in the 2016 election, which indicates that the Republican (Trump-Pence) and Democratic (Clinton-Kaine) tickets pursued strategies of persuasion versus mobilization, respectively.

We use a similar methodology to analyze the strategy behind Bill Clinton's campaign visits. Specifically, we estimate a Poisson regression model predicting the number of times that Bill Clinton visited each county within the 10 states to which he traveled in 2016 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). For purposes of comparison, we also estimate the same model to predict the number of campaign visits made by Hillary Clinton, Tim Kaine, and Anne Holton, to the same counties that year. Our model's independent variables include each of the county-level political and demographic characteristics used by Devine (2018a) to analyze the Democratic and Republican tickets' campaign visits in 2016. Demographic variables include the county's median age; median household income (in thousands of dollars); percentage of African-Americans, Latinos, and college graduates; number of evangelical Protestants (per 1,000 residents); population density (i.e. per square mile);

and population growth, from 2010 to 2015.⁸ Political variables include electoral competitiveness, measured as the squared difference in two-party vote share from the 2012 presidential election; electoral vote share, measured as the county's percentage of the state population multiplied by the state's number of electoral votes; and ad ratio, measured as the ratio of Democratic to Republican campaign advertisements aired in that county's media market at the end of the campaign (i.e. in the latter half of October 2016).⁹ Also, because most voters' exposure to campaign visits comes via local media coverage, and the ad ratio variable is measured at the media market level, we cluster observations by Designated Market Area (DMA).

The model results presented in Table 2 indicate that Bill Clinton campaigned more often in counties that had a younger, more college-educated, and less wealthy population, as well as more African-Americans and fewer evangelical Protestants. In most cases, the same can be said for Hillary Clinton, Tim Kaine, and Anne Holton. However, Bill Clinton is the only Democratic candidate or surrogate who campaigned more often in poorer counties. With respect to the political variables, Bill Clinton was more likely to campaign in more electorally competitive counties, as well as ones that represented a greater share of the national electoral vote and ones in which Democrats had a greater advantage over Republicans in campaign advertising. However, in each of these cases the same can be said for the other Democratic campaigners. In most cases, the demographic and political variables' coefficients are comparable across candidates. Aside from income, the only variables that distinguish Bill Clinton from his Democratic counterparts are population change and electoral vote share; specifically, he was significantly less likely than Hillary Clinton to campaign in counties with a growing population, and ones that represented a greater share of the national electoral vote.

⁸ County-level evangelical Protestant estimates come from the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies' 2010 U.S. Religion Census, at <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/RCMSCY10.asp>. All other county-level demographic estimates come from the U.S. Census Bureau's "American Fact Finder," at <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>, or "QuickFacts," at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>. Accessed May 26, 2017.

⁹ Devine (2018a, 60) describes the rationale for these variables in greater detail. In short, these variables control for a campaign's propensity to visit counties that are likely to have greater weight in deciding the election's outcome in the Electoral College, and ones that the campaign sees fit to contest via paid advertisements. Advertising data come from Kantar Media/CMAG, with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project. See here: http://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016Release7_AdAdvttable.csv. Accessed July 10, 2019. DMA designations, by county, come from Kantar Media, at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180328203430/http://kantarmedia.srds.com/common/pdf/DMA-County-Coverage.pdf>. Accessed July 10, 2019.

Table 2: Predictors of campaign visits in 2016 for the Democratic candidates and their spouses, by county.

