

A Return to Shoe Leather Politicking:

The effects of voter contact strategies on local election outcomes

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Abstract

Modern day political campaigns are starting to look more and more like the campaigns of days past, with decreasing emphasis on mass media methods of contacting voters - such as television and radio – to increasing direct voter contact, or “voter connection,” in the form of door knocking and phone banking. At the local level, these types of voter contact strategies have always been used but rarely looked at in terms of political research. Most campaign effects literature not only looks at higher-profile races, but also focuses on aggregate measures of campaign effectiveness - such as overall spending or intensity - as opposed to the effects of individual activities. As well, the literature tends to look at campaign effectiveness in terms of voter turnout, as opposed to election outcomes. This paper looks at the effects of voter contact activities in two types of local election campaigns – for state house of representatives and state senate. In these local-level races, I will show that candidates who run larger-scale voter contact campaigns will be more likely to win election than their counterparts who rely on other methods.

Introduction

In recent years, much attention has been paid to the effects of political campaigns on voting behavior – analyzing how they serve both as catalysts for voter turnout and also for affecting vote choice. However, while most of the literature looks at campaign effects in terms of either dollar amounts spent or advertising (mostly negative), this paper focuses on the effects of campaign voter contact activities on election outcomes (see, for example, Partin, 2001, and Lau, et. al., 1999). For the purposes of this paper, voter contact, or “field” activities (as they are termed in the campaign world) consist of activities by which potential voters are directly contacted by a campaign or by a

candidate in order to urge them to get out and vote and/or to vote for a specific candidate. The key characteristic of these types of activities is direct contact with the voter.

In June of 2001, *Washington Post* reporter David S. Broder wrote an article that suggested that campaigns were rethinking their prevalent high-tech, media-focused strategies of winning elections and returning to the old adage, “the personal is political.” The article, entitled “Shoe Leather Politicking,” recounts a groundbreaking 2000 study by Yale Professors Alan Gerber and Donald Green that found a profound effect on voter turnout created by personal contacts with potential voters.¹

In November of 2000, long before Broder’s article was published, U.S. Senate candidate Jon Corzine shocked the campaign world by spending a record \$63 million to win election to office. While most of those funds went to advertising and direct mail (likely due to New Jersey’s precarious position between two extremely expensive media markets – New York and Philadelphia), another portion went to employing an army of “field” workers, charged with knocking on potential voters’ doors in order to get-out-the-vote.² Corzine’s nationally significant campaign recognized what folks who have been running local campaigns have known for years: it is easier to get someone to go to the polls when there is someone at the door motivating them to go.

However, at the federal level the Corzine case is unique. The dynamics of campaigns are different at the local level than at the congressional, state, or national levels. The primary difference between campaign types is district size. A state house or senate district is usually about 1/10 the size of a congressional district. Another factor is money. With a smaller constituency and less voters to contact, local campaigns need not spend, nor can they raise, as much money as a candidate for higher office. Given these differences, local campaigns are forced to utilize different tactics than do campaigns for higher office, which must use mass-media tactics to reach vast numbers of potential voters, and may only supplement such activities with a field program. Rather than broadcast through the airwaves, a local campaign message must, in many cases, be taken to the streets via direct voter contact by candidates and campaigns if it is to be relayed at all.

The New Mexico Case³

Campaigns for the state legislature throughout New Mexico, and for City Council in Albuquerque, New Mexico, are characterized by a candidate’s ability to contact voters and effectively communicate his or her message. I conducted interviews with several candidates for the New Mexico state legislature in 2000 and for the Albuquerque City Council in 2001. The interviews were conducted in December, 2000 and October, 2001, respectively. What candidates and campaign managers have to say about their efforts is compelling. According to State Representative Al Park (D-Albuquerque), first elected in 2000, his tight, 190-vote win in a tough central Albuquerque swing district would never

¹ David S. Broder, “Shoe Leather Politicking,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 2001, p. A29.

² “Corzine Hires Homeless in Campaign,” Associated Press, November 3, 2000.

³ I wish to thank NM State Representative Al Park, Griego for City Council campaign manager Eli Lee, and NM Victory 2000 Director B. Scott Nunnery for their participation in this study.

have been possible without going door-to-door. In an interview, he stated, “I think the deciding factor to the outcome of the election was that I made going door-to-door my primary campaign tactic. I visited some of those voters’ houses 2 or 3 times. They really knew me by the time Election Day rolled around.”

