You get what you (don’t) pay for: The impact of volunteer labour and candidate spending at the 2010 British General Election.

Justin Fisher (Brunel University), Ron Johnston (University of Bristol), Charles Pattie (University of Sheffield), David Cutts (University of Manchester) & Edward Fieldhouse (University of Manchester).

Repeated evidence in Britain demonstrates the positive electoral payoffs from constituency campaigning. However, the impact of such campaigning varies depending upon the electoral context and the effectiveness of campaign management. Debate also exists in respect of the relative impact of traditional versus more modern campaign techniques, as well as between campaign techniques that incur cost and those that are carried out voluntarily. Such debates are of interest not only to academics and political parties, but also to regulators when considering whether to restrict campaign spending in the interests of electoral parity. This paper uses candidate spending data and responses to an extensive survey of election agents in the British General Election of 2010 to assess the impact of both campaign expenditure and free, voluntary labour on electoral performance. It suggests that both have some independent impact, but that impact varies by party. The implications of these results are highly significant in both academic and regulatory terms – campaign expenditure can affects electoral outcomes but these effects are offset to some extent by voluntary efforts.

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You get what you (don’t) pay for: The impact of volunteer labour and candidate spending at the 2010 British General Election.¹

Justin Fisher (Brunel University), Ron Johnston (University of Bristol), Charles Pattie (University of Sheffield), David Cutts (University of Manchester) & Edward Fieldhouse (University of Manchester).

There is now a large body of research, which demonstrates over a series of elections that campaigning at district (constituency) level in Britain can produce electoral payoffs (Clarke, Sanders, Stewart & Whiteley, 2004, 2009; Whiteley & Seyd, 1994; Pattie, Johnston & Fieldhouse, 1995; Denver & Hands, 1997; Denver, Hands, Fisher & McAllister, 2003; Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2008; Fisher, Cutts & Fieldhouse, 2011). The level of payoffs varies. For example, Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse (2011) show that there are four key variables exogenous to a constituency which impact upon the effectiveness of campaigning: the closeness of the election at national level, the likelihood of a significant change in parties' standing, the number of target seats, and the extent to which central parties have clear objectives in respect of their campaign management. Equally, Pattie, Johnston & Fieldhouse (1995) have shown that the effectiveness of candidate campaign spending varies depending upon whether a candidate is an incumbent or a challenger, reflecting the work of Gary Jacobson (1980) in the United States. Overall, however, different research teams, using different data have arrived at broadly the same conclusion – campaigning at district level can influence electoral outcomes.

The two principal approaches to the measurement of campaign intensity as a means to assess electoral effects use different data sources, which are brought together for this paper. The first, associated principally with Ron Johnston and Charles Pattie, uses candidate spending data as a surrogate for campaign intensity.² Candidate spending in Britain is limited by law and that limit varies by the electorate and geography of the constituency. Thus, the appropriate measurement of candidate spending is not the total expenditure, but the percentage of the maximum permitted. The second, pioneered by David Denver and Gordon Hands but now associated with Justin Fisher, David Cutts and Edward Fieldhouse, employs a survey of election agents³ designed to capture the many different aspects of campaigns: preparation, organisation, manpower, use of computers, polling day activity, use of telephones, use of direct mail, canvassing, use of leaflets and e-campaigning.

¹ Research for this paper was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Grant Number RES-000-22-2762. This support is gratefully acknowledged.
² Candidate spending in Britain is limited by law and that limit varies by the electorate and geography of the constituency. Thus, the appropriate measurement of candidate spending is not the total expenditure, but the percentage of the maximum permitted.
³ All candidates are legally obliged to retain an election agent. The agent is responsible for the organisation and conduct of the campaign.
(Fisher, Cuts & Fieldhouse, 2011: 827). Critically, this includes both campaign techniques that incur financial cost, but also those that are provided free by volunteers. Both approaches have advantages. The agent survey is a much more direct measure of campaign intensity, which captures a very wide range of effects. However, it is limited by response rates. For example, while the 2010 survey solicited a very respectable and representative response rate of 54%, there are still some data gaps. This is not a problem of the analysis of candidate spending. Declaration of spending is required by law and published by the Electoral Commission. Thus, near complete spending data are available for all candidates across a long run of elections. Moreover, previous studies (Denver and Hands, 1997; Johnston and Pattie, 2006) have shown a fairly strong relationship between the level of candidate spending and the level of campaign intensity (as captured through the survey). In 2010, spending again correlated with overall campaign intensity, but not perhaps as strongly as one might expect. For example, correlating the candidate expenditure over the period from the dissolution of parliament to polling day (the ‘short campaign’) with overall campaign intensity produces coefficients of 0.618, 0.732 and 0.716 for the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats respectively. Candidate spending captures a significant proportion of campaign intensity, but clearly not all of it.

