Conceived in Harlesden: Candidate-centred campaigning in the 2015 general election

Caitlin Milazzo
University of Nottingham

Joshua Townsley
University of Kent
Pty vs. candidate: Two examples from Broxtowe
Why the candidate-centric campaign?

• Voters care about candidate characteristics
  • Appearance (Johns and Shephard, 2011; Mattes and Milazzo, 2014)
  • Occupational background (Coffe and Theiss-Morse, 2016; Campbell and Cowley, 2014)
  • Experience (Stokes, 1963, 1992; Groseclose, 2001)
  • Local connections (Cowley, 2013; Johnson and Rosenblatt, 2007)

• + Traits ↑ support
  • UK (Arzheimer and Evans, 2012; Campbell and Cowley, 2014; Milazzo and Mattes, 2016)
  • US (Key 1949; Dudley and Rapoport, 1989; Garand, 1988; Lewis-Beck and Rice, 1983)
  • Australia (Studlar and McAllister, 1996)
  • Europe (Pedersen et al., 2007)
Why do candidate characteristics matter to voters?

- Distributional benefits from local representation (Key, 1949)
- In-group favouritism (Fiva and Halse, 2016)
- Voters receive psychological satisfaction voting for candidate similar to them (Lewis-Beck and Rice, 1983)
- Awareness of local candidates is higher (Bowler, Donovan and Snipp, 1993; Gimpel et al, 2008) contributing to a personal vote (Beck et al., 1992)
- Local candidates better at mobilising voters in their hometowns (Rice and Macht, 1987)
Questions

• Do all candidates use candidate-centred messing?

• When and where are candidates more/less likely to do so?
Building the dataset

• Python-scraping to gather images, meta-information

• Some leaflets discarded (local elections, incomplete leaflets)

• Major, widely-competitive parties
  • CON, LAB, LD, UKIP, Greens, and SNP → All won > 1 million votes

• Additional (manual) coding
### Distribution of 2015 election leaflets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukip</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N (leaflets)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,304</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The map on the right shows the distribution of leaflets across different regions in the UK.
Correlation between no. of leaflets and spending, BES leaflet contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Total spending (£)</th>
<th>BES respondents receiving leaflet (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0.18 **</td>
<td>0.18 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>0.24 **</td>
<td>0.28 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem</td>
<td>0.37 **</td>
<td>0.47 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.56 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>0.47 **</td>
<td>0.46 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>0.21 **</td>
<td>0.21 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01
How much of the candidate in the message?

• Mention of the party’s candidate

• Local connections – anything that stresses candidate’s local connections, e.g.:
  • “He has lived in the North-East of Scotland all his life, he has many friends and family in Banff & Buchan and worked his first graduate job in Peterhead” – Labour, Banff & Buchan
  • “Born in Wrexham, I live here with my wife and children and work locally” – Conservative, Wrexham
  • ”Matthew lives and works in South East Hampshire and has many direct links with Fareham” – Lib Dem, Fareham

• Candidate traits – anything that mentions candidate’s personal experience or background, e.g.:
  • “Experience as a trustee of a children’s charity...” – Conservative, Wrexham
  • “My professional background is in architecture and interior design” – UKIP, West Ham
  • “As an experienced business advisor...” – Green, Exeter
Variation in candidate-centric messaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Candidate Mentioned (%)</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Name only (%)</th>
<th>Additional Info (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Lib Dem</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Variation in candidate-centric messaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Additional Info (%)</th>
<th>Local ties only (%)</th>
<th>Traits only (%)</th>
<th>Both (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When do candidates emphasise personal credentials?

• Marginality (Heitshusen et al., 2005)

• Distance from legislative body – a centre-periphery effect (Wood and Young, 1997)

• Race (McIlwain and Caliendo, 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Name only (%)</th>
<th>Local ties only (%)</th>
<th>Traits only (%)</th>
<th>Both (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra urban</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra rural</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multinomial logit: DV = Leaflet contains candidate-centric message (REF – Name only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Local ties only</th>
<th>Traits only</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party (ref=Labour)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib Dem</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKIP</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME candidate</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Margin of victory</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ns = p > 0.05
What do we find?

• Context matters less than the individual

• Why do we care?
  • Priming
  • 2017

I am a life long Brent resident, conceived in Harlesden, born in Kilburn, grew up in Queens Park and now reside in Willesden. I wasn’t always political but like many, after the Iraq war I was left with so many questions about politics in the UK. Questions like, what makes democracy work for the people, not just the powerful?
Modelling the presence of candidate-centred messaging

- Candidate characteristics
  - Party
  - Incumbency (-)
  - Female candidate (?)
  - Race/ethnicity (?)

- Constituency characteristics
  - Competition - 2010 Margin of victory (-)
  - Rural areas (+)
I want to tell you a bit about me, because lots of you ask! I was born in
London, the son of a Police Officer. I went to Warwick University, where I met
my wife Jackie and after doing a teaching course at Trent Poly I started my career.
Jackie and I married in Burton Joyce in 1978 and have two children Laura and
Matt. Laura, like her parents is a teacher. Her husband, also called Matt, has just
returned from serving with the army in Cyprus. They have a beautiful daughter
Florence (Flo). Jackie and I absolutely love being grandparents. Our son Matt
is a plumber, which comes in useful! He is engaged to Ruth who also works in
education.

