

# The Vice Presidential Home State Advantage Reconsidered: Analyzing the Interactive Effect of Home State Population and Political Experience, 1884-2008

CHRISTOPHER J. DEVINE

*The Ohio State University*

KYLE C. KOPKO

*Elizabethtown College*

*Previous research has found that presidential tickets perform particularly well in a vice presidential candidate's home state when that state is relatively low in population. In this article, we argue that selecting a vice presidential candidate from a small state is not sufficient to produce a large vice presidential home state advantage; rather, state population should matter only insofar as the vice presidential candidate has extensive experience within that state's political system. Analysis of presidential election returns from 1884 through 2008 demonstrates the statistically significant interactive effect of home state population and political experience on the size of the vice presidential home state advantage. The models presented in the article perform much better than models that do not account for this interactive effect.*

Do vice presidential candidates influence voting in presidential elections? Certainly many in the media and the public think so, as indicated by the extensive media coverage of, and speculation about, possible vice presidential selections and their strategic implications for presidential elections. Political scientists, however, have questioned the theoretical and empirical bases for expecting vice presidential candidates to significantly influence presidential voting. A particular area of scholarly interest, addressed in this article, is the vice presidential home state advantage.

---

*Christopher J. Devine is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at The Ohio State University. His research interests include voting behavior, political psychology, partisanship, and ideology.*

*Kyle C. Kopko is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania. His research interests include judicial politics, political psychology, and partisanship.*

*AUTHORS' NOTE: We extend our sincerest thanks to Herbert F. Weisberg and Jeffrey L. Budziak for their helpful comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this article.*

Contrary to conventional wisdom, scholars typically find that presidential tickets do not fare significantly better than otherwise would be expected in a vice presidential candidate's home state. However, studies also indicate that vice presidential home state advantage is significantly more likely under certain conditions, most notably when vice presidential candidates come from relatively less populous states where voters are more likely to be familiar with their political views and achievements.

While previous studies have found state population to be a significant predictor of vice presidential home state advantage, we argue that such findings are based on an incomplete application of the home state advantage literature's theoretical foundation: V. O. Key's (1949) "friends and neighbors" hypothesis. A more rigorous application of this theory suggests that selecting a candidate from a relatively less populous state is not sufficient to produce a large vice presidential home state advantage. Rather, selecting a candidate from a small state should provide a significant electoral advantage only when the candidate has extensive experience serving the voters of that state as an elected representative. To evaluate this hypothesis, we test the interactive effects of state population and state political experience using an updated data set comprising presidential election returns from 1884 through 2008.

Before exploring this topic further, it is important to consider whether the vice presidential home state advantage is relevant today. Many people would argue that, whereas geographic considerations were crucial in previous eras that were characterized by salient intraparty sectional cleavages, home state considerations have played no significant role in determining vice presidential candidate selections in recent years. Indeed, most recent vice presidential candidates have come from states that were not expected to be competitive in that year's election, including Wyoming's Dick Cheney in 2000 and 2004 and Delaware's Joe Biden in 2008.

However, perceptions of vice presidential home state advantage still seem to influence vice presidential selections, and presidential campaign strategies more broadly, in important ways. In 2008, 4 of the 10 vice presidential finalists, as identified by Baumgartner (2008), represented prominent swing states in that election, and two other finalists were born in, and retained close ties to, swing states.<sup>1</sup> Also, we saw in 2008 a strong indication that presidential campaigns still believe in the likelihood of a vice presidential home state advantage. Prior to Sarah Palin's selection as John McCain's running mate, the Barack Obama campaign had engaged in an unprecedented and highly publicized effort to win traditionally Republican Alaska, even coming within four points of McCain in a July poll of Alaskans (Wohlforth 2008). However, within three weeks of Palin's selection, the Obama campaign pulled all of its television advertisements in Alaska (Harnden 2008), cut spending in the state dramatically, consolidated its two state offices into one, and canceled the scheduled opening of another state office (Quinn 2008). Apparently, the Obama campaign

1. Vice presidential finalists representing swing states included Tim Kaine (Virginia) and Evan Bayh (Indiana) on the Democratic side, and Tom Ridge (Pennsylvania) and Tim Pawlenty (Minnesota) on the Republican side. Additionally, Joe Biden of Delaware was born in Pennsylvania and heavily emphasized his roots in that state while campaigning as a vice presidential candidate, while Mitt Romney of Massachusetts was born in Michigan, where his father also served as governor.

believed, as many media commentators did,<sup>2</sup> that it could not win Alaska with Palin on the Republican ticket.

Another indication that presidential candidates give credence to the possibility of a vice presidential home state advantage came in 2004, when John Kerry selected North Carolina senator John Edwards as his running mate. Kerry's selection of Edwards seems to have been motivated, at least in part, by his hopes of winning North Carolina; in fact, the day after Kerry announced his selection, his campaign launched its first advertisements in Edwards's home state (Kornblut 2004).

Thus, while home state considerations do not determine vice presidential candidate selection and, quite likely, influence selections less than in previous years, presidential campaigns still seem to believe that vice presidential candidates can provide a home state electoral advantage. To the extent that a perceived home state advantage influences vice presidential selection, and campaign strategy more broadly, it is important to provide an improved empirical assessment of the vice presidential home state advantage and the conditions under which it is most likely to occur.