**Candidate Spending**

The fact that candidate spending fails to capture a significant proportion of campaign efforts matters not only in academic terms, but also in regulatory ones. Candidate expenditure has been limited by law in Britain since 1883 – a move designed both the limit any potential electoral benefit arising from a larger financial endowment, but also to limit the cost of elections themselves (Clift & Fisher, 2004). However, despite this longstanding regulation, significant concerns have been raised in recent years about the electoral impact of spending outside the regulatory period. Johnston and Pattie (2007) have shown, for example, that Conservative spending at district level in advance of the 2005 election did indeed yield electoral payoffs, while more recent work by Cutts, Johnston, Pattie and Fisher (2012) shows that this was also the case in 2010. As a result of such concerns, the regulated period was extended in the 2010 election. In addition to the period from dissolution to polling day (a period of just over four weeks) – the ‘short campaign’, legislation introduced in 2009 introduced a second regulated period of limited candidate spending – from January 1st 2010 to the dissolution (a period of just over three months): the ‘long campaign’. Despite this introduction, concerns have remained about the ability of the currently financially dominant Conservatives to gain an electoral advantage on account of their greater spending power. Table 1 illustrates the Conservatives’ advantage. On average, Conservative candidates were able to spend 66.7% of the legal maximum in the short campaign, compared with 51% and
37.4% for Labour and the Liberal Democrats respectively. Combining the spending in both regulated periods (the long and the short campaign) again shows a fairly significant Conservative advantage.

Table 1. Mean Maximum of Permitted Candidate Expenditure in 2010 (n=621)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Lib Dems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Campaign</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short + Long Campaign</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, despite the Conservative financial advantage overall, the electoral advantages were less clear cut. At both national and district levels, the extra spending power was not matched by electoral gains to the same degree (Fisher, 2010; Johnston et al, Forthcoming). What accounts for this apparent anomaly? First, of course, it could be that the Conservatives spent their money unwisely and that other parties targeted resources more effectively. One way to test this is to assess the level of spending depending upon the electoral status of a seat. Although the unit of analysis is campaigning at the district level, all parties seek to coordinate their district level campaigns from the centre. This level of centralisation has been increasing over time (Fisher & Denver, 2008) and has yielded electoral payoffs (Fisher, Denver & Hands, 2006). Thus, central parties designate whether or not seats are targets. This exercise is more than cosmetic. Target seats receive more in the way of assistance from the central party, through the provision, for example, of staff and also through telephone and direct mail campaigning run from the centre.

As a result of such coordination, broadly speaking, we would expect a rational party to spend most in its target seats (seats which it was seeking to gain, or its own seats which the party regarded as being vulnerable) and least in the seats where it had no chance of winning. In seats which a party holds, but where there is little chance of defeat, we would expect levels of spending to be somewhere in between. As we can see, the patterns of candidate spending were much as predicted. The only particular surprise is that Conservative spending was relatively high in its safe seats (labelled Held Not Target) and in seats where the party had very little chance of electoral success (labelled Not Held Not Target).

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4 In 2010, the context for designating target seats was a little uncertain on account of extensive boundary reviews in England and Wales following the 2005 election. Thus, both parties and indeed academics made use of notional results for 2005.

5 In the 2010 election, all existing Liberal Democrat seats were regarded as targets. As a result, there are no seats in the Held Not Target category.
One possible explanation for this is that given that the level of spending is regulated in each constituency, the possibilities for transferring expenditure to electoral targets are more limited. Nonetheless, the returns on safe seats and hopeless ones from campaigning are likely to be small, which would have the effect of depressing the effectiveness of spending overall.