We are very proud of our family and like you we want the best for our children
and grandchildren.

On a lighter note, it's good to keep meeting people I taught at Arnold Hill or
Bigwood (as it was then). Seems I either taught or played football with or against
half of Gedling.

Vernon Coaker

ABOUT DAVID

David has lived locally with his family for 26 years. He worked in
industry before politics. David helps hundreds of people each
year at constituency surgeries &
regularly visits all parts of the
constituency. He believes that
Britain at its best gives
opportunity to all, regardless of
background, race or religion.

Contact David

davidilidington.com

david@davidilidington.com

A True Local Candidate for Erewash

Martin has lived in Erewash for 35 years and is standing for
Parliament in Erewash for the sixth time.

Martin is Chair of Governors at Friesland School in Sandiacre
where he has served as a governor since 2002.

Martin is an Associate Professor in Pharmacy at the University of
Nottingham and has research interests in medical
nanotechnology, gene therapies and children’s brain cancer.

He has served as an advisor to EPSRC, one of the main UK
Research Councils, on nanotechnology and Healthcare.

Martin is keen to make the fruits of research work for the economy in ways which will benefit us all.

I am a life long Brent resident, conceived in Harlesden, born in
Kilburn, grew up in Queens Park and now reside in Willesden. I wasn't
always political but like many, after the Iraq war I was left with so
many questions about politics in the UK. Questions like, what makes
democracy work for the people, not just the powerful?

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2016-2017: Founding Director, IF, Jesus College.

I ran a new centre, working on the big issues society faces - the
future of work, ageing, climate change, and trust in technology
and democracy.

2015-2016: Lecturer in public policy, University of Cambridge

2010-2015: Member of Parliament for Cambridge

I spent five years working hard to represent our city's interests. I
led with over 30,000 individual pieces of casework. I was a
member of the Home Affairs Select Committee, championing
liberties.

2005-2009: County Councillor for East Chesterton (Cambridge)

2005-2010: Research scientist, University of Cambridge

3-2005: CEO, Cambridge Laboratory Innovations Ltd

BBIES & INTERESTS

I always loved cycling and hiking, and in my spare time enjoy
walking to the mountains somewhere.

When in Cambridge I enjoy visiting the Arts Picturehouse and
spending time in Cambridge’s many independent cafes and pubs.

I'm a regular at the Cambridge Folk Festival, and if you come to
the Beer Festival, you may well see me serving the drinks.
I want to tell you a bit about me, because lots of you ask! I was born in London, the son of a Police Officer. I went to Warwick University, where I met my wife Jackie and after doing a teaching course at Trent Poly I started my career. Jackie and I married in Burton Joyce in 1978 and have two children Laura and Matt. Laura, like her parents is a teacher. Her husband, also called Matt, has just returned from serving with the army in Cyprus. They have a beautiful daughter Florence (Flo). Jackie and I absolutely love being grandparents. Our son Matt is a plumber, which comes in useful! He is engaged to Ruth who also works in education. We are very proud of our family and like you we want the best for our children and grandchildren.

On a lighter note, it’s good to keep meeting people I taught at Arnold Hill or Bigwood (as it was then). Seems I either taught or played football with or against half of Gedling!

Vernon Coaker

ABOUT DAVID
David has lived locally with his family for 26 years. He worked in industry before politics. David helps hundreds of people each year at constituency surgeries & regularly visits all parts of the constituency. He believes that Britain at its best gives opportunity to all, regardless of background, race or religion.

Contact David

[Email: davidlidlington.com]
[Email: david@davidlidlington.com]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
2016-2017: Founding Director, IF, Jesus College
I ran a new centre, working on the big issues society faces - the future of work, ageing, climate change, and trust in technology and democracy.

2015-2016: Lecturer in public policy, University of Cambridge
2010-2015: Member of Parliament for Cambridge
I spent five years working hard to represent our city's interests. I helped with over 30,000 individual pieces of casework. I was a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee, championing civil liberties.

2001-2009: County Councillor for East Chesterton (Cambridge)
2005-2010: Research scientist, University of Cambridge
2003-2005: CEO, Cambridge Laboratory Innovations Ltd

HOBBIES & INTERESTS
I've always loved cycling and hiking, and in my spare time enjoy escaping to the mountains somewhere.

When in Cambridge I enjoy visiting the Arts Picturehouse and spending time in Cambridge's many independent cafes and pubs.

I'm a regular at the Cambridge Folk Festival, and if you come to the Beer Festival, you may well see me serving the drinks.
Providing information one of the key components of a local campaign

• More than £15 million spent on ‘unsolicited materials’, 40% of campaign spending
  • Leaflets the most of common form of election contact (2015, BES)

• Systematic variation in messaging?