Eli Lee, campaign manager for Albuquerque city councilor Eric Griego - elected in 2001 - echoes Park’s sentiments, arguing that the campaign’s voter contact operation (which included door knocking and phone banking by the candidate and volunteers) was responsible for the councilor’s sizeable, 2-to-1 win over the incumbent and two other challengers. “Our field operation was second-to-none,” Lee stated, “We had upwards of 250 volunteers knocking on doors and phone banking over the course of the campaign. Our opponents didn’t come close to matching that kind of voter contact.”

Scott Nunnery, director of the 2000 New Mexico Democratic Coordinated Campaign, which staged a massive voter identification and Get-Out-The-Vote program, attributes Al Gore’s slim New Mexico win to the campaign’s voter contact program. Nunnery also argues that many Democratic state legislative candidates, including Park, benefited from the aggressive efforts of the campaign. Regarding the Democrats’ efforts, Nunnery stated, “I predicted in June (of 2000) that we would win this state if we executed our program well. On November 7, we had people literally pulling folks off their couches on Election Day to get them to the polls. We had people giving folks coffee in line at 6:45 PM to keep them there until they voted. Those efforts paid off for Gore and the state legislative candidates.”

Based on these and other interviews, the anecdotal effects of direct contact field activities are powerful. Although the focus of my study has been on New Mexico elections, there is also evidence to suggest a resurgence of shoe leather politicking across the country. In his article on the Gerber and Green study, *Washington Post* reporter David Broder also interviewed then-chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Joe Andrew. Based on his experience as the Indiana Democratic chairman, Andrew was convinced that “a combination of modern technology and old-fashioned shoe leather (could) produce dramatic results.”⁴ As well, Broder notes an upsurge in person-to-person campaigning by national organizations such as the AFL-CIO, the NRA, and the Christian Coalition.

These anecdotes make a strong argument for the effect of field activities on election outcomes. It would seem that shoe leather politicking is responsible for electing an increasing number of its practitioners to office – especially at the local level. But is this really the case? Are shoe leather campaigns really causing these important electoral wins?

In this paper I will show that field activities are, in fact, crucial for electing candidates to office at the local level. The data reveal that a candidate’s increase in “shoe leather activity” causes an increase in the likelihood that he or she will be elected to office. However, before assessing the data, it is important to understand their place in the theoretical argument for campaigns’ effectiveness.

⁴ Broder, p. A29.

The Argument for Campaign Effects

Based on the anecdotal evidence provided by the Broder article and interviews with local office candidates, I hypothesize that increases in campaign field activities lead to increases in electoral gains. Theoretically, candidates who utilize a greater level of voter contact activities should be more likely to be elected to office than their opponents who do not engage in such activities, or who do so at lower levels. Certainly, there are some circumstances in which this hypothesis should not hold, as in the case of incumbents. I will discuss this assertion in more detail at a later point.

In addition to the anecdotal evidence, the hypotheses I present herein are based on two main theories that have been vigorously tested in the literature. The first theory suggests that campaigns and, more specifically, campaign information, have an important effect on election outcomes. The second finds incumbency to be a strong predictor of election outcomes.

Albeit controversial, there is a solid stock of literature that supports the legitimacy of the campaign effects theory. Holbrook's *Do Campaigns Matter* (1996), for example, presents a whole host of evidence on the matter, citing evidence that a significant number of people change their minds about who to vote for during the course of a campaign. Holbrook notes that, as early as 1942, studies found that campaigns have a significant effect on election outcomes. For example, in their panel study, Lazarsfeld et. al., found that as much as 8% of the electorate will change their mind about who to vote for during the course of a campaign (1944). This finding is supported more recently by a panel study conducted by Finkel (1993), but at a smaller margin (4.8%) (p. 15-16). Such findings, while on their surface insignificant, suggest that in a tight election, campaigns can swing enough voters to tip the scales in the opposite direction.

Even more generous, however, is Holbrook himself, who, after analyzing ANES vote decision data from 1952-1992, concludes that, "an average of 63% of all voters decided how to vote by the end of the (presidential) nominating conventions" (p. 7). Holbrook further argues, "The flip side to this, however, is that the remaining 37% constitute a significant portion of the electorate that, if mobilized by a campaign, can play an important role in the outcome" (p. 12).

Changing voters' minds and mobilizing them is not done by magic, however. Campaigns perform this feat by disseminating information to the electorate. Holbrook argues that the campaign's primary function is to influence public opinion by providing the electorate with information regarding the candidate (p. 5).