Table 2. Candidate Spending by Electoral Status (n=621)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short (Short + Long)</th>
<th>Held Not Target</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Not Held Not Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>78.4 (39.1)</td>
<td>88.7 (64.2)</td>
<td>44.1 (21.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>65.7 (27.9)</td>
<td>78.9 (51.1)</td>
<td>23.7 (9.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>88.7 (63.2)</td>
<td>27.7 (11.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Figures represent the percentage spent of the maximum permitted expenditure

A second possibility is that overall, parties’ campaigns were differentially effective on account of campaign management. These were the conclusions of Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse (2011), who show that despite the exogenous contextual circumstances being unfavourable to Labour, the party was successful in boosting its vote through campaigning by having clear objectives about the desired outcome of the election. Labour knew it was likely to lose, so its strategy was to minimize Conservative gains in order to deny the party a parliamentary majority. This entailed effectively sacrificing some seats which were likely to be won by the Conservatives in order to focus resources to those seats that, if held, would deny the Conservatives a majority. By way of contrast, the Conservatives focussed too much attention on seats that the party would win anyway.

A third possibility is that candidate expenditure does not capture all the key aspects of campaigning sufficiently well. A reliance, therefore on this measure alone as an indicator of campaign intensity has the potential to generate a misleading picture. To be sure, many aspects of campaigning do require expenditure, and these will be captured by candidate spending. But given that many aspects of campaigning rely on labour and cannot legally be undertaken by paid staff, but can be carried out by unpaid volunteers, there is the possibility that parties can counteract the effects of differential wealth through the efforts of unpaid volunteers engaged in a whole range of activities including canvassing, and polling day activities such as ‘knocking-up’ to ensure that a party’s supporters remember to vote. Again, the effectiveness of these activities will depend both on their aggregate levels, and how effectively the efforts of volunteers are distributed. This then, is the focus of this paper. To what extent does ‘free campaigning’, independent of that which incurs cost, make an independent contribution to parties’ electoral performance at the district level?
Free Campaigning
The survey of election agents provides some useful data, featuring four questions which broadly capture these ‘free’ aspects of election campaigns. They cover: the proportion of the electorate canvassed on the doorstep during a campaign; the number of campaign workers; the proportion of the constituency covered by volunteers staffing polling stations to take details of who had voted, and the number of polling day workers. Table 3 illustrates the relative strength of each party in respect of these free activities. Across every indicator, the Conservatives had a significant advantage – double that of their competitors in some instances. However, as with any resource, the aggregate total only tells us so much. What is more important is how effectively that resource is utilised.

Table 3. Mean Free Campaign Indicators by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Lib Dems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Electorate Canvassed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Campaign Workers</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Constituency covered by number takers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Polling Day Workers</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get a better indication of the distribution of ‘free’ campaign effort, it is more useful to produce a scale of the above items. This is done through Principal Components Analysis. All four variables load on a single factor as one might expect (for the full solutions, see Appendix). What was less expected is that one variable – the number of campaign workers loaded much less strongly than the others. While the other three variables produced coefficients of 0.69 or above, this variable loaded at 0.23. We therefore re-ran the analysis without the number of campaign workers included. This had the effect of improving the factor loading to 0.71 or above, but also improved the variance explained from 48% to 63%. We therefore use the factor scores from the three variables: the proportion of the electorate canvassed on the doorstep during a campaign; the proportion of the constituency covered by volunteers staffing polling stations to take details of who had voted, and the number of polling day workers. These scores were then standardised around a mean of 100 to permit ease of interpretation.

Table 4 illustrates the distribution of free resources by the electoral status of the seat. Here, we might expect a more efficient distribution of effort than is the case with candidate

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6 Where there were missing data on individual variables that formed part of these scales, multiple imputation was used, which took account of the individual party and the target status of the seat.
spending as the amount of volunteer activity is not capped. However, often frustratingly for parties, human resources may actually be less mobile than financial ones (Fisher & Denver, 2008). And so, we see here that the picture is mixed. On the one hand, the level of free campaigning in seats where a party is unlikely to make an electoral breakthrough (Not Held Not Target) is evidently much lower than in other seats for all parties. On the other hand, however, the differentiation in intensity between target seats and those that are ‘safe’ (Held Not Target) is tiny. Political circumstances may explain this a little in the case of the Labour Party. The party was unpopular and defending gains won after three election victories. In that sense, safe seats may not have been perceived as such by those offering the free effort.

