

First Impressions: Persuasion Field Experiments Using Campaign Canvassing Data

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September 10, 2016

EPOP 2016 Panel “Political Communication”

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Research on election campaigns

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- **We need to get better at studying persuasion within the campaign context.**

Research on election campaigns

- Good reasons to believe that political persuasion in partisan campaigns is different from persuasion in non-partisan campaigns (Nickerson 2006).
- Partisan identities (Green et al. 2002) and partisan cues (Foos 2015) may constrain persuasion attempts.

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Traditional instruments are either expensive (low response rates) or only allow us to study persuasion post-election (inconvenient for campaigns)

We should conduct more field experiments in-cycle

- “Test, learn, adapt” method (Haynes et al., 2012).
- We should make persuasion experiments cheaper to implement.
- Doing them in-cycle and cheaply should lead to a proliferation of campaign experiments.

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- Widely used by all political parties in the UK for targeting.
- ① Available at the individual level.
- ② Available as a by-product of ongoing campaign.
- ③ Collected at multiple points in-cycle (voters are recontacted).

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- 3 Reliability of the data.

Canvassing data

- Data structure

Subject	Party ID
1	$-L - d - Lt$
2	$-dTL - Dd$

Southampton: Correlation between Labour support at year t and Labour support at year $t+n$

t	$t+n$			
	2011	2012	2014	2015
2010	.57***	.56***	.53***	.49***
N	2174	1696	1524	3575
2011		.57***	.57***	.51***
N		3019	3356	4791
2012			.61***	.59***
N			3196	4546
2014				.65***
N				3575

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, pearson correlation coefficients.

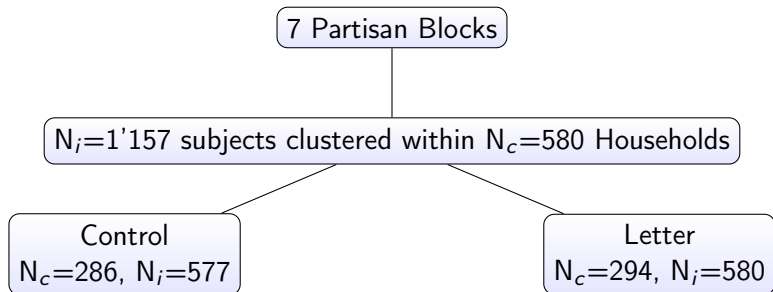
Validate treatment effect estimate with telephone survey

- Independent telephone survey (identified as a study about local and European politics conducted in April and May 2014)
- Conducted by a team of student volunteers.
- General Election questions embedded within a larger questionnaire on local and European issues in Southampton.

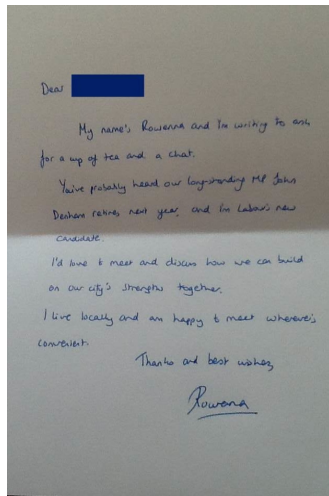
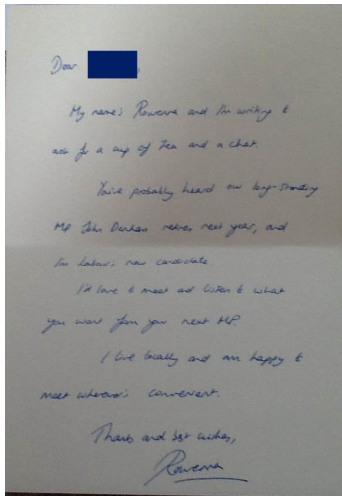
Representativeness of Respondents

	Telephone		Canvassing	
	Respon- dents	Nonrespon- dents	Respon- dents	Nonrespon- dents
% Lab 2011/12	23.1	22.4	23.1	14.6
% Lab 2010/11	12.1	12.7	24.7	13.9
% Cons 2011/12	21.8	17.9	34.7	43.1
% Cons 2010/11	38.7	24.2	32.3	27.3
% Others 2011/12	45.2	43.1	42.2	42.3
% Others 2010/11	63.6	48.7	58.8	43.0
% Turnout 2012	41.8	34.8	27.6	38.0
% Turnout 2011	60.0	50.8	51.5	52.3

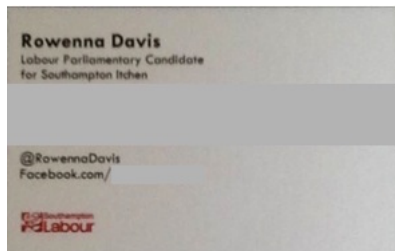
Cluster-Random Assignment to Treatments and Control