## Literature

Despite the widespread belief that party tickets enjoy extraordinary success in a vice presidential candidate's home state, evidence of a home state advantage is minimal. Research indicates that presidential tickets win the vice presidential candidate's home state one-half to two-thirds of the time, depending on the time frame used for analysis (Baumgartner 2008; Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Tubbesing 1973). Additionally, party tickets outperform their recent party predecessors in the vice presidential candidate's home state less than 60% of the time (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Tubbesing 1973). What is more, vice presidential home state advantage rarely affects the outcome of a presidential election. Adkison (1982) finds that a change in one state's vote would have changed the national election outcome in only 30% of elections between 1900 and 1980, and in only 29% of those elections would winning a larger vice presidential home state have changed the national outcome.

Previous studies find no statistically significant evidence that presidential tickets gain an electoral advantage in the vice presidential candidate's home state (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Garand 1988; Holbrook 1991; Rosenstone 1983). However, estimates of the average vice presidential home state advantage vary considerably; Garand (1988) and Rosenstone (1983) estimate the electoral advantage gained in a vice presidential candidate's home state to be, on average, 3.0% and 2.5%, respectively, while Dudley and Rapoport (1989) estimate it to be only 0.3%.

Findings also vary with regard to the factors that determine the size of a vice presidential home state advantage. Garand (1988) and Dudley and Rapoport (1989) argue that Democrats should enjoy a greater electoral advantage in the vice presidential

2. For example, one reporter said that Palin's selection "has taken Alaska away from Mr. Obama" (Harnden 2008), while another declared it "a blow to Obama's slim hopes of capturing Alaska" (Quinn 2008).

candidate's home state than Republicans because the number of inconsistent voters likely to be mobilized by a home state candidate is greater for Democrats than for Republicans. However, the vice presidential candidate's party is not a statistically significant predictor of home state advantage in Garand's study, and it is only marginally significant in Dudley and Rapoport's study. Garand also argues that vice presidential candidates from the South and West should enjoy greater home state advantages than candidates from other regions, but he finds little evidence to support this hypothesis.

The strongest empirical predictor of vice presidential home state advantage is home state population. Dudley and Rapoport (1989) find statistically significant evidence that vice presidential candidates from relatively small, less populous states tend to enjoy greater home state advantage than do candidates from larger, more populous states. Several studies of the presidential home state advantage reach the same conclusion about presidential candidates, including Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983), Mixon and Tyrone (2004), and, among Democratic presidential candidates only, Garand (1988). However, Disarro, Barber, and Rice (2007) find no support for a home state population effect at the presidential or vice presidential level.

Dudley and Rapoport's finding that state population is negatively related to the size of a vice presidential candidate's home state advantage is particularly attractive because it is consistent with the logic of the "friends and neighbors" hypothesis, from which the home state advantage literature draws its inspiration. Key (1949) first proposed this hypothesis, which states that candidates perform best within and near the locale in which they reside. Key and other scholars studying the home state advantage explain the friends and neighbors effect in terms of several cognitive and affective factors: (1) local voters are most familiar with local candidates, thereby reducing their information costs; (2) local candidates are perceived to be knowledgeable about local concerns, and more likely to direct government resources toward addressing those concerns when in office; (3) local voters are more likely to have engaged in interpersonal contact with a local candidate and individuals closely associated with the candidate; and (4) local voters tend to identify more strongly with local candidates, often viewing those candidates as "one of our own" (Disarro, Barber, and Rice 2007; Key 1949; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1983).

Key (1949) finds empirical support for the friends and neighbors hypothesis in his study of Southern Democratic gubernatorial primaries. Black and Black (1973), Tatalovich (1975), Kjar and Laband (2002), and Mixon and Tyrone (2004) find additional support for Key's hypothesis in varied geographic and electoral contexts, using diverse methodological approaches.

Whether the friends and neighbors hypothesis applies to presidential elections is a matter of scholarly dispute. Key argues that the nationalization of politics by the mid-twentieth century rendered the friends and neighbors hypothesis irrelevant to presidential elections. He explains,

In recent decades the issues and forces of national politics have tended to wear down sectional groupings. The new issues push people, wherever they live, towards divisions different from the traditional sectional cleavages and the states gradually have become more alike in the manner of their presidential voting. (1956, 26-27)

Given the consistent evidence of a statistically significant presidential home state advantage, other scholars clearly would dispute Key's argument. However, vice presidential home state advantage, on average, is not statistically significant, perhaps suggesting that the friends and neighbors hypothesis has limited applicability to presidential elections.

Considering Dudley and Rapoport's findings, it might be the case that the friends and neighbors hypothesis applies to vice presidential candidacies only when the candidate hails from a relatively small, less populous state. Indeed, the arguments used to justify the friends and neighbors hypothesis seem particularly relevant to presidential elections in relatively small states. First, voters in small states are more likely than voters in large states to be familiar with the personality and public record of a home state vice presidential candidate. We would expect this to be the case because the candidate would have faced less competition for public attention throughout his or her career in a small state with relatively few elected officials. Also, the candidate's current and past constituents should make up a greater proportion of the population in a small state than in a large state. Second, candidates from small states are more likely to be knowledgeable about, and direct government resources toward, state voters' concerns because those interests are relatively homogeneous and a greater proportion of voters stand to benefit from a localized distribution of government resources. Third, interpersonal contact between candidates and state voters is more likely to occur because candidates have to travel less broadly to reach their constituents and there is a smaller pool of voters with which candidates must interact. Finally, voters in small states are more likely to identify with local candidates because small state identities tend to be relatively homogeneous, as compared with large states that often have multiple regional identities.