In the case of the Conservative Party however, the lack of differentiation is more difficult to explain, particularly given its relative popularity prior to the election. One possible explanation is that a wave of expectation among Conservative volunteers led them to campaign more, regardless of the electoral status of the seat – thus we see higher scores for the Conservatives across all three categories. However, it may also reflect a longer term problem in the party, whereby electoral efforts are often misdirected at safer seats – especially where the central party is unable to deploy resources more effectively. Certainly, the overall intensity scales, which capture a whole range of election activities, some of which can be influenced by central party strategies, suggest a greater differentiation between safer seats and targets. And indeed, this was also true in the case of Labour (Fisher, Cutts & Fieldhouse, 2011: 820). Overall then, the Conservatives enjoyed the highest level of free campaigning, but that advantage was tempered through strong targeting by the Liberal Democrats and to an extent, seemingly excessive effort in Conservative safe seats. Of course, strong efforts in safe seats would be unlikely to damage the Conservative cause, but would represent a missed opportunity to focus efforts more effectively.

Table 4. Mean Free Campaigning Effort by Electoral Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Held Not Target</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Not Held Not Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (n=287)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour (n=388)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat (n=353)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Electoral Impact
To assess the relative electoral impact of candidate spending and free district level campaigning, we combine candidate spending data and the free campaigning index from the election agent survey. We create a model which analyses the impact of these two variables
on the share of the vote in 2010, while controlling for the share of that party's vote in 2005\(^7\) and whether the party was fielding an incumbent candidate. Controlling for previous vote share has a number of advantages. First, it captures change in electoral performance which is a much more accurate estimate of effectiveness. Second, it captures a variety of other contextual effects (such as the demographic profile of the electorate). Third, it captures any effects of previous campaigns at earlier elections. We also control for personal incumbency as there is ample evidence to suggest that this can have an impact at district level. The inclusion of vote share at the previous election not surprisingly has a significant effect on model fit. But, it also serves to illustrate that where effects are found, they are likely to be robust. We operationalize our model using OLS.

The first table (Table 5) uses candidate spending during the short campaign period, while the second table (Table 6) uses the aggregate expenditure of candidates over the whole regulated period (long plus short campaigns). In both tables, we are seeking to first to assess if both candidate spending and free district campaigning have independent effects. If they do, it suggests that factors not captured by candidate spending have electoral effects. If that is the case, it would suggest that disparities in spending can be offset to a degree by the level of free campaigning. And, if both candidate spending and free campaigning have independent effects, we can then compare their relative effects using the standardized beta coefficients.\(^8\)

The results vary for all three parties. In the case of the Conservatives, the findings are clear. Candidate spending over both regulated periods yielded electoral payoffs, while free campaigning had no impact in either model. This may be surprising in one sense – after all, the Conservatives had the highest levels of free campaigning overall and the highest levels in target seats. However, the relative lack of impact may be explained first by relatively poor targeting. Thus, while the Conservatives had strong levels of free campaigning in target seats, the same was also true in their safe seats. As a result, the overall effectiveness of their free campaigning will have been suppressed as any gains that would have been made in safe seats (particularly with that party being relatively popular) would be marginal. Second, of course, the data suggest that the impact of candidate spending was so great that any effects of free campaigning were significantly diminished.

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\(^7\) Boundary revisions took place between 2005 and 2010, so these are notional 2005 vote shares

\(^8\) Given the unexpected results of our Principal Component Analyses (see discussion above and the Appendix), we also ran the models with number of campaign workers as an additional variable. In every case, the number of campaign workers had no statistically significant effect.
In the case of Labour, the position is effectively reversed. Comparing free campaigning with candidate spending during the ‘short campaign’ (Table 5), we find that both had a statistically significant impact on share of the vote, though spending only just reaches statistical significance. This, along with the standardized beta coefficients suggest that free campaigning had a stronger effect. This is amplified when we look at spending over the entire regulated period (Table 6). Here, candidate spending had no statistically significant impact, while free campaigning continued to do so. Labour, of course, spent considerably less than the Conservatives (see Table 1), but what is apparent is that free campaigning appears to have compensated to some extent.

Analysis of the Liberal Democrats also produces some interesting results. Again, both candidate spending and free campaigning had statistically significant effects (and in this case for both the short campaign and the full regulated period). However, the order of the effects is perhaps unexpected. The Liberal Democrats have traditionally had significantly less money to spend and have relied on well-targeted efforts by grass roots activists (Cutts, 2006; Cutts & Shryane, 2006). We might expect, therefore, that the effects of free campaigning would be stronger than candidate spending. In fact, the reverse is true. The beta coefficients indicate that candidate spending had stronger effects on Liberal Democrat vote share. Given that the Liberal Democrats spent substantially less than the Conservatives and somewhat less than Labour (see Table 1), the puzzle is why this occurred. The likely answer is effective targeting. As Table 2 shows, Liberal Democrat candidate spending in their target seats was broadly comparable with that of Conservative candidates in that party’s targets. The Liberal Democrats had less money overall, but candidate spend was distributed very effectively. Of course, free campaigning by the Liberal Democrats was also effective. But once again, it was well targeted. As Table 4 shows, free campaigning by the Liberal Democrat in target seats was broadly comparable with that of the Conservatives.