	Model 1 Hillary Clinton	Model 2 Bill Clinton	Model 3 Tim Kaine	Model 4 Anne Holton
Median age	-0.030 0.023	-0.091** 0.029	-0.055* 0.027	-0.158** 0.059
Median HH income (\$1000)	-0.012 0.014	-0.026* 0.013	-0.012 0.017	0.020 0.021
% College graduates	0.051** 0.016	0.042*** 0.011	0.056*** 0.012	0.024+ 0.012
% Latinos	-0.014 0.008	-0.017 0.011	-0.001 0.009	-0.022 0.015
% African-Americans	0.082*** 0.011	0.059*** 0.009	0.038** 0.014	0.031** 0.011
Evangelical Protestants/1000	-0.010*** 0.002	-0.005** 0.002	-0.003 0.003	-0.001 0.002
Population per square mile	0.000 0.000	0.000 0.000	0.000** 0.000	0.000 0.000
% Population change (2010–2015)	0.075** 0.028	-0.020 0.036	0.028 0.033	-0.051 0.068
TV ad ratio (Dem:Rep)	0.020*** 0.005	0.017** 0.006	0.010* 0.005	0.018** 0.006
% Diff. in two-party vote, 2012 (sq.)	-0.002** 0.001	-0.003*** 0.001	-0.003*** 0.001	-0.002* 0.001
Electoral vote share (county)	1.037*** 0.108	0.712*** 0.109	0.900*** 0.153	0.826*** 0.172
Constant	-3.021* 1.482	1.126 1.188	-1.632 1.267	1.262 1.800
Log likelihood	-133.86	-191.88	-178.30	-154.81
<i>N</i>	664	664	664	664

Notes: $+p < 0.10$, $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, and $***p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Entries are Poisson regression coefficients. Robust standard errors are below each coefficient. The dependent variable in each model is the number of campaign visits per county made by that candidate or spouse in 2016. The dataset includes every county in the 10 states that Bill Clinton visited that year (see Table 1). Observations are clustered by Designated Market Area (DMA).

What should we make of these results? First and foremost, Bill Clinton did not play a unique role in the 2016 election. Indeed, despite his reputation as a legendary campaigner with centrist appeal and a record of fostering economic growth as president, Bill Clinton did not function as an emissary to voters outside of the modern Democratic coalition. Rather, his role on the campaign trail essentially was redundant. In most cases, he visited the same types of communities that Hillary Clinton, as well as Tim Kaine and Anne Holton, visited – which were, for the most part, Democratic “base” counties. That is to say, these counties were

more heavily populated by groups that tend to favor the Democratic Party – including youths, African-Americans, and, at least in 2016, college graduates – while also including fewer evangelical Protestants, a key Republican constituency group. Also, while Bill Clinton campaigned more often in electorally competitive counties, he was no more likely to do so than his Democratic counterparts, and, like them, he also campaigned more often in areas that the Democratic campaign already was contesting on the airwaves. The only way in which Bill Clinton distinguished himself from his Democratic counterparts was by campaigning more often in less wealthy counties. In that sense, he seemed to be appealing to the party's base, rather than the persuadable voters that many observers thought he could reach more effectively than Hillary Clinton and perhaps any other leading Democratic politician or surrogate. Otherwise, as in our previous analysis, we must conclude that Bill Clinton campaigned in the shadow of Hillary Clinton – apparently reinforcing rather than expanding her efforts to appeal to voters across and within battleground states. But was he effective at doing so? And how effective was he, in comparison to the Democratic candidates and the vice presidential spouse, Anne Holton? We answer these questions in the next section of our analysis.

4 Did Bill Clinton's Campaign Visits Influence Vote Choice?

In this section, we evaluate whether Bill Clinton's campaign visits helped or hurt Hillary Clinton in 2016. Specifically, we regress county-level, two-party vote share on the number of campaign visits that Bill Clinton made to that county. Again, we limit this analysis to the 10 states that he visited that year, and cluster observations by media market. Our model includes the same county-level demographic and political control variables from Table 2, with four exceptions. First, to isolate the independent effects of Bill Clinton's campaign visits, we control for the number of visits to the same county made by his Democratic counterparts (Hillary Clinton, Kaine, Holton) and their Republican opponents (Trump, Pence), in 2016. Second, because our model is designed to predict two-party vote share, we control for two-party vote share in the 2012 election, rather than the squared margin of victory from Table 2, which measures simply how close the previous election had been regardless of which party won. Third, we exclude the electoral vote share variable from this model because it is not relevant to predicting party vote share. Finally, we exclude population density from this model because in some tests its inclusion results in unacceptably high variance inflation factor (i.e. greater than ten).