Analyzing the relationship between home state population and vice presidential home state advantage also is important because presidential candidates, historically speaking, tend to select running mates from relatively large states, with the hope of maximizing the number of electoral votes derived from winning a running mate's home state. Sigelman and Wahlbeck (1997) find that home state population was one of only three statistically significant predictors of vice presidential selections between 1940 and 1992; presidential candidates during that period were more likely to select running mates from large states than small ones.<sup>3</sup> However, it should be noted that Sigelman and Wahlbeck's period of analysis is quite limited, particularly in comparison to other studies of vice presidential selection and home state population, such as Dudley and Rapoport's. Also, Baumgartner (2008) does not find home state population to be a significant predictor of vice presidential candidate selection in his analysis of the 1960-2008 period.

Hiller and Kriner (2008) also find state size to be a statistically significant predictor of vice presidential selection prior to 1972, but they find that it has not been a statistically significant predictor in elections since that time. The authors attribute this change in vice presidential selection strategy to a shift away from party leaders' domination of the

3. Because their analysis focuses on the strategic considerations of presidential candidates in selecting vice presidential running mates, Sigelman and Wahlbeck exclude from their analysis the two candidates chosen by convention delegates between 1940 and 1992, Charles McNary (1940, Republican) and Estes Kefauver (1956, Democrat).

presidential and vice presidential nomination process following the 1972 McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms, which reduced the need for presidential candidates to mollify large state or regional intraparty factions by selecting a member of that faction for vice president in order to be nominated. Still, the historical tendency toward selecting vice presidential candidates from relatively large, populous states makes evidence of a negative relationship between vice presidential home state population and home state advantage a particularly interesting and relevant matter of empirical study for political scientists and politicians alike.

Given the theoretical and practical relevance of home state population to the study of vice presidential selection and vice presidential home state advantage, it should be troubling that its effects have been conceptually underdeveloped and subjected to limited empirical analysis. In this article, we argue that a relatively small vice presidential home state, in and of itself, is not sufficient to give a presidential ticket a significant electoral advantage in that state; a significant advantage is likely only when the vice presidential candidate has extensive political experience in a relatively small home state.

To understand this study's conceptual critique, recall the factors cited by Key and other scholars to justify the friends and neighbors hypothesis: local voters' greater familiarity with a local candidate, a local candidate's greater knowledge of local voters' concerns, increased likelihood of interpersonal contact between local voters and a local candidate, and local voters' perception of a local candidate as "one of us." Simply coming from a relatively small state does not ensure access to these benefits as a vice presidential candidate. Candidates who have spent little or no time representing the state as an elected official have had little opportunity to gain the advantages just described. Conversely, elected officials from relatively small states with a great deal of experience in state politics are particularly likely to enjoy these electoral advantages. They have had more time to become familiar to voters, both publicly and through personal interaction; their lengthy service has provided extensive opportunities to learn about, and to direct government resources toward, the concerns of state voters; and repeated election likely indicates that voters perceive the candidate to be "one of us."

Given the clear theoretical relevance of home state political experience to the vice presidential home state advantage, a study accounting for experience's effects stands to provide an important contribution to the literature on this topic. Therefore, in this article, we test the interactive effects of home state population and political experience. Specifically, we hypothesize that vice presidential candidates from relatively small states, with an extensive record of experience in elected office within that state, enjoy a home state advantage that is significantly greater than that obtained by relatively inexperienced candidates or candidates from large states.<sup>4</sup>

4. We recognize the distinct possibility that our hypothesis applies to the presidential home state advantage as well as to the vice presidential home state advantage. However, in this article we focus only on the latter for two primary reasons. First, previous research consistently has found that the presidential home state advantage is statistically significant, in the aggregate. Our analysis of the presidential home state advantage, not reported in this article, confirms these findings; between 1884 and 2008, presidential candidates, on average, earned a statistically significant home state advantage of 3.51% ( $p = .000$ ). In contrast, studies of the vice presidential home state advantage, including our own, consistently find it to be, on average, small and not statistically significant. However, these studies also find that large vice presidential



## Methodology

To test the hypothesized interactive effects of home state population and political experience, this article modifies the vice presidential home state advantage model used by Dudley and Rapoport (1989). For several reasons, the Dudley and Rapoport model is the most appropriate starting point for this article's analysis. First, Dudley and Rapoport's study of vice presidential home state advantage provides our primary empirical motivation for studying the hypothesized effects of state population and state political experience. As such, their model provides the most appropriate framework for modifying their findings. Second, the Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983) model, on which Dudley and Rapoport base their analysis, is the standard model for studying home state advantage at the presidential and vice presidential levels, though it is often modified to some degree (see Disarro, Barber, and Rice 2007; Garand 1988). Third, the model's conceptualization of home state advantage as the home state's deviation from previous voting patterns relative to the national deviation from previous voting patterns is more intuitive and conceptually sound than other models used in the home state advantage literature.

Dudley and Rapoport's operationalization of home state advantage is nearly identical to that of Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983). The latter authors conceptualize a candidate's home state advantage as the difference between the home state electorate's deviation in a given election from its typical partisan voting pattern and the national electorate's deviation in that election from its typical partisan voting pattern. Formally, the dependent variable is calculated as

$$H = (S_a - S_e) - (N_a - N_e),$$

where  $H$  is the vice presidential candidate's estimated home state advantage in a given election;  $S_a$  is the vote percentage won by the vice presidential candidate's ticket in his or her home state in a given election;  $S_e$  is the average vote percentage won by the vice presidential candidate's party in his or her home state over the five most recent presidential elections;  $N_a$  is the vote percentage won by the vice presidential candidate's ticket nationally in a given election; and  $N_e$  is the average vote percentage won by the vice presidential candidate's party nationally over the five most recent elections.