Of course, it is very likely to be the case that high levels of free activity in a constituency are associated with high levels of spending (and vice versa), suggesting possible problems with collinearity. Certainly, the index of free campaigning correlates positively with the levels of spending for all three parties, though not perhaps as strongly as we might expect. Thus, to confirm the robust nature of our findings, we regressed levels of free activity against candidate spending during the short campaign and during the whole regulated period. From this we took standardized residuals for each as measures of free campaigning independent of spending. We then re-ran the regression models using these standardised residuals.

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9 The correlations between free campaigning and the regulated spending periods (Short and Short Plus Long) are: .470 and .464 for the Conservatives; .585 and .526 for Labour; and .555 and .585 for the Liberal Democrats.
instead of the normal indicator of free campaigning. The results for the short campaign are shown in Table 7, and confirm the broad findings in Table 5. Once again, for the Conservatives, only candidate spending has an impact. For Labour and the Liberal Democrats, we observe once again that free campaigning has an independent and statistically significant effect on electoral outcomes alongside candidate spending. The only real difference compared with the results in Table 5 is that the beta coefficients indicate that candidate spending now has a stronger impact for both parties. Similarly, the analysis presented in Table 8 is very similar to that in Table 6. For the Conservatives, only candidate spending had an impact and in the case of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, both candidate spending and free campaign had independent and significant effects. The only important difference is that in Table 8, Labour candidate spending reaches statistical significance (which was not the case in Table 6). The beta values suggest, however, that free campaigning was marginally more significant.

Table 5. The Electoral Impact of Candidate Spending and Free District Campaigning (Short Campaign Spend)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative (n=281)</th>
<th>Labour (n=384)</th>
<th>Lib Dem (n=347)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b        Std Error  Beta Sig</td>
<td>b        Std Error  Beta Sig</td>
<td>b        Std Error  Beta Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.741     .646   **</td>
<td>-8.175       1.004  **</td>
<td>2.889        .848  **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote 2005</td>
<td>.966      .022   .925 **</td>
<td>.872        .023   .840 **</td>
<td>.662         .023   .658 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent</td>
<td>.932      .558   .029 n.s.</td>
<td>2.270       .689   .066 **</td>
<td>3.553        .994   .097 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Campaigning</td>
<td>.001    .005   .002 n.s.</td>
<td>.046        .011   .079 **</td>
<td>.036         .010   .095 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Spending</td>
<td>.028    .009   .054 **</td>
<td>.025        .012   .047 *</td>
<td>.060         .010   .184 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>.864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, n.s. Not statistically significant

Table 6. The Electoral Impact of Candidate Spending and Free District Campaigning (Short + Long Campaign Spend)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative (n=281)</th>
<th>Labour (n=384)</th>
<th>Lib Dem (n=347)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b        Std Error  Beta Sig</td>
<td>b        Std Error  Beta Sig</td>
<td>b        Std Error  Beta Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.317     .636   **</td>
<td>-8.456       1.007  **</td>
<td>3.681        .884  **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote 2005</td>
<td>.969      .021   .928 **</td>
<td>.887        .022   .854 **</td>
<td>.665         .035   .660 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent</td>
<td>1.408     .581   .044 *</td>
<td>2.441       .689   .071 **</td>
<td>3.061        .985   .083 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Campaigning</td>
<td>- .002    .006   - .005 n.s.</td>
<td>.051        .011   .088 **</td>
<td>.033         .101   .087 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Spending</td>
<td>.037    .009   .062 **</td>
<td>.015        .016   .018 n.s.</td>
<td>.090         .014   .196 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05 n.s. Not statistically significant
Table 7. The Electoral Impact of Candidate Spending and Free District Campaigning (Short + Long Campaign Spend) (Residual Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>(n=281)</th>
<th>(n=384)</th>
<th>(n=347)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>3.139</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vote 2005</strong></td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incumbent</strong></td>
<td>1.408</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Campaigning</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Spending</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, n.s. Not statistically significant