Popkin (1991) is especially convinced of the importance of campaign information, arguing, "Campaigns make a difference because voters have limited information about government... They are open to influence by campaigners who offer more information or better explanations about the way in which government activities affect them" (p. 70). As well, Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar (1993) also stress the importance of campaign information noting that, "What voters learn during the campaign

affects their evaluations of the candidates...Overall the evidence clearly shows that campaigns affect votes” (p. 187).

Salmore and Salmore (1989) and Wattenberg (1990) find that campaign information and candidate-centered campaigns are even beginning to outweigh the information provided by the parties. This suggests a decreasing dependence upon party information and party cues when a voter is making a choice at the polls, elevating the importance of the individual campaign and its ability to affect the election’s outcome. Additionally, Bartels (1993) finds an independent campaign effect on changes in candidate evaluations during the 1980 election, and suggests that if information changes candidate perceptions, then it can also affect vote choice.

The evidence cited thus far presents a strong argument in favor of the campaign’s ability to affect the outcome of an election. The campaign’s primary function is to provide information that is vital to affecting perceptions about the candidate, which can ultimately lead to affecting vote choice. Most of this evidence, however, applies to national-level elections, which begs the question, “What about the sub-national level?”

There is quite a bit of research that supports these national findings at the sub-national and local levels, and then some. Partin (2001), for example, finds that campaign intensity in gubernatorial elections affects campaign outcomes. According to the author, “[T]he conclusion that campaigns for governor influence levels of information is suggestive of an informative role for campaigns. If these contests successfully dispense information to individual voters...then ultimately that information may help shape and affect vote choice” (p. 133). Hogan (1999) also finds support for the campaign effects theory of vote choice in his study of campaign influences on voter participation at the local level, stating, “voter characteristics may explain why voters go to the polls, but campaign(s) explain how they vote once they get there” (p. 415).

Vital to my argument are two components of the literature on campaign effects, especially since they apply to the local level (on which this paper focuses). The first suggests that the further toward the top of the ballot the office, the more information there is available about the candidates for that office. Given a higher level of information, a voter is more likely to use that information, as opposed to an informal cue such as race, gender, or incumbency, in order to make their vote choice decision.

Many studies have analyzed the effects of low-information levels on vote choice. Fleitas (1971) defines a low or “minimal-information” election as, “defined by a general absence of awareness of the issues on the part of the voters, lack of partisan identification on part of the candidates, and (or) by a relative or total lack of relevant information with which the voters can evaluate the candidates” (p. 434). Fleitas notes that low-information elections are frequently found at the local or sub-national level, and especially in those that are non-partisan. The author argues that, because of this general lack of information regarding candidates and issues in the election, “meager and vague cues” are necessary in order to formulate vote choice. Such cues can include gender, last name as a proxy for race (i.e. Martinez = Hispanic), or – in the case of his study – “bandwagon” or “underdog” effects.

The second component of the literature suggests that within any model that supports campaign effects, incumbency is a powerful predictor of electoral outcomes. As the information level about a particular campaign declines, incumbency becomes highly correlated with re-election (see, for example, Tompkins, 1984, McKelvey and Riezman, 1992, King and Gelman, 1991, and McCurley and Mondak, 1995). This effect is largely due to the same factors discussed previously: incumbency is used as a cue when there is a general lack of information about candidates and issues in a campaign. The voter will often opt for the incumbent for reasons of name recognition (as a cue)⁵ or a perception of competency and experience.⁶

The importance of noting the effects of low information and incumbency on vote choice, for the purposes of this paper, is to highlight some major differences between campaign effects at the local and national levels. First, campaigns at the sub-national, and particularly at the state legislative, county, or city levels, are information-poor by nature. They are less well funded and their districts are made up of smaller populations. They are more likely to be surrounded by a very large media market, making television or radio ads less cost-effective than other means of campaigning. By the same token, local-level campaigns have the ability to make one-on-one contact with voters at a much higher rate than do those for higher offices with larger constituencies. By their very (small) nature, local-level campaigns must take a different approach than larger, congressional, state, or national-level campaigns.

The Argument for Person-to-Person Contact

Thus far, I have argued that campaigns have a significant affect on election outcomes. I have presented evidence that indicates an importance for the information that campaigns disseminate and that information's effect on candidate perceptions and vote choice. I base the second part of my argument on the theory that person-to-person contact regarding elections has a mobilizing effect on the electorate. The campaign's ability to affect a voter's choice at the polls is not enough. The campaign must also get enough people *to* the polls in order to win.