---

home state advantages are likely to occur under certain conditions. Given the distinctively conditional nature of the vice presidential home state advantage, we find it particularly important to conduct an improved analysis of the conditions under which large vice presidential home state advantages occur, in contrast to the normal pattern of null results. Second, vice presidential selections traditionally have been viewed more as matters of campaign strategy than as matters of shaping future government policy because of the limited constitutional role granted to the vice presidency and the far more visible role played by presidential candidates in presidential elections. Whereas presidential candidates are likely to be selected primarily on the basis of their policies and their appeal to the nation as a whole, instead of their appeal to a specific geographic constituency, vice presidential candidates are more likely to be selected on the basis of targeted considerations, including, but not limited to, the need to win a particular state in which the presidential candidate's chances of victory are uncertain. Thus, the determination of whether, and under what conditions, large vice presidential home state advantages are likely to occur is more crucial to evaluating the criteria relevant to selecting vice presidential candidates than the criteria relevant to selecting presidential candidates.

Whereas Lewis-Beck and Rice use raw vote percentages to calculate the home state advantage, Dudley and Rapoport use two-party vote shares only. Dudley and Rapoport modified the home state advantage measure in this way because they recognized that third-party candidacies sometimes substantially reduce the vote percentage earned by a presidential ticket, thereby distorting direct comparisons of past and present party performance. In this article, we only use two-party vote shares.

To properly evaluate previous conclusions about population's effect on the size of the vice presidential home state advantage, our empirical model contains each of Dudley and Rapoport's five independent variables, while adding state political experience and its interaction with state population.

The five independent variables used in Dudley and Rapoport's model are vice presidential candidate party identification (Republicans are coded 1, and Democrats are coded 0), presidential incumbency (incumbents are coded 1, and nonincumbents are coded 0), vice presidential incumbency (incumbents are coded 1, and nonincumbents are coded 0), previous political positions held by the vice presidential candidate (current or past senators or governors are coded 1, and all other candidates are coded 0), and state population. We operationalize state population as the proportion of the national population represented by the vice presidential candidate's home state.<sup>5</sup>

To Dudley and Rapoport's model, we add home state political experience and its interaction with home state population. Political experience is operationalized in two ways: as years of experience at any level of elected office within the state, and as years of experience in statewide elected office only.<sup>6</sup> The first political experience measure is calculated as the number of years in which the vice presidential candidate held elected office in his or her home state, at any level of government, including municipal, county, state, and representation in the U.S. Congress. The second political experience measure is calculated as the number of years in which the vice presidential candidate held an elected office representing the entire state population. By this definition, statewide political offices include senator, governor, lieutenant governor, U.S. representative at large, and any elected office within the state executive branch.<sup>7</sup>

We include these two distinct measures of home state political experience in our analyses because each is relevant to the vice presidential home state advantage in a

5. State and national population figures were obtained from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, published by the U.S. Census Bureau. This is the same resource used by Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983). We used U.S. Census Bureau population projections for elections occurring between decennial census reports. When population projections were not available, particularly for elections before 1930, we estimated population figures in relation to the preceding and successive census reports.

6. To determine which years, and in which offices, the vice presidential candidates served, we relied principally on two sources: the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (<http://bioguide.congress.gov>) and the National Governors Association website (<http://www.nga.org>) (accessed September 21, 2009).

7. We calculated the number of years in elected office by subtracting the first year the candidate served in an elected office from the last year he or she served in that office. For example, we coded John Edwards, whose only experience in elected office was serving as North Carolina's senator from 1999 to 2005, as having five years of state political experience when he was selected as John Kerry's running mate in 2004 ( $2004 - 1999 = 5$ ).



different way. Holding statewide elected office seems likeliest to yield a large home state advantage because it affords the officeholder the opportunity to become familiar to, interact with, and serve the interests of *all* state residents, as opposed to a subset of state residents. However, operationalizing state political experience only as the number of years in statewide elected office would fail to capture other forms of political experience likely to provide vice presidential candidates with electoral benefits among a significant subset of state voters, if not all state voters.

For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 and 1936 running mate, John Nance Garner, served the 15th District of Texas as its U.S. representative from 1903 to 1933, during which time he also served as House minority leader and Speaker of the House. Garner's long and distinguished service in the U.S. House makes it highly probable that he would have enjoyed the electoral benefits likely to yield a large home state advantage. However, operationalizing state political experience only as the number of years spent serving in statewide elected office would fail to capture the effects of Garner's home state political experience because he never served in statewide office. A similar case could be made for many other vice presidential candidates included in our data.

While there are good reasons to believe that either experience measure is more directly relevant to the vice presidential home state advantage, when interacted with home state population, the measure of experience at any level of state government is more likely to be a statistically significant predictor. The reason for this expectation is simple. Statewide officeholders are visible and familiar to all voters in small states and large states alike. Theoretically, then, the effects of statewide political experience on the size of the vice presidential home state advantage are not likely to vary between large and small states enough for this interaction to be statistically significant. On the other hand, elected officials serving below the statewide level typically are visible and familiar to a subpopulation of their constituents only. In relatively less populous states, these constituencies tend to represent a larger proportion of the state population than in relatively populous states. Therefore, the effects of experience at any level of state government *should* vary between large and small states enough for this interaction to be statistically significant, with its effects being greater in small states than in large states.

