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Hanging on the Telephone? Doorstep and Telephone Canvassing at the British General Election of 1997

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After years of neglect, a growing literature has reclaimed the constituency campaign as an important aspect of British elections. However, relatively little work has been done to disentangle which aspects of the local campaign are effective, and which are not. For much of the twentieth century, the mechanics of the local campaign were in essentials unchanged. But changing campaign technologies in the last decade offer new possibilities to party campaign managers. The 1997 British general election was the first in which parties made extensive use of telephone canvassing as well as the more traditional doorstep canvass. This article provides a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of traditional versus telephone constituency campaigns. Traditional face-to-face canvassing had a statistically significant influence on the outcome of the 1997 general election. But the telephone canvass did not.

British election campaigns are fought at two distinct spatial scales: each party fights a national campaign, and 641 separate constituency campaigns.[1] Prior to the advent of mass television audiences in the 1950s, the bulk of campaign activity took place at the constituency level, as it had done for over a century. Candidates campaigned via election meetings, rallies and canvassing. Since then, however, the national campaign has become increasingly important, and now provides the main focus of party efforts. Not only that, but the national campaign has become increasingly sophisticated. Polling and focus groups allow parties to monitor how their message is getting across to the electorate. 'Spin doctors' try to manipulate media reporting to present the party in the best possible light. News management techniques are applied to try and ensure that party candidates are 'on message' throughout the campaign, and that a party's campaign themes will be well reported on the all-important prime television news broadcasts. New technology is increasingly applied, to communicate both between party headquarters and grassroots campaigners, and between parties and voters. The rather *ad hoc* campaigns of the 1940s and early 1950s bear little relation to the highly managed campaigns of the 1990s and 2000s.[2]

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[1] At the 1997 general election, there were 659 constituencies. However, eighteen of these were in Northern Ireland, which has its own distinctive party system, and is not contested by the Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat parties. We therefore exclude the Northern Ireland seats from our discussion. Two further seats were excluded from analysis: Tatton, where Labour and the Liberal Democrats stood down to allow an independent candidate a clear run against the Conservative incumbent; and West Bromwich West, the seat held by the Speaker of the House of Commons (and traditionally uncontested).

[2] M. Rosenbaum, *From Soapbox to Soundbite: Party Political Campaigning in Britain since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 1997); M. Scammell, *Designer Politics: How Elections are Won* (London: Macmillan, 1995); D. Kavanagh, *Election Campaigning: The New Marketing of Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); P. Norris, ed., *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); P. Norris, *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

By contrast, however, constituency campaigns changed relatively little until the end of the twentieth century. The main change was the decline of attendance at public election meetings as television became the main medium of communication between parties and voters. However, local parties continued to pursue their other traditional activities. Constituency activists mailed party literature to local voters; distributed leaflets and posters from door to door; and canvassed voters on their doorsteps. The canvass allows parties to identify their supporters, their opponents, and also undecided voters, who might be swayed in an election. The intention is in part to win over converts, but mainly to maximise the number of committed supporters who actually turn out to vote come the election. Canvassing also provides a point of contact between voters and local parties: maintaining a local profile is often seen as an important component of local campaigning, partly as a means of raising a party's visibility locally (and hence perceptions of its chances of winning in that seat), partly in order to illustrate a concern with local issues and worries.

Local campaigns have traditionally relied on local volunteers engaged on doorstep activity, therefore. During the 1980s and early 1990s, there were some innovations in local campaigning, mostly involving the introduction of cheap computer power to both manage canvass returns and to run direct mailing to constituents. But in many ways this was an extension of existing activities. The 1997 campaign, however, saw the introduction of potentially radical new departures for British election campaigns. Both the Liberal Democrats and Labour concentrated much of their efforts in key target seats (fifty and ninety respectively).[3] Within the target seats, undecided voters were singled out for special attention. And, most radically of all, the parties began to make extensive use of telephone canvassing. Although widely used in the United States, this was a new departure for British electoral politics. Whereas effective doorstep canvassing required large numbers of committed party workers in each constituency, the telephone canvass in a constituency could be conducted by operatives based outside the constituency. Some telephone canvassers in 1997 were party activists in non-marginal seats: others were employed in regional 'phone banks'.[4] Telephone canvassing has clear attractions for the parties. It can supplement (and may even replace) the labour-intensive doorstep canvass, no small consideration when party membership is in decline. Taken to extremes, however, telephone canvassing could potentially be conducted without the need for local activists to be involved at all. Furthermore, telephone campaigning allows parties to side-step tight controls on spending in constituency campaigns, since calls can be hard to trace or to attribute to a particular constituency.

But is this actually desirable for the parties? What impact does telephone canvassing have on party support, and how does it compare to more traditional forms of local political activity? To date, no real systematic work has been carried out on the issue in Britain. In this article, therefore, we provide a preliminary analysis of the effects of doorstep and telephone canvassing on voter choice at the 1997 British general election.