A whole host of literature supports the concept of campaign mobilization. Many of the works cited in support of campaign effects on vote choice also support the general effect of campaigns on mobilizing the electorate (e.g. Partin, 2001, Hogan, 1999). Other studies have looked at specific campaign and candidate effects on mobilization. Eldersveld (1956), Blydenburgh (1971), and Bartell and Bouxsein (1973), for example, all find evidence for campaign effects on mobilization and increased voter preference via techniques such as canvassing, or going door-to-door. These studies indicate that person-to-person contact, by a campaign worker or candidate, not only influences voters' vote choice, but also their decision of whether or not to vote.

Other studies have focused more directly on turnout, without any or with only mild focus on candidate preference. Patterson and Caldiera (1983), for instance, studied the effects of campaign activities on voter turnout and found that, "it is very clear that

⁵ Fleitas, 1971.

⁶ McCurley and Mondak, 1995.

aggressive and intensive campaigning can impressively mobilize voters” (p. 686). As well, Gerber and Green (2000) studied the effects of several campaign techniques – primarily telephone calls, direct mail, and canvassing – on voter turnout. Their experiment was conducted in a non-partisan, non-candidate related, and purely informational manner. They found striking evidence that direct mail and person-to-person contacts increased voter turnout.⁷

The evidence clearly shows that campaigns have a dual purpose and effect: first, they disseminate much needed information to the public so that they might make informed vote choices, and they clearly succeed in that mission when conducted effectively. Second, they mobilize potential voters to go to the polls, increasing turnout and the odds of election for the candidate of choice.

Given the small but convincing body of evidence to support the effects of campaigns on vote choice and mobilization, there is, unfortunately, a general absence of research on the effects of specific campaign activities on vote choice and turnout (with the exception of negative advertising, of which there is perhaps more research than necessary). This study attempts to fill some of that gap.

Theoretical Hypothesis

Based on a bevy of anecdotes and a handful of recent studies on campaign effects and voter turnout experiments, I hypothesize that, for local campaigns that focus on good old fashioned “shoe leather politicking,” or greater utilization of direct contact field activities, candidates for the state legislature garner a larger percentage of the vote, and therefore win election at a higher rate than do their counterparts.

Data

Because I am primarily interested in examining the effects of voter contact strategies on local election outcomes, I focus my analysis on local-level elections in New Mexico. Specifically, I analyze campaigns for state house and senate in 2000 (although data were collected with regard to the Albuquerque City Council race in 2001, the sample size (N=11) was too small from which to draw any tangible conclusions). Given the limited nature of these data (the largest possible N for the 2000 legislative races is 184), I will offer the following caveat: **this is a work in progress**. Any conclusions I may draw from the data as they are presented in this paper will have to be fleshed out further with larger data samples.

In February of 2001, I distributed by mail and personal delivery a survey to all 112 New Mexico State legislators (70 members of the House of Representatives and 42 Senators) and to their opponents, if any (a combined total of 72), who participated in the general election of 2000. I received responses from 36% of the entire group (N=66) – although a larger proportion of the elected legislators responded than did their opponents

⁷ Although Gerber and Green did not find a significant effect for phone calling, their use of an out-of-state, paid phone bank, as opposed to local volunteers, could be attributed to the lack of success in mobilizing natives of New Haven, Connecticut.

(37% of the total number of legislators responded as compared with 31% of the total number of opponents). There was a generous mix of responses, varying by region, ethnicity, and sex, as well as by political party (48.5% were Democrats; 40.9% were Republicans; and 6.5% held other party affiliations).

The state legislative survey asked general questions regarding each candidate's campaign strategy and about their use of specific campaign activities. The questions ranged from the candidate's perceived overall importance of each activity, to amounts of personal time and money spent, to the perceived effect on election outcome each activity may have had (for specific questions, see the Appendix).

Method

Based on the academic and anecdotal evidence on the effects of direct-contact campaign activities, I test the following hypotheses utilizing the state legislative data:

H1: Other factors held constant, candidates who expend more resources on direct-contact field activities will receive a larger percentage of the vote, and therefore are more likely to be elected to office than their counterparts.

H2: Because of incumbency's powerful effect on election outcomes at the local level, the effect of direct-contact field activities on percentage of the vote obtained will be more marginal for incumbents than for their challengers or for candidates in an open seat.

I use the state legislative data to directly test these hypotheses using OLS analysis.