To test the hypothesized interactive effects of state population and state political experience, we created two interaction terms, each multiplying the candidate's years of home state political experience at the statewide level *or* at any level of state government by the percentage of the national population represented by his or her home state.<sup>8</sup>

8. Because our hypothesis predicts that a vice presidential candidate's home state advantage increases as state political experience *increases* and as state population *decreases*, we considered that the interaction term might be best constructed so that its maximum values would represent extensive elected experience in a very small state. To that end, we tried operationalizing state population as the state population's percentage of the national population, subtracted from 100, and interacted that measure with state political experience. However, operationalizing state population in this way does not change any substantive conclusions drawn from analyses using the raw state population percentage of the national population. In order to make our analyses more readily interpretable, then, we use the raw population percentage and its interaction with state political experience for all calculations presented in this article.

## Data

We test this article's hypothesis using presidential election returns from 1884 through 2008,<sup>9</sup> which were obtained from the online CQ Press Voting and Elections Collection.<sup>10</sup> These data include 32 presidential elections and 64 vice presidential candidacies. After excluding cases in which the vice presidential candidate came from the same state as another major party presidential or vice presidential candidate, 56 vice presidential candidacies remain available for empirical analysis.<sup>11</sup>

Table 1 presents the estimated home state advantages for all 56 vice presidential candidacies included in our data, along with the candidates' home state proportion of the national population, the number of years the candidate served in statewide elected office, and the number of years the candidate served in elected office at any level of state government. On average, the vice presidential home state advantage is not statistically significant ( $p = .316$ ).<sup>12</sup> The 0.69% mean home state advantage that we find is slightly higher than Dudley and Rapoport's (1989) estimate of 0.3%, and quite a bit lower than Rosenstone's (1983) 2.5% and Garand's (1988) 3.0%.<sup>13</sup>

In light of this study's hypothesis, it is worth noting that the nine largest home state advantages occurred in relatively small states (as determined by a median split of the population data). Also, the 10 candidates earning the largest home state advantages averaged 19.2 years of experience as elected officials in their states and 12.4 years of experience as elected statewide officeholders, compared with sample means of 14.0 and

9. We begin our analysis with the 1884 election because, as Lewis-Beck and Rice explain, the elections immediately preceding 1884 occurred too soon after the Civil War and Reconstruction to permit meaningful comparisons of present and recent national voting trends, as many Southern states were unable to vote during those periods. Also, fundamental changes in the two-party system—including the Democratic-Republican Party's dominance in the 1820s, the Whig Party's emergence in the 1830s, and Republican Party's emergence and the Whig Party's disappearance in the 1850s—make direct comparisons of present and past two-party presidential votes impossible for many of the elections prior to 1884. Nonetheless, to assess the possible limitations of our data, we replicated all analyses presented in this article using an expanded data set comprising presidential election results from 1848 to 2008. The substantive conclusions drawn from our analysis of the 1848-2008 data are no different than those drawn from our analysis of the 1884-2008 data. Therefore, the conclusions presented in this article should not be regarded as the product of a limited data set. In fact, we believe that the 1884-2008 data set represents a more accurate measure of vice presidential home state advantage, given the measurement problems in the pre-1884 data just described, and that is why we use it in all of this article's analyses.

10. See: <http://library.cqpress.com/elections/export.php>. Election data for 2008 were obtained from the Federal Elections Commission website, <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2008/2008presgeresults.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2009).

11. Excluded candidacies include those of Levi Morton (1888), Whitelaw Reid (1892), James Sherman (1912), Thomas Marshall (1916), Charles Fairbanks (1916), Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (1960), Sargent Shriver (1972), and Lloyd Bentsen (1988). We exclude Sherman (1912) because the Progressive Party ticket headed by Theodore Roosevelt, a fellow New Yorker, earned more electoral votes than the Republican Party in that state, thus warranting its treatment as a major party.

12. We conducted a one-sample mean comparison test to determine whether the average home state advantage was distinguishable from zero.

13. Rosenstone and Garand's reliance on more limited time frames and methodologies almost certainly is responsible for their findings of a much larger vice presidential home state advantage.

**TABLE 1**  
**Vice Presidential Home State Advantage, 1884-2008**

<i>Party/ Year</i>	<i>Home State Advantage</i>	<i>State Population as a Share of National Population</i>	<i>Statewide Political Experience</i>	<i>Total State Political Experience</i>
R2008	2.00	0.23	1	10
D2008	6.00	0.29	35	38
R2004	6.97	0.17	10	10
D2004	0.01	2.91	5	5
R2000	10.64	0.18	10	10
D2000	7.89	1.21	15	25
R1996	-6.85	6.84	0	18
D1996	-4.76	2.0	7	15
R1992	2.64	2.22	7	11
D1992	-0.81	1.97	7	15
R1988	1.52	2.26	7	11
D1988	—	—	—	—
R1984	4.03	6.79	0	4
D1984	1.43	7.48	0	5
R1980	1.84	6.28	0	4
D1980	2.59	1.8	16	16
R1976	-3.92	1.06	7	25
D1976	0.99	1.82	16	16
R1972	1.57	1.95	1	5
D1972	—	—	—	—
R1968	-1.04	1.86	1	5
D1968	13.32	0.49	13	19
R1964	-8.37	9.21	0	15
D1964	0.51	1.85	15	19
R1960	—	—	—	—
D1960	-14.71	5.37	11	23
R1956	-0.62	7.2	1	5
D1956	0.28	1.83	7	17
R1952	3.67	7.5	1	5
D1952	-7.16 <sup>+</sup>	1.98	6	15
R1948	3.68	7.13	9	23
D1948	5.18	1.97	21	35
R1944	-0.97	5.19	9	9
D1944	-5.70	2.77	9	9
R1940	0.64	0.84	23	23
D1940	-0.93	1.94	0	0
R1936	-1.30	6.14	0	0
D1936	-3.97	4.79	34	0
R1932	0.18	1.46	37	19
D1932	1.49	4.5	34	0
R1928	12.38	1.56	37	19
D1928	-0.40	1.54	26	15
R1924	0.82	6.23	0	0
D1924	4.23	1.21	3	1
R1920	0.83	3.66	13	4