Letter

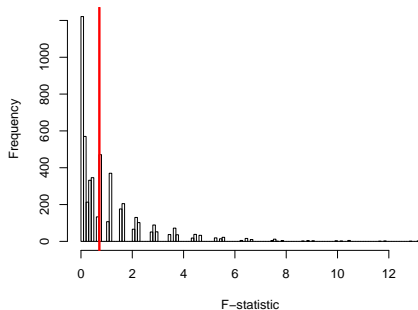


Business Cards

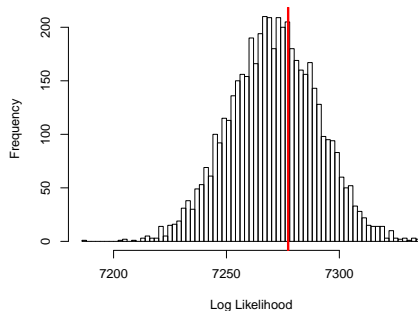


Attrition Checks

Sampling distribution of simulated f-statistics



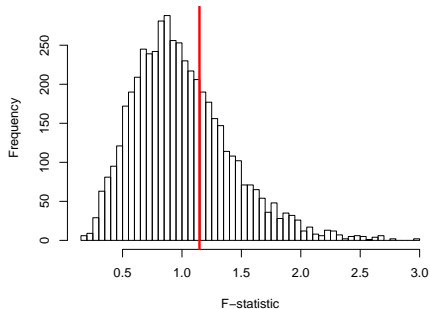
Sampling distribution of simulated log likelihoods



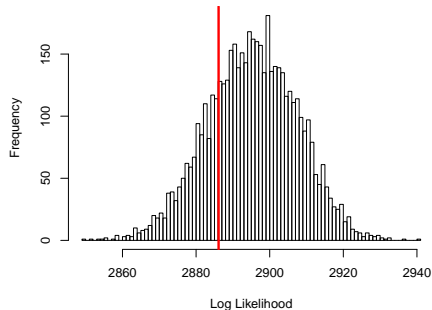
a) Telephone survey b) Canvassing data

Balance Checks

Sampling distribution of simulated f-statistics



Sampling distribution of simulated log likelihoods



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Effect of Letters on Labour Support

	Telephone Interviews	Canvassing ID
Labour Support Letter	13.6%	18.5%
Labour Support Control	5.5%	9.9%
ITT	8.2 ⁺	8.6 [*]
95% Confidence Interval	[-2.7, 19.5]	[0.7, 16.1]
Covariate-adjusted ITT	8.4 ⁺	10.6 ^{**}
95% Confidence Interval	[-2.5, 19.7]	[2.8, 17.9]
N	110	394

Live-telephone interviews conducted in May and June 2014.
 Canvassing conducted between June 2014 and February 2015.
 *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$ (based on one-tailed hypothesis tests using randomization inference), accounts for block and cluster random assignment

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- Canvassing data appears to be a valid, reliable and widely-available outcome measure of party support.
- We should use it to study persuasion in the context of election campaigns.

Thank you for your attention.

Telephone Survey

- Question: If you decide to vote in the General Election next May, which candidate will you vote for? I am now going to read out a list of the declared candidates in your seat:
 - 1 Rowenna Davis for the Labour Party
 - 2 Royston Smith for the Conservative Party
 - 3 Liberal Democrats
 - 4 UK Independence Party
 - 5 Other (INTERVIEWER: DO NOT NAME OPTION, WRITE IN):
 - 6 Undecided (INTERVIEWER: DO NOT NAME OPTION)
 - 7 Don't know (INTERVIEWER: DO NOT NAME OPTION)
 - 8 Refused (INTERVIEWER: DO NOT NAME OPTION)

Experiment 2: Effects on Labour Support

	Control	Candidate	Volunteers	Leaflet
Labour support	68%	73%	69%	74%
Contact	0.2%	35.8%	13.5%	
ITT vs control unadjusted		4.6 ⁺ [-2.1, 11.3]	1.3 [-5.2, 7.9]	5.8 ⁺ [-2.7, 14.2]
CACE vs control unadjusted		12.9 ⁺ [-4.0, 29.8]	10.0 [-34.1, 54.0]	
ITT vs control covariate-adjusted		5.3 ⁺ [-1.3, 12.0]	2.1 [-4.4, 8.5]	5.9 ⁺ [-2.4, 14.1]
CACE vs control covariate-adjusted		14.9* [-1.7, 31.5]	15.9 [-27.8, 59.5]	
N	336	700	952	293

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$ (based on one-tailed hypothesis tests), accounts for block and cluster random assignment.