Variables

In order to test my hypotheses, I have chosen to analyze each candidate's/campaign's employment of the following voter contact activities:

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:

The first independent variable in my model is an index created from values generated by three separate campaign activity variables:

- Going door-to-door: Probably the most important campaign activity because of the intensity of one-on-one contact with the voter, this variable measures the hours per week each candidate spent knocking on potential voters' doors during the height of the campaign. The purpose of going door-to-door by the candidate is to introduce him or herself to the voter, provide campaign information to the voter, and to identify potential supporters for tracking.
- Attending Local Events: Next to door knocking, this variable is the second most important because, while it measures the level of one-on-one contact, it is conducted in a group, as opposed to individual, forum. This variable measures

the number of hours a candidate spent at local events (neighborhood association meetings, community picnics, debates, candidate forums, and so forth).

- **Literature Drops:** Literature drops are probably the least important of the voter contact variables I test. This is primarily because, while the activity involves going door-to-door, it does not necessitate a personal contact (although often they occur), but rather that the candidate or volunteer simply leave campaign literature at the door. It is, however, more personal than direct mail, because a representative from the campaign must stop by the voter's home. This variable measures the dollar amount spent on literature drops during the course of the campaign – in order to measure the volume of literature dropped at the door.

Index: Overall Shoe Leather Activity - In order to gauge the overall effectiveness of these variables, I created an Overall Shoe Leather Activity index. This is a combined index of the three campaign activity variables – hours per week spent going door-to-door, hours per week spent at local events, and total amount of money spent on literature drops. The individual indices break down as follows:

Activity:	Units of Activity:	Index Level:
Door-to-Door	0 hours per week	0
	1 – 10 hours per week	1
	11-20 hours per week	2
	21-30 hours per week	3
	> 30 hours per week	4
Local Events	0 hours per week	0
	1 – 5 hours per week	1
	6 – 10 hours per week	2
	11 – 20 hours per week	3
	> 20 hours per week	4
Literature Drops	\$0 spent	0
	\$1 - \$250 spent	1
	\$251 – \$600 spent	2
	\$1,000 - \$3,000 spent	3
	>\$4,000 spent	4

The overall activity index is the combined total of each campaign's individual activity index value:

Overall Shoe Leather Activity Index = Door-to-Door + Local Events + Literature Drop

Possible Levels: 0 – 12, where 0 = No Activity and 12 = Highest Level of Activity

**Actual Levels: 0 – 8 (highest level of activity reported),
where 0 = No Activity and 8 = Highest Level of Activity**

The main independent variable to be tested, then, is the campaign's overall level of shoe leather activity.

OTHER INCLUDED CONTROL VARIABLES:

Incumbency: The other important independent variable, as widely discussed in the literature, is incumbency. This variable is used to control for the powerful effect incumbency has on the possibility of being elected to office. This is measured by a dummy variable: 1 = incumbent, 0 = non-incumbent.

Number of Other Candidates: The number of candidates in the race is also important, since a greater number of candidates detract from the percentage of the vote it is possible to garner. This control is measured simply by the number of *other* candidates in the race besides the respondent. In this case, it equals 0, 1, or 2 since there were no more than three candidates total in any of the races for which I received responses. This variable also measures whether or not the race is for an open seat (0 opponents vs. >0 opponents).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE:

Percentage of the Vote Received: As opposed to looking at a simple, dichotomous win/loss variable, this variable can be effectively used to gauge whether or not the likelihood of being elected increases with each unit of increase in shoe leather activity. Its value ranges from 0 – 100%.

Selection Factors:

Before running a regression analysis, it is important to select certain cases out of the model for various reasons. They are as follows:

No Opposition/Number of Other Candidates = 0: In a race with only one candidate, the candidate receives 100% of the vote whether or not they put any effort into being elected. These cases do not apply to my hypotheses and would unnecessarily weight the results of analysis.

The testable model, therefore, looks as follows:

Dependent Variable:

Percentage of the Vote:

0 – 100%

Independent Variables:

Overall Shoe Leather Activity Index: 1 - 8
 Incumbency: 0 or 1
 Open Seat: 0 or 1
 Number of candidates: 1 or 2
 N = 55*

*After application of selection factors, the testable N was reduced from N=66 to N=55.