TABLE 1 *Continued*

<i>Party/ Year</i>	<i>Home State Advantage</i>	<i>State Population as a Share of National Population</i>	<i>Statewide Political Experience</i>	<i>Total State Political Experience</i>
D1920	-4.66	9.87	2	0
R1912	—	—	—	—
D1912	-0.84	2.91	4	4
R1908	1.03	9.94	19	0
D1908	3.05	3.03	4	0
R1904	-2.47	3.22	7	7
D1904	3.41	1.32	15	12
R1900	-0.22	9.75	3	1
D1900	1.17	6.47	7	0
R1896	10.36	2.45	11	0
D1896	-9.59	0.98	0	0
R1892	—	—	—	—
D1892	2.26	6.25	7	0
R1888	—	—	—	—
D1888	-0.56	6.12	19	17
R1884	-0.25	6.28	24	11
D1884	-0.06	3.84	15	10

Note: Like Lewis-Beck and Rice (1983) and Dudley and Rapoport (1989), we calculate home state advantages using state and national data from the five preceding elections, except for 1888 and 1884, when we use the four preceding elections and three preceding elections, respectively.

+ Harry Truman did not receive any votes for president in Alabama in 1948 because the state's ballot listed Strom Thurmond as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate. Therefore, when calculating Alabama Senator John Sparkman's 1952 home state advantage, we treat all votes for Thurmond in 1948 as votes for the Democratic Party presidential candidate.

7.0 years, respectively.<sup>14</sup> These findings provide initial support for the hypothesized effects of home state population and home state political experience, but more direct testing is needed to draw firm conclusions.

Before directly testing this article's hypothesis, it is useful to replicate Dudley and Rapoport's model with the addition of all vice presidential candidacies since the time of their study. Our objective in doing so is to demonstrate that this article's empirical critique of Dudley and Rapoport's substantive conclusions does not hinge on the addition of new vice presidential candidacies to our data set. Indeed, there are no substantive differences between Dudley and Rapoport's original findings and those obtained by testing their model with our updated data set. As shown in the first column of Table 2, the population variable is statistically significant and negatively signed ( $p = .004$ ), just as Dudley and Rapoport find. Party identification is the only other variable to reach statistical significance ( $p = .044$ ), with Republican vice presidential candidates earning larger home state advantages than Democratic candidates.

We use two models to predict the size of the vice presidential home state advantage. The second column of Table 2 provides the results of a model including each of Dudley

14. The 10 candidates earning the smallest home state advantages averaged 15.6 years as elected officials in their states and 4.0 years in elected statewide office, and only four hailed from large states.

**TABLE 2**  
**Models of the Vice Presidential Home State Advantage**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Dudley and Rapoport Model</i>	<i>Statewide Experience Model</i>	<i>Total Political Experience Model</i>
Party ID	2.37* (1.36)	2.53* (1.34)	2.43* (1.31)
Incumbent vice president	0.58 (2.34)	0.50 (2.31)	0.79 (2.26)
Incumbent president	-1.57 (1.82)	-1.47 (1.80)	-1.95 (1.76)
Senator or governor	-1.12 (1.51)	-1.76 (1.83)	-1.75 (1.50)
Population	-0.74** (0.27)	-0.41* (0.31)	-0.05 (0.39)
Statewide political experience	—	0.27* (0.13)	—
Population * statewide experience	—	-0.04 (0.05)	—
Political experience	—	—	0.24* (0.10)
Population * political experience	—	—	-0.06* (0.02)
Constant	3.43* (1.83)	1.34 (2.07)	0.59 (2.17)
<i>N</i>	56	56	56
Adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.085	0.132	0.152

+  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ , one-tailed test.

and Rapoport's independent variables, plus a variable representing the vice presidential candidate's years of experience in statewide elected office and that variable's interaction with home state population. The third column of Table 2 provides the results of the same model, but this time using a measure of the vice presidential candidate's years of experience in elected office at any level of government within his or her home state to capture political experience.<sup>15</sup> For reasons discussed in the previous section, it is more likely that the interaction term would be a statistically significant predictor of the vice presidential home state advantage when measuring experience as years in office at any level of state government.