Following Devine (2018b), who uses essentially the same models to estimate campaign visit effects for Hillary Clinton in 2016, we analyze Bill Clinton's effects within specific states, as well as within battleground states, generally. This is because, as noted above, previous studies have found that some candidates' campaign visits have differential effects across states. For instance, Devine (2018b) finds that Hillary Clinton's visits had no discernible effect on county-level voting generally or within most key battleground states in 2016, but in Pennsylvania they did have a statistically significant and positive effect – and likewise for Mike Pence in Ohio, only. Here, we estimate Bill Clinton's visit effects within the three states that he visited most frequently: North Carolina (18), Ohio (17), and Florida (15). If he had any direct effect on voters in 2016, it should be evident in these states where he spent the most time and, presumably, attracted the most local media coverage.

Our expectations are straightforward. If Bill Clinton's campaigning on behalf of Hillary Clinton helped her to win votes, then we should find evidence of a statistically significant and positive relationship between the number of campaign visits that he made to a county and the two-party vote share won by the Democratic ticket in that county. Conversely, if Bill Clinton was a liability on the campaign trail, this relationship should be statistically significant and negative. Of course, it is also possible that – like many candidates in 2016 and in other election years, judging by previous studies – Bill Clinton's campaign visits simply had no evident effect on voters, in which case this variable should not be statistically significant. Finally, like Hillary Clinton and Mike Pence, his effectiveness could have been limited to a small number of battleground states, or just one, whose voters found him particularly appealing and thus were more responsive to his visits than in other states.

Table 3 presents the results from our linear regression models. Model one indicates that Bill Clinton's campaign visits had no effect on county-level vote share, in general (that is, across all 10 battleground states that he visited). Nor did the other candidate spouse, Anne Holton, influence vote choice via campaign visits. Among the candidates, only Tim Kaine's visits influenced vote choice at the $p < 0.10$ level.

Turning to the state-level analyses, in Models 2 and 3, respectively, we see that Bill Clinton's visits – and, for that matter, Anne Holton's – had no effect on voting in North Carolina and Ohio. Interestingly, we find that Donald Trump's visits had a statistically significant and *positive* effect on Democratic vote share in North Carolina; in other words, Trump's visits apparently hurt his electoral performance in that state. This counterintuitive finding differs from that of Devine (2018b), who finds that Trump's visits had no effect on voting in North Carolina. The discrepancy suggests that accounting for spousal campaign visits can help to clarify the effects

Table 3: Effect of Bill Clinton’s campaign visits on county-level democratic vote share (two-party), 2016 presidential election.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Overall	North Carolina	Ohio	Florida
Median age	-0.005	0.027	-0.388*	-0.003
	0.035	0.041	0.152	0.051
Median HH income (\$1000)	0.044	-0.034	0.245**	0.044
	0.060	0.078	0.068	0.052
% College graduates	0.349***	0.432***	0.034	0.327***
	0.100	0.072	0.071	0.048
% Latinos	0.113***	0.195***	0.046	0.133***
	0.019	0.039	0.132	0.016
% African-Americans	0.276***	0.219***	0.641***	0.211***
	0.018	0.023	0.104	0.039
Evangelical Protestants/1000	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.007*
	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.003
% Population change (2010–2015)	0.172*	-0.054	0.322	0.076
	0.079	0.042	0.310	0.041
TV ad ratio (dem:rep)	-0.020**	0.023	0.023*	0.019
	0.007	0.011	0.009	0.029
Democratic vote % (2-party), 2012	0.820***	0.841***	0.826***	0.845***
	0.036	0.042	0.053	0.043
Donald Trump visits	0.102	0.455*	0.190	0.131
	0.205	0.193	0.317	0.358
Mike Pence visits	0.245	-0.101	-1.285*	0.352
	0.264	0.501	0.476	0.250
Hillary Clinton visits	-0.193	-0.387	0.483	0.077
	0.191	0.345	0.282	0.088
Tim Kaine visits	0.476+	0.256	0.422	-0.024
	0.276	0.577	0.988	0.143
Bill Clinton visits	0.173	-0.436	-0.288	0.933*
	0.312	0.273	0.822	0.376
Anne Holton visits	0.027	-0.249	-0.315	-0.704+
	0.231	0.224	0.619	0.386
Constant	-11.343**	-12.049	-4.330	-14.425**
	3.790	5.638	7.884	3.679
Adjusted R^2	0.9472	0.9921	0.9704	0.9919
N	664	100	87	68