The model equation is as follows:

$$V = C + B1 \cdot X1 + B2 \cdot X1 \cdot D + B3 \cdot X3$$

Where:

C = Constant
 B1 = shoe leather activity index coefficient
 X1 = shoe leather activity index level
 B2 = incumbency coefficient
 B3 = Number of other candidates in the race coefficient
 X3 = Number of other candidates in the race
 V = Predicted Percentage of the Vote Received
 D = Incumbency (1 = incumbent, 0 = non-incumbent)

Results

Table A displays the results of the regression analysis for percentage of the vote received based on overall shoe leather activity, incumbency, and the number of other candidates in the race:

Table A: Effect of Shoe Leather Activity and Controls on Percentage of the Vote Received

Independent Variables	B	SE (B)
Incumbency	42.09***	8.29
Overall Shoe Leather Activity Index	2.37**	1.12
Activity Index combined with Incumbency	-3.22*	1.91
Number of Other Candidates in the Race	-17.06**	6.50
Constant	46.75***	9.50

N=55

***Significant at the p<.01 level

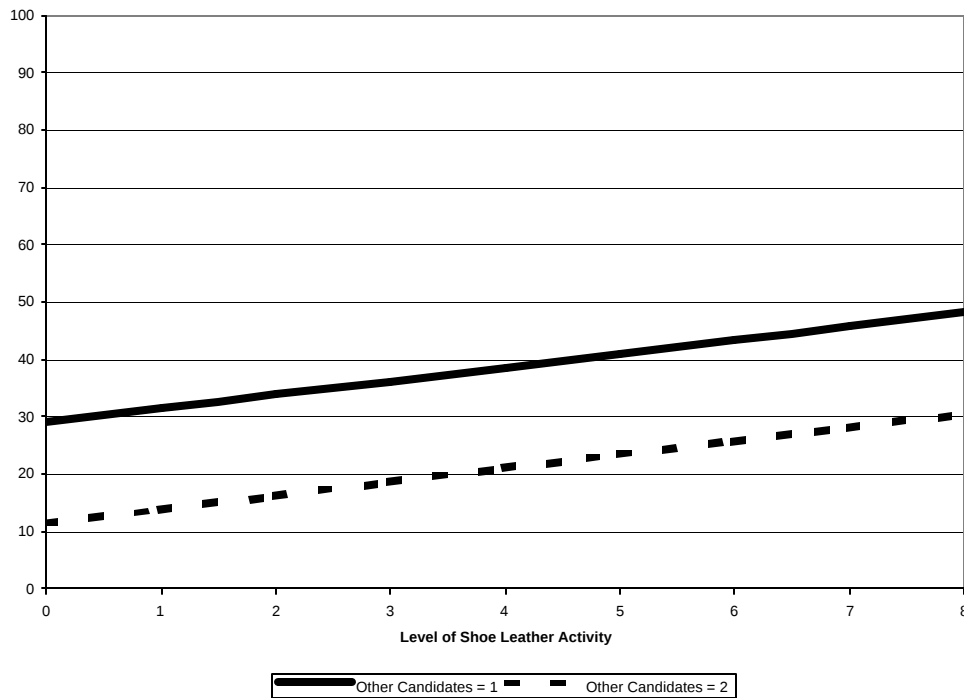
**Significant at the p<.05 level

*Significant at the p<.10 level

The results clearly show a significant effect for the model in the directions predicted. The Overall Shoe Leather Activity index (X1) is highly significant when analyzed with controls for incumbency (B2), number of other candidates in the race (X3), and a combined interaction variable of overall activity and incumbency (B2*X1) used to gauge the model's effects strictly on incumbents. This confirms H1. As the level of shoe leather activity increases, so too does the likelihood of winning election.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the data show that for every 1 unit-level increase in shoe leather activity, the non-incumbent candidate will receive 2.3% more of the vote. As predicted, however, the number of other candidates in the race reduces the baseline non-incumbent vote by a hefty margin, making it much more difficult for a non-incumbent with two opponents (as opposed to only one) to be elected, even when they undertake a high level of shoe leather activity.