The results presented in the second and third columns of Table 2 support our hypothesis. Whereas the interaction of home state population and statewide political experience is not statistically significant in the statewide political experience model, the

15. In response to an anonymous reviewer's suggestion, we conducted additional analyses, including a dummy variable representing whether vice presidential candidates were selected by convention delegates (pre-1940) or presidential candidates (1940-2008, excluding McNary in 1940 and Kefauver in 1956). This variable was not statistically significant in any of the models we tested, nor did it change the statistical significance of other variables in those models. Also, when testing our models exclusively among convention- or candidate-selected running mates, we found no important substantive differences between these results and the results presented in Table 2.

interaction of home state population and experience at any level of state government is statistically significant in the total political experience model ( $p = .013$ ). The negatively signed coefficient associated with the latter model's interaction term indicates, as expected, that the vice presidential home state advantage increases as home state population decreases *and* as years of experience at any level of state government increases. Further attesting to the value of interacting population and political experience, the total political experience model yields an adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.152, which is nearly double the 0.085 adjusted  $R^2$  value of the Dudley and Rapoport model.<sup>16</sup>

The statistical significance and direction of the total political experience model's interaction term supports our contention, contra Dudley and Rapoport, that selecting a vice presidential candidate from a relatively small state is not sufficient to produce a large home state advantage. Rather, coming from a small state increases a vice presidential candidate's home state advantage only insofar as the candidate has extensive experience representing that state as an elected official. Indeed, the population variable is not statistically significant once the interactive effects of home state population and political experience are accounted for in the total political experience model.

However, interpreting this or any other lower-order interaction term based solely on raw regression coefficients is ill advised. As Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006) and Braumoeller (2004) note, the statistical significance of a lower-order interaction term cannot be interpreted directly from a model's raw coefficients and standard errors. Instead, a graphical representation is most appropriate for evaluating the interaction term's marginal effects. We present political experience's marginal effects on the vice presidential home state advantage in Figure 1, using the results of the total political experience model.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 1 confirms the hypothesized interactive effects of state population and political experience. As state population increases, the marginal effect of political experience on a vice presidential candidate's home state advantage decreases. However, judging by the confidence intervals shown in Figure 1, the effect of experience is statistically insignificant in relatively populous states.<sup>18</sup> For candidates from less populous states, experience has a larger effect, and it is statistically significant. The vertical line in Figure 1 represents the median state population value for all states from 1884 through 2008. As this figure illustrates, presidential tickets can expect to earn a statistically significant vice presidential home state advantage when they select a running mate who has extensive elected political experience within one of the 25 least populous states.

16. To provide an additional basis for evaluating the relative merits of our total political experience model and the Dudley and Rapoport model, we used the coefficients from both models (excluding the 2008 observations) to predict Joe Biden and Sarah Palin's 2008 home state advantages and then compared these predictions to the candidates' actual home state advantages. Our model came within just 1.63% of predicting Biden's actual home state advantage, and within just 1.65% of predicting Palin's. The Dudley and Rapoport model, on the other hand, underestimated Biden's home state advantage by 4.05% and underestimated Palin's by 2.60%.

17. We employ the GRINTER command in Stata to graph the marginal effects of state political experience on vice presidential home state advantage.

18. We report a 90% confidence interval in Figure 1 because we employ one-tailed tests in our statistical models. One-tailed hypothesis tests are appropriate because we posit a directional hypothesis.



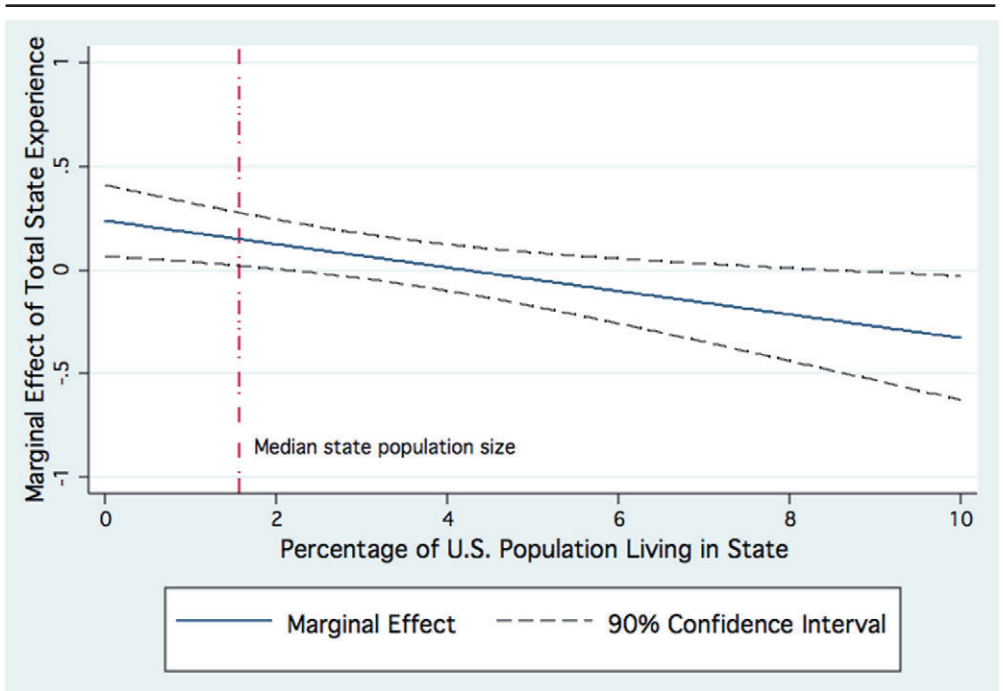


FIGURE 1. The Marginal Effect of Experience on Home State Advantage.

## Discussion

Our findings indicate that scholars should reevaluate their understanding of the factors that shape vice presidential home state advantages. Whereas Dudley and Rapoport (1989) conclude that vice presidential candidates from relatively small, less populous states provide their party's presidential ticket with a significant electoral boost in that state, our findings indicate that selecting a vice presidential candidate from a relatively small state benefits a presidential ticket only insofar as the vice presidential candidate has extensive political experience within that state. Moreover, the interaction of state population and political experience significantly predicts the vice presidential home state advantage only when measuring the latter in terms of years of experience at any level of state government.