Notes: + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Entries are linear regression coefficients. Robust standard errors are below each coefficient. The dependent variable represents the two-party vote percentage won by the Democratic ticket, by county, in 2016. The dataset includes every county in the 10 states that Bill Clinton visited that year (see Table 1). Observations are clustered by Designated Market Area (DMA).

of a candidate’s visits – a possibility that may be worth heeding in future research. However, Pence’s statistically significant and negative effect on Democratic vote share in Ohio is consistent with Devine’s (2018b) previous analysis.

Finally, in contrast to our other findings, Model 4 indicates that Bill Clinton's visits *did* have a statistically significant effect on voting in Florida. Specifically, his visits are associated with a 0.93 percentage-point increase in a county's two-party, Democratic vote share. This effect is particularly impressive because, as we show in Figure 1, the former president campaigned throughout this large and populous state – not just in Democratic-leaning cities such as Miami, but also in the Republican-leaning panhandle. Why did Bill Clinton's visits have this effect in Florida, alone? The answer is unclear. Nor is it clear why Anne Holton's visits would have a negative effect on Democratic voting in Florida, as this model also suggests – albeit only at the marginal, $p < 0.10$ level. Further research is necessary to better understand and explain these effects.

For now, what is important about these results is that they provide systematic, empirical evidence – for the first time in the political science literature – that the presidential and vice presidential candidates' *spouses* can influence vote choice, via campaign visits. However, the only spouse to have a positive effect on voting, according to our analysis, was a former president who had once won that state's electoral votes. Thus, other candidate spouses or campaign surrogates may be unable to achieve a similar effect. And, for that matter, it is worth emphasizing that Bill Clinton's visits did *not* influence vote choice in battleground states, generally, or in the two states that he visited most often (North Carolina and Ohio). In that case, while our analysis demonstrates that spouses and surrogates *can* influence voting via campaign visits, for the most part it cautions against assuming that these effects have occurred in the past or anticipating that they will occur in the future.

5 Conclusion

Previous studies of presidential campaign visits provide mixed evidence of the presidential and vice presidential candidates' effectiveness. Specifically, they show that some candidates' visits generally influence vote choice while others do not, and that some candidates are influential in some states while in others they are not. But presidential and vice presidential candidates are not the only ones who make numerous, high-profile campaign visits. Indeed, campaign surrogates – and particularly the candidates' spouses – often make these visits on the candidates' behalves, or take part in joint appearances. But to what end? Do campaign surrogates' visits actually *matter* in terms of influencing the election's outcome? What about the most active surrogates in most campaigns, the candidates' spouses? While previous studies have examined the strategy of spousal campaign visits, none have systematically analyzed the effect of candidates' spouses' – or for that matter any surrogates' – campaign visits on vote choice.

This study focuses on the effects of Bill Clinton's campaign visits in 2016. As a former president, Bill Clinton represents an ideal test case for determining whether campaign surrogates, and candidate spouses, specifically, have the potential to influence vote choice via campaign visits. In essence, if *any* spouse or surrogate were capable of generating the media coverage and public interest necessary to move votes on the campaign trail, surely this would be it. But, then again, as we detailed earlier in this paper, there is reason to believe that Bill Clinton might have hurt, rather than helped, Hillary Clinton's efforts to win the White House in 2016. Therefore, our objective in this paper was not only to determine whether Bill Clinton influenced voters on the campaign trail in 2016, but whether any influence he did have amounted to a campaign asset or a liability. Also, we were interested in determining how active Bill Clinton was on the campaign trail, and what strategic role he played, in comparison to the Democratic presidential and vice presidential candidates as well as the vice presidential spouse, Anne Holton.