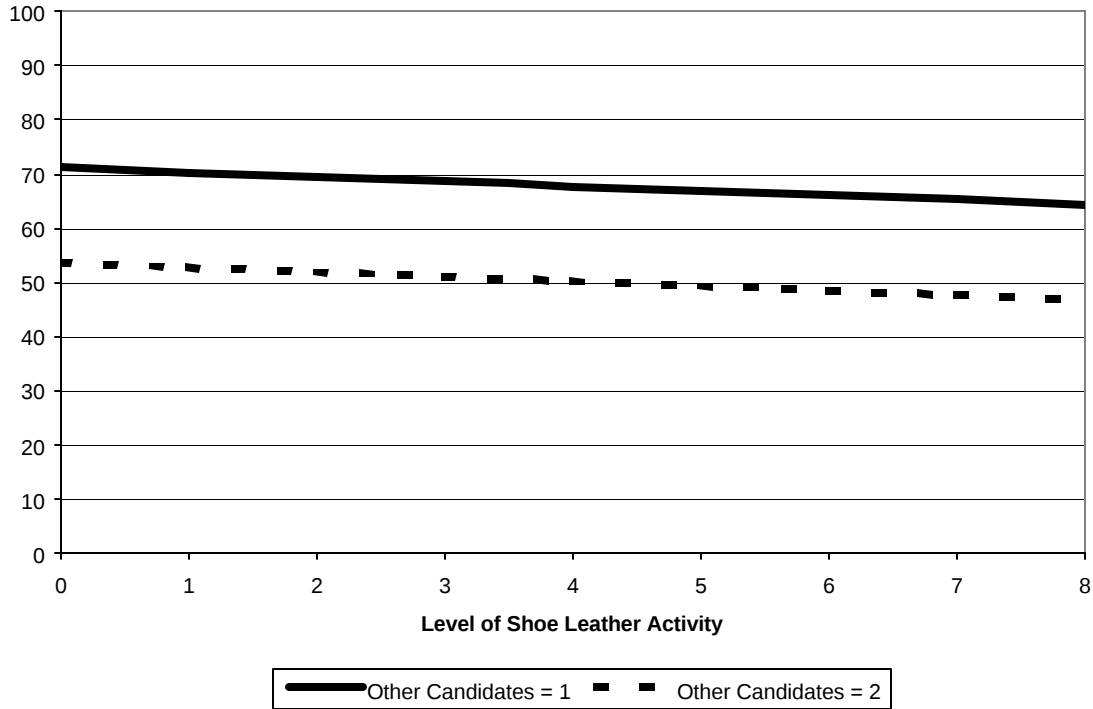
Figure 1: Predicted Percent of Vote for Non-Incumbents



The results also show the baseline percentage of the vote is much lower for non-incumbents than for incumbents (29% for non-incumbents vs. 71% for incumbents), which supports the basis of H2 – the powerful effect of incumbency on winning election. The number of other candidates in the race factor also decreases the percentage of the vote it is possible to obtain by 17% - regardless of the candidate's incumbency or lack thereof.

Figure 2 illustrates the predicted percentage of the vote for incumbent candidates:

Figure 2: Predicted Percent of Vote for Incumbents



Strikingly, when incumbency and overall activity are combined, a negative effect is produced. The interaction variable ($B2 \cdot X1$) looks directly at the effect of the activity index on incumbents, due to a hypothesized marginal effect for the amount of effort incumbents invest in getting re-elected.

What these results suggest is that the level of shoe leather activity exerted by one candidate (in this case, the incumbent) is a *function* of the amount exerted by the other candidate (the non-incumbent, or challenger). As a challenger invests more and more effort into a shoe leather campaign, the incumbent is also forced to exert more effort, but will receive less of the vote as the challenger chips away with every increased level of voter contact activity.⁸

In order to test this hypothesis directly, it would be necessary to have a sizeable number of cases where all candidates in the race (incumbent and challenger or challengers) returned completed surveys. Unfortunately, the limited nature of the data does not provide such an opportunity. This hypothesis will have to stand untested for now, although all logical arrows point in that direction.

⁸ Jacobson (1978, 1990), for example, has found this endogenous effect with regard to campaign spending by challengers. Campaign spending by challengers, he finds, is more effective than campaign spending by incumbents, creating a negative marginal effect for incumbent campaign spending as challengers spend more and more to win election.

Overall, the state legislative data paint a convincing picture of the effect shoe leather activity campaigns have on local election outcomes. If a candidate, especially a non-incumbent, wants to be elected to office, it is clearly necessary to run a campaign with a comprehensive voter contact strategy.

Conclusion

Although the data presented herein are limited, the model and overall results make a strong case for the effect of voter contact activities on election outcomes. These results not only support the case for campaign effects, they also pave the way for research which further analyses the effects of various campaign activities on election outcomes – potentially moving the literature away from focusing on aggregate effects as measured by dollar amounts or simply on the effects of negative advertising, as opposed to the myriad other activities in which campaigns may engage.

The implications for such research are important. As Lau, et.al. (1999), suggest, “For those who believe that politics matters – that it makes a difference whether a Democrat or Republican sits in the White House or in the governor’s mansion, or which party controls Congress – knowing whether a popular campaign tactic ‘works’ is important information” (p. 852). This is true for the academic, as well as the political realm, and could potentially lead to a bridge between the two worlds. The practical implications of this research are thus evident.