LOCAL CONSTITUENCY CAMPAIGNING

The world of constituency election campaigning is changing. Ever since the 1959 election (the first fully televised election in Britain), the academic orthodoxy on constituency

[3] D. Denver, G. Hands and S. Henig, 'Triumph of Targeting? Constituency Campaigning in the 1997 Election', in D. Denver, J. Fisher, P. Cowley and C. Pattie, eds, *British Elections and Parties Review 8: The 1997 General Election* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 171–90.

[4] Phone banks were in action again in the run up to the 2001 general election: Labour, for instance, set up a call centre in North Shields to deal with the campaign.

campaigning has held it to have no impact on party performance at national elections. For Kavanagh, writing in 1970, for instance, the constituency campaign in the television age had become an empty ritual.[5] Voters no longer attended mass meetings in their constituencies, but received the vast majority of their election news from the national media. Uniform swing across all constituencies seemed to demonstrate the futility of the local campaign. In so far as it served a purpose, the constituency campaign had become a means for keeping local party activists busy, for giving them a feeling of participation in the party's struggle (or more cynically, to prevent the devil of party discord from finding work for idle hands!). This orthodox view has become enshrined in the Nuffield election studies, produced after each British contest since 1945. Commenting on the 1992 contest, for instance, Butler and Kavanagh comment: 'it is hard to locate evidence of great benefits being reaped by the increasingly sophisticated and computerised local campaigning'.[6]

The British orthodoxy has been in contrast to the rich North American research literature on local campaign effects.[7] However, in recent years, a growing body of research has challenged this orthodoxy.[8] Early experimental analyses suggested that extra canvassing might yield electoral dividends. Studying individual contests, Bochel and Denver provided extra canvassers for some parts of local government wards, but not for others: turnout was higher in the more heavily canvassed areas than in the less heavily canvassed.[9]

More recently, analysis has turned to the study of canvassing across a wide range of constituencies. Analyses of constituency campaign spending in Britain have revealed significant variations in election outcomes.[10] The more a party spends on its local campaign in a constituency, *ceteris paribus*, the greater the share of the vote it receives, and the smaller the share going to its rivals. Other independent studies have found similar results, though looking at wider indicators of campaign intensity than just campaign spending. In

[5] D. Kavanagh, *Constituency Electioneering in Britain* (London: Longman, 1970).

[6] D. Butler and K. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 244. See also Butler's comments to the Neill Committee on Standards in Public Life, *The Funding of Political Parties in the United Kingdom: Fifth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Vol. 2: Evidence* (London: HMSO, CM 4057-II, 217, 1998).

[7] R. Huckfeldt and J. Sprague, *Citizens, Politics and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); G. Jacobson, 'The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 72 (1978), 469–91; G. Jacobson, 'The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections: New Evidence for Old Arguments', *American Journal of Political Science*, 34 (1990), 334–62. The nature of the 'local' campaign differs in important respects between the United States and Britain, however. In the United States, large amounts of money can be spent on television advertising promoting particular candidates. This is not possible in Britain (both because of restrictions on the purchase of political advertising on television, and because of the tight legal limits imposed on local spending in Britain: television advertising, even if possible, would exceed a constituency party's budget, and would leave it open to legal challenge).

[8] Contrast Kavanagh, *Election Campaigning*, p. 245, with Kavanagh, *Constituency Electioneering in Britain*.

[9] J. M. Bochel and D. Denver, 'Canvassing, Turnout and Party Support: An Experiment', *British Journal of Political Science*, 1 (1971), 257–69; J. M. Bochel and D. Denver, 'The Impact of the Campaign on the Results of Local Government Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 2 (1972), 239–44.

[10] R. J. Johnston, *Money and Votes: Constituency Campaign Spending and Election Results* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); R. J. Johnston, C. J. Pattie and L. C. Johnston, 'The Impact of Constituency Spending on the Result of the 1987 British General Election', *Electoral Studies*, 8 (1989), 143–57; R. J. Johnston, C. J. Pattie and I. MacAllister, 'The Funding of Constituency Party General Election Campaigns in Great Britain', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 17 (1999), 391–409; R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Campaigning and Advertising: an Evaluation of the Components of Constituency Activism at Recent British General Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1998), 677–85; C. J. Pattie, R. J. Johnston and E. A. Fieldhouse, 'Winning the Local Vote: The Effectiveness of Constituency Campaign Spending in Great Britain, 1983–1992', *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), 969–83.