A number of interesting findings emerged from our analysis. For instance, we found that Bill Clinton made nearly as many campaign visits as Hillary Clinton. Not surprisingly, his visits focused on battleground states. In fact, he visited four battleground states – Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania – over a dozen times during the 2016 campaign. In terms of the location of Bill Clinton's campaign visits, we found that he tended to visit the same types of places that Hillary Clinton, Tim Kaine, and Anne Holton visited. These tended to be Democratic counties, which provide some evidence that the campaign focused more on mobilizing the base than on persuasion. Our analysis of the impact of Bill Clinton's campaign visits on Hillary Clinton's electoral performance showed that his visits did not have a statistically significant effect on county-level vote share, in general (that is, across the 10 states that he visited). Notably, visits by the other candidate spouse, Anne Holton, did not influence vote choice either. Of all the candidates and spouses, we found that only Tim Kaine's visits had an impact on vote choice, though at the $p < 0.10$ level. Interestingly, when we turned to analysis of the impact of visits *within* the states that Bill Clinton visited most frequently – Ohio, North Carolina, and Florida – we found that his visits only had a statistically significant impact in one state: Florida. There, a visit by Bill Clinton was associated with a 0.93 percentage-point increase in Hillary Clinton's county-level vote share.

This research makes an important contribution to scholars' understanding of the strategy and effectiveness of campaign visits, as well as the role that candidate spouses and other surrogates play in modern presidential campaigns. But further research is necessary to build upon these findings and draw more generalizable conclusions. First, scholars ought to conduct similar analyses of campaign visits made by surrogates other than the candidates' spouses in 2016, including public officials and political leaders (e.g. President Obama), celebrities (e.g. Beyoncé and

Jay-Z), and the candidates' children (e.g. Chelsea Clinton and Donald Trump, Jr.), in order to determine whether their visits influenced vote choice overall or, like Bill Clinton, only in a particular state. Of course, most surrogates – except for some of the presidential candidates' children – made very few campaign visits in 2016, which might make it impractical to conduct an empirical analysis of their effects or perhaps require a different method of analysis to do so.

Second, scholars ought to conduct similar analyses of campaign visits, by the candidates' spouses and other surrogates, in other election years. Indeed, as scholars including MacManus and Quecan (2008) have demonstrated, candidate spouses were active on the campaign trail well before 2016. By documenting where their visits took place, and how the visited counties or other locales voted in the election, one could estimate their effects in a similar fashion in order to determine whether our findings regarding the 2016 election are exceptional or generally applicable. Scholars also ought to conduct such analyses in future election years, as the necessary empirical evidence becomes available.

On that note, it is worth emphasizing this study's implications for the 2020 election. While, at the time of this writing, we do not know who will be the Democratic Party's presidential or vice presidential nominees, already we can see that many of the candidates' spouses and other family members or close associates are active on the campaign trail.¹⁰ It is very likely that the eventual nominees' spouses will draw significant media attention in 2020, much of which will focus on their potential to influence voters. For instance, how might voters respond to a less-familiar presidential husband, such as Bruce Mann (Elizabeth Warren) or Douglas Emhoff (Kamala Harris)? Or a same-sex spouse, such as Chasten Buttigieg (Pete Buttigieg)? Or a celebrity partner, such as Rosario Dawson (Cory Booker)? And, on the Republican side, what if Melania Trump takes a more active and independent role in the 2020 campaign than she did in 2016? Would the First Lady prove to be an effective campaigner, or might she attract more negative than positive attention as she did when delivering a partially-plagiarized speech at the 2016 Republican convention?

Indeed, as we noted earlier, there is now an expectation that spouses will be active participants – if not the leading surrogates – in modern presidential campaigns. Overall, our results provide little evidence that candidate spouses are used to pursue a distinct strategic objective on the campaign trail, or that usually they are effective at winning votes. However, the perception that at least some spouses and other surrogates have the potential do so seems to remain strong among campaign observers and strategists. In that case, they are likely to be active and

¹⁰ See <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/23/2020-spouses-presidential-candidates-1233092> and <https://www.apnews.com/1b5e33b807fe48fb9d7e7bcc79547af7>.

visible participants in the 2020 presidential campaign, and in future campaigns. The question is: If Bill Clinton barely influenced on voters in 2016, why should we expect another spouse or surrogate to do better?

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