The implications of this research are also important for the ongoing debate regarding the health of American democracy. Over time, studies have found Americans increasingly use the heuristics of socio-demographic similarity, strength of partisan identification, name recognition, and the like, to simplify the vote choice decision. In Anthony Downs’ world of imperfect information, such cues have become extremely common to the average citizen’s voting calculus. Unfortunately, the use of cues does not do much to assure the democratic idealist that citizens are voting in their instrumental self-interest. Direct contact with the voter to convey substantial information regarding the candidate is one possible solution to this problem, and likely why it has such a strong effect toward the bottom of the ballot. Further, this type of research could have a stimulating affect on candidates and campaigns, leading to a more general shift in campaign tactics, and thus drawing us closer to that democratic ideal.

Clearly, there is much further research that needs to be done in this area of study. One case study can obviously not suffice. Data regarding local elections across the county should be collected and analyzed in order to discover if campaign techniques differ in their effectiveness by region. Time-series data should be collected to identify if effects vary at different times and during different types of election cycles. Attention should be paid to other types of local elections beyond state legislature: city and county councils and commissions, school boards, and other local partisan and non-partisan races should be examined in order to start drawing generalizations.

As well, studies that assess aggregate-level outcomes would be further supported by individual-level analysis to confirm conclusions. Without going directly to the voters

to identify which, if any, campaign activities affected their vote choice, it is possible that false conclusions can be drawn and baseless inferences can be made. Given the significant implications of this type of research, such studies would be justified and rightly welcomed into the family of the campaign effects literature.

Appendix

1. Using a scale of one to seven, where one indicates lowest importance and seven indicates highest importance, **how important was going door-to-door** for your overall campaign strategy? If you did not go door-to-door at all, please circle the “not applicable” response.

a. If you went door-to-door, approximately **how many hours a week** did you spend at this activity during the height of the campaign (mid-October through November)?

b. If you went door-to-door, **how important** was that activity to the following (a value of one indicates low importance while a value of seven indicates high importance)?

increasing your name identification

reinforcing your name identification

establishing your issue positions

the outcome of the election

2. Using a scale of one to seven, where one indicates lowest importance and seven indicates highest importance, **how important was attending local events** for your overall campaign strategy? If you did not attend local events at all, please circle the “not applicable” response.

a. If you attended local events, approximately **how many hours a week** did you spend at this activity during the height of the campaign (mid-October through November)?

b. If you attended local events, **how important** was that activity to the following (a value of one indicates low importance while a value of seven indicates high importance)?

increasing your name identification

reinforcing your name identification

establishing your issue positions

the outcome of the election

3. Using a scale of one to seven, where one indicates lowest importance and seven indicates highest importance, **how important was using direct mail** for your overall campaign strategy? If you did not use direct mail at all, please circle the “not applicable” response.

a. If you used direct-mail, approximately **how many different pieces** did you use?

b. Approximately **how much money** did your campaign spend on direct-mail?

c. Approximately **what percentage of your overall campaign budget** was dedicated to direct-mail?

d. If you used direct-mail, **how important** was that activity to the following (a value of one indicates low importance while a value of seven indicates high importance)?

increasing your name identification
reinforcing your name identification
establishing your issue positions
the outcome of the election

4. Using a scale of one to seven, where one indicates lowest importance and seven indicates highest importance, **how important was using literature drops** for your overall campaign strategy? If you did not use literature drops at all, please circle the “not applicable” response.

- a. If you used literature drops, approximately **how many different pieces** did you use?
- b. Approximately **how much money** did your campaign spend on literature drops?
- c. Approximately **what percentage of your overall campaign budget** was dedicated to literature drops?
- d. If you used literature drops, **how important** was that activity to the following (a value of one indicates low importance while a value of seven indicates high importance)?

increasing your name identification
reinforcing your name identification
establishing your issue positions
the outcome of the election

5. Using a scale of one to seven, where one indicates lowest importance and seven indicates highest importance, **how important was using yard signs** for your overall campaign strategy? If you did not use yard signs at all, please circle the “not applicable” response.

- a. If you used yard signs, approximately **how many** did you use?
- b. Approximately **how much money** did your campaign spend on yard signs?
- c. Approximately **what percentage of your overall campaign budget** was dedicated to yard signs?
- d. If you used yard signs, **how important** was that activity to the following (a value of one indicates low importance while a value of seven indicates high importance)?

increasing your name identification
reinforcing your name identification
establishing your issue positions
the outcome of the election

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