

# Spouses as campaign surrogates

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Spouses of presidential candidates are employed in campaigns more strategically and intensively than ever before. New research by political scientists concludes that the ability of presidential and vice-presidential candidates' spouses to act as campaign surrogates may contribute to the successes and failures on the campaign trail.

Political scientists Susan A. MacManus and Andrew F. Quecan (both University of South Florida, Tampa Campus) analyze spouses' appearances on the 2004 campaign trail in “Spouses as Campaign Surrogates: Strategic Appearances by Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates' Wives in the 2004 election”, an article which appears in the April issue of PS: Political Science and Politics, a journal of the American Political Science Association (APSA).

The full article is available online at

<http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/PSApr08MacManusQuecan.pdf>

After collecting data from Labor Day until Election Day 2004, the authors examine spouses' appearances on behalf of the Bush-Cheney and Kerry-Edwards campaigns. Specifically, they empirically analyze the frequency, timing, and structure of such appearances on the campaign trail across six dimensions: (1) which states (battleground vs. non-battleground) were visited and how often; (2) the timing of the visits—early vs. late; (3) the nature of the appearance—solo or jointly with the candidate; (4) the type of event—rally, town hall meeting, coffee, fundraiser, or roundtable discussion; (5) the targeted audience—general population, party activists, women, racial/ethnic

groups, seniors, college students, military, and other; and (6) the substantive focus—health, war/national security, education, the economy and jobs, or Get-Out-The-Vote.

The study's findings show that spousal appearance strategies were constantly being adjusted by the campaigns, often in reaction to polls measuring spouses' popularity and a state's competitiveness. "This first empirical analysis of wives as surrogate candidates on the presidential campaign trail clearly shows they were strategically used in the 2004 election," observe the authors. They conclude by noting that "it is evident, especially in this media age, that we must analyze how effectively the appearances of spouses are used to complement the candidates' visits to key electoral battleground states and the role spouses may play in candidates' successes or failures."

In this remarkable election year, which includes the first possible former president in the role of a candidate's spouse, this new research establishes an important baseline against which to measure the use of candidate spouses as surrogates in presidential election campaigns in the United States.

Source: American Political Science Association

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