their surveys of party election agents in the 1990s, Denver and Hands measured a wide range of indicators of local campaign intensity.[11] For a large number of constituencies, they were able to construct campaign indices for each party, based on the party's preparedness for the campaign, the average number of volunteer workers it could call on, the proportion of the electorate it had canvassed, how many leaflets it had distributed, how much use had been made of computers, and how well organized it had been on polling day. Once again, they were able to demonstrate that parties that campaign hard locally are more effective in terms of the change in party support from one election to the next in constituency contests than are parties that do not put as much effort into the local campaign.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of a local campaign is not just a matter of local parties being rich in resources. It is also about people. Whiteley and Seyd's influential studies of party membership have shown that the more active the individual members, and the larger the local party, the better it does in constituency campaigns.[12] It would seem that the parties themselves share this diagnosis. Prior to the 1997 election, for instance, Labour undertook a major recruitment drive, increasing party membership from just over 300,000 in 1994 to 400,000 in 1997.[13] All parties engaged in some degree of constituency targeting in 1997, especially, as we have seen, Labour and the Liberal Democrats.[14] But for the Conservatives especially, there is some concern over party members' local campaigning resources. Membership is declining, and members are ageing (the average Conservative member is now retired): even among the most committed, fewer than before are able or willing to undertake canvassing, leaflet distribution, and other street and doorstep campaign activities, especially where these take place in constituencies other than their own.[15]

The 'new orthodoxy' increasingly points to the effectiveness of local campaigning, therefore, and to the importance of maintaining an active and vibrant grassroots membership in the constituencies. However, Labour's dramatic increase in members prior to 1997 notwithstanding, the general trend in party membership in Britain is downwards. Mainstream parties now boast fewer members than in the 1950s, and even New Labour has seen its membership fall from its 1997 peak, with potentially serious consequences for parties' abilities to mobilize support locally.[16]

The strategies and technologies adopted by parties themselves in their local campaigns have changed in recent elections. The introduction of relatively cheap computer power into almost every constituency since the 1980s has opened up new possibilities for targeted

[11] D. Denver and G. Hands, *Modern Constituency Electioneering: Local Campaigning in the 1992 General Election* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Constituency Campaigning in the 1997 General Election: Party Effort and Electoral Effort', in I. Crewe, B. Gosschalk and J. Bartle, eds., *Political Communications: Why Labour Won the General Election of 1997* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 75–92; Denver, Hands and Henig, 'Triumph of Targeting?'

[12] P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots: The Politics of Party Membership* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); P. Whiteley and P. Seyd, 'Local Party Campaigning and Electoral Mobilization in Britain', *Journal of Politics*, 56 (1994), 242–52; P. Whiteley and P. Seyd, 'Labour's Grassroots Campaign in 1997', in Denver, Fisher, Cowley and Pattie, eds, *British Elections and Parties Review 8: The 1997 General Election*, pp. 191–207; P. Whiteley, P. Seyd and J. Richardson, *True Blues: The Politics of Conservative Party Membership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[13] P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, 'New Labour and the Party: Membership and Organisation', in S. Ludlam and M. Smith, eds, *New Labour in Government* (London: Macmillan, 2001), pp. 73–91.

[14] Denver, Hands and Henig, 'Triumph of Targeting?'

[15] Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson, *True Blues*.

[16] P. Whiteley and P. Seyd, 'The Dynamics of Party Activism in Britain: A Spiral of Demobilization?' *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1998), 113–37.

mailshots to particular groups of voters, better record keeping and so on.[17] Not only that, but in 1997 especially, the parties began to make more effective use than in the past of constituency targeting (concentrating campaign resources in a few key constituencies rather than in seats where the result was assured). In addition, the adoption of telephone canvassing, widely used in North America, but still novel in Britain, allows parties the potential to overcome some of the difficulties caused by declining grassroots activism.[18] What would it matter if local party memberships were in decline, and members themselves were becoming less active, if a nationally-organized telephone bank could identify and contact targeted voters in targeted seats? The 'new technology' of the telephone canvass, combined with a target seat strategy, would seem to do away with the need for healthy local party organizations. Local campaigning might continue to be important, perhaps shorn of the impediment of local party members.

But is it this simple? Some evidence from the United States, where trends towards telephone campaigning and away from doorstep campaigns are much further advanced than in Britain, suggest that the decline in face-to-face contact between parties and voters has had an adverse impact on turnout.[19] Recent American research suggests that while doorstep canvassing can improve turnout, telephone canvassing has little or no effect.[20] So what is the picture in Britain? The 1997 election gives us our first chance to compare 'traditional' and 'modern' canvassing techniques. In the remainder of this article, we make that comparison.

MEASURING THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF DOORSTEP AND TELEPHONE CANVASSING

How effective were doorstep and telephone canvassing at the 1997 British general election? Our main data source is the 1997 British Election Study cross-section, a stratified, clustered random sample of 2,733 adults conducted in the immediate aftermath of the election. Respondents to the survey were asked whether, during the election, they remembered a canvasser from any party calling at their home and whether they remembered someone phoning them to canvass their support. In addition, they were asked which party each canvasser represented.