This article's findings are consistent with Key's (1949) and other scholars' theoretical justification for expecting candidates to poll best among local voters. Vice presidential candidates are more consequential for voters' electoral decisions when their home states are relatively small and less populous because candidates from these states should be more familiar to state voters, more likely to have engaged in interpersonal contact with a large proportion of state voters, more likely to understand and respond to state voters' concerns, and more likely to be viewed by state voters as "one of us." Vice presidential candidates with limited or no political experience in their home states have little

opportunity to capitalize on these electoral advantages, while candidates with extensive home state political experience have ample opportunity to do so.

Additionally, this article contributes to scholars' broader understanding of the relevance of political experience in the vice presidential selection process. Baumgartner's (2008) study of vice presidential selections since 1960 finds years of political experience to be a statistically significant predictor of vice presidential selection. While presidential candidates' motivations for selecting experienced vice presidential candidates certainly go beyond the desire to win a running mate's home state, this article's findings suggest that selecting an experienced running mate might serve a presidential ticket well at the state level, as well as at the national level.

In light of this article's findings, future research into the determinants of vice presidential home state advantage should account for candidates' experience in elected office within their home state, particularly with regard to experience in relatively small home states. Presidential candidates also would be wise to heed these findings when evaluating the likely electoral advantage to be gained by selecting a vice presidential candidate from a given state, although these findings indicate that gaining a significant advantage is likely only within small states that offer few electoral votes. In that sense, selecting a vice presidential candidate in the hope of winning his or her home state seems ill advised, unless the state is relatively small and highly competitive, the prospective vice presidential candidate has extensive elected experience within that state's political system, and the national election is expected to be so competitive that the vice presidential candidate's home state quite plausibly could determine its outcome.

## References

- Adkison, Daniel M. 1982. "The Electoral Significance of the Vice Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 12 (Summer): 330-36.
- Baumgartner, Jody C. 2008. "The Veepstakes: Forecasting Vice Presidential Selection in 2008." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41 (October): 765-72.
- Black, Earl, and Merle Black. 1973. "The Wallace Vote in Alabama: A Multiple Regression Analysis." *Journal of Politics* 35 (August): 730-36.
- Brambor, Thomas, William Roberts Clark, and Matt Golder. 2006. "Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses." *Political Analysis* 14 (Winter): 63-82.
- Braumoeller, Bear F. 2004. "Hypothesis Testing and Multiplicative Interaction Terms." *International Organization* 58 (October): 807-20.
- Disarro, Brian, Jillian Barber, and Tom W. Rice. 2007. "The Home State Effect in Presidential Elections: Advances in the Study of Localism." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37 (September): 558-66.
- Dudley, Robert L., and Ronald B. Rapoport. 1989. "Vice-Presidential Candidates and the Home State Advantage: Playing Second Banana at Home and on the Road." *American Journal of Political Science* 33 (May): 537-40.
- Garand, James C. 1988. "Localism and Regionalism in Presidential Elections: Is There a Home State or Regional Advantage?" *Political Research Quarterly* 41 (March): 85-103.
- Harnden, Toby. 2008. "Obama Targets Seven Swing States as Dreams of a Landslide Win Fade." *Daily Telegraph* (London), September 10, p. 15.
- Hiller, Mark, and Douglas Kriner. 2008. "Institutional Change and the Dynamics of Vice Presidential Selection." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38 (September): 401-21.

- Holbrook, Thomas M. 1991. "Presidential Elections in Space and Time." *American Journal of Political Science* 35 (February): 91-109.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Tom Rice. 1983. "Localism in Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 27 (August): 548-56.
- Key, V. O., Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Random House.
- . 1956. *American State Politics: An Introduction*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Kjar, Scott A., and David N. Laband. 2002. "On 'Home Grown-ness' in Politics: Evidence from the 1998 Election for Alabama's Third Congressional District." *Public Choice* 112 (July): 143-50.
- Kornblut, Anne E. 2004. "Edwards Influence in South Contested." *Boston Globe*, July 8, p. A18.
- Mixon, Franklin G., Jr., and Matthew Tyrone. 2004. "The 'Home Grown' Presidency: Empirical Evidence on Localism in Presidential Voting, 1972-2000." *Applied Economics* 36 (September): 1745-49.
- Quinn, Steve. 2008. "Obama Campaign Quiet since Palin Announcement." Associated Press State and Local Wire, September 24.
- Rosenstone, Steven J. 1983. *Forecasting Presidential Elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Sigelman, Lee, and Paul J. Wahlbeck. 1997. "The 'Veepstakes': Strategic Choice in Presidential Running Mate Selection." *American Political Science Review* 91 (December): 855-64.
- Tatalovich, Raymond. 1975. "'Friends and Neighbors' Voting: Mississippi, 1943-73." *Journal of Politics* 37 (August): 807-14.
- Tubbesing, Carl D. 1973. "Vice Presidential Candidates and the Home State Advantage: Or, 'Tom Who?' Was Tom Eagleton in Missouri?" *Western Political Quarterly* 26 (December): 702-16.
- Wohlforth, Charles. 2008. "Claiming the Last Frontier: Can Obama Break the Democrats' 44-Year Dry Spell in Alaska?" *The New Republic*, July 23. <http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/claiming-the-last-frontier> (accessed October 18, 2010).