Table 8. The Electoral Impact of Candidate Spending and Free District Campaigning (Short Campaign Spend) (Residual Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>(n=281)</th>
<th>(n=384)</th>
<th>(n=347)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>2.789</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vote 2005</strong></td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incumbent</strong></td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Campaigning</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Spending</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, n.s. Not statistically significant

Overall, these analyses suggest that candidate spending as a measure of campaign intensity is a very useful surrogate measure. But it does not capture a significant aspect of campaigns – that provided free through voluntary labour. And, most critically, for Labour and the Liberal Democrats, this free campaigning has significant electoral effects, independent of candidate spending. These findings are not an isolated example. Using a different measure of campaign spending, Fisher (2011) shows that free campaigning has had independent effects for these two parties in most elections from 1992-2005. The implications here are clear. To be sure, the Conservatives enjoyed a significant financial advantage in terms of candidate spending and were successful to a degree in exploiting that advantage. However, the advantages enjoyed by the Conservatives were offset in part by the impact of free campaigning by Labour and the Liberal Democrats.
Conclusions
Measuring the intensity of campaigns in order to assess their electoral impact has become increasingly sophisticated, with multiple sources of data employed. The result has been that researchers can illustrate very clearly that campaigns can boost electoral performance, but that effective management of these campaigns is essential to maximise their impact. Inevitably, any measure will not capture all of the effects. The survey of election agents has difficulty capturing efforts more than a year prior to polling day (and there is plentiful evidence that a significant amount takes place), while the analysis of candidate spending can only focus on spending during regulated periods when candidates are required to file a return. Nevertheless, (and notwithstanding the work of Johnston & Pattie, and Cutts et al, who have managed to capture the activities of high spending local parties prior to the regulated period), the various sources of data present a convincing case. By combining data (as we do in this paper), we are therefore in a position to make a good assessment about the extent to which the level of spending by a candidate is core to understanding his or her electoral performance. Of course, no one could fight an election without money, nor with a trifling sum – it is very clear empirically that even the most token campaigns require some expenditure and that broadly speaking, better funded campaigns have strong potential to deliver electoral payoffs and indeed do so.

However, what this paper shows is that level of spending does not capture all campaign effects, and that free volunteer labour can also have a significant impact. As we see in the cases of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, their financial disadvantage relative to the Conservatives was offset somewhat by both effective management of their resources though targeting, but also by the level of free campaigning. Somewhat intriguingly, this was not the case for the Conservatives. But this result may tell us more about the continuing relative inability of the party to direct resources at local level effectively, than about the nature of Conservative free campaigning. In essence, money matters and better financially endowed candidates will generally perform better electorally. But, it is apparent from this paper that a party can compensate for its relative poverty to an extent, through well targeted and well managed free campaign activity.

Such conclusions may give cause for cautious optimism, since better financial endowment may not be automatically beneficial in electoral terms. But they also have regulatory implications. As we show earlier in the paper, concern about the distorting effects of candidate spending have prompted an extension of the regulated period of spending for candidates. And indeed, Labour has previously called for the regulated period to be analogous to that at national level (which is currently 365 days). Yet, if candidate
expenditure can be offset to an extent by free volunteer labour (which presumably would be something that a democracy would wish to encourage), there might be a case for rejecting such calls for an extended regulatory period, or even reducing the current one given that even in target seats, candidates did not, on average, come anywhere near to the spending cap (see Table 2). However, an alternative view would be that although spending can be offset by free campaigning, there is no guarantee that this will always be the case – especially where parties have limited manpower. Thus, it makes sense to continue to regulate as we currently do, but perhaps treat any proposals for extension more cautiously, given the costs of compliance for what are still voluntary organisations.

Appendix

Table A1. Principal Components Analysis of Free Campaigning Index (Four Variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Electorate Canvassed</td>
<td>.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Constituency Covered by Number Takers</td>
<td>.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Campaign Workers</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Polling Day Workers</td>
<td>.828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: After Varimax Rotation. 1 Component Extracted

Table A2. Principal Components Analysis of Free Campaigning Index (Three Variables)

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Electorate Canvassed</td>
<td>.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Constituency Covered by Number Takers</td>
<td>.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Polling Day Workers</td>
<td>.826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: After Varimax Rotation. 1 Component Extracted

Table A3: Responses

The numbers of responses for each party in the agent survey by target status were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Held Not Target</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>No Target Not Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