Only a minority of voters recalled being canvassed during the campaign (see Table 1). Even so, doorstep canvassing was recalled much more often than telephone canvassing: a quarter of all respondents experienced the former, compared to only 7 per cent experiencing the latter. Only small numbers of BES respondents reported a phone call from a party. To some extent this is surprising. The Conservatives and Labour especially have reported undertaking a considerable amount of telephone campaigning in the run-up to the 1997 election. Not only that, but telephone canvassing was relatively novel in Britain in 1997.[21] We would therefore expect many voters to remember it if it had been widely employed.

[17] Denver and Hands, *Modern Constituency Electioneering*.

[18] Parties can now purchase electoral registers and telephone directories on computer file, allowing them to create merged databases.

[19] M. Gray and M. Caul, 'Declining Voter Turnout in Advanced Industrial Democracies, 1950 to 1997: The Effects of Declining Group Mobilization', *Comparative Political Studies*, 33 (2000), 1091–122.

[20] A. S. Gerber and D. P. Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment', *American Political Science Review*, 94 (2000), 653–63; A. S. Gerber and D. P. Green, 'Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout?' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 65 (2001), 75–85.

[21] Denver, Hands and Henig, 'Triumph of Targeting?'.

TABLE 1 *Electors Canvassed at the 1997 General Election*

	Percentage canvassed	*N*
Doorstep canvass:		
Any party	25	2,899
Conservative	10	2,884
Labour	13	2,884
Liberal Democrat	6	2,884
Telephone canvass:		
Any party	7	2,900
Conservative	2	2,888
Labour	4	2,888
Liberal Democrat	1	2,888

Source: 1997 BES cross-section.

To some extent, the low level of respondents remembering a phone call from a party might be an artefact of the uses to which telephone canvassing in particular was put. 'Voter identification' is a major aspect of all canvassing, identifying supporters, opponents and floating voters, and allowing parties to direct other campaigning activities such as targeted mailings more effectively. It is quite possible that in some phone calls, the 'opinion poll' aspect of voter identification was uppermost, and the recipient was not informed of the party 'sponsoring' the call. Furthermore, much of this 'voter identification' work was done well in advance of the official election campaign, and may also provide a preliminary to other forms of local campaigning, such as follow-up doorstep canvassing of committed supporters and floating voters.[22] To the extent that this is the case, estimates of telephone canvassing based on voter recall of contact by a party during the official campaign period are likely to underestimate the overall scale of the activity and may downplay its impact. That said, the focus here is on the mobilization potential of different local campaigning strategies: if a party does not identify itself, it cannot expect voters to 'get' its message by osmosis.

That said, small, but not insignificant, numbers of respondents reported being phoned by Labour or the Conservatives during the election campaign. The numbers reporting a Liberal Democrat phone call were very small, but that party was not able to put much effort into this aspect of its campaign. To the extent that the BES estimates are based on small samples, and potentially miss pre-election telephone canvassing, our estimates of the impact of the telephone campaign are likely to be relatively conservative. Even so, despite the small numbers involved, we believe the exercise of investigating the impact of exposure to the telephone canvass on 1997 BES respondents' behaviour is worthwhile. While 1997 was the first election in Britain in which extensive use was made of telephone campaigning, it will not be the last, and it is likely that this campaign resource will be exploited even more in the future. Our analysis therefore serves as a baseline for studies of telephone canvassing in future elections.

Reflecting both the greater number of seats contested actively by the major parties, and their much larger memberships, more voters reported being canvassed by Labour or

[22] Denver, Hands and Henig, 'Triumph of Targeting?' p. 177.

Conservative party members than by Liberal Democrats. To an extent, the low levels of canvassing during the campaign reported in the BES reflect the logistics of an election campaign. In a constituency with (on average) around 65,000 voters, even the most assiduous local party would have to work hard to reach a substantial proportion of voters during the official campaign. And local party membership varies greatly from constituency to constituency:[23] some local parties are too small to be able to mount more than the most token canvass in their area. In addition, canvassing goes on between election campaigns as well as during them. Well-organized constituency parties build databases of potential supporters in advance of an election campaign, and parties may reasonably decide not to waste precious time and resources during the campaign on electors who are unlikely to support them.[24]

Telephone and doorstep canvasses could be used to complement each other, not as alternatives. Telephone calls could be used to identify likely supporters and floating voters who could be followed up later by doorstep visits.[25] That said, those BES respondents who reported being canvassed on the doorstep by a party were not especially likely to remember being phoned by it too. Only 3 per cent of those who recalled being door-stepped by the Conservatives in 1997 also remembered a phone call from the party, for instance. The equivalent figures for Labour and Liberal Democrat canvassing were 9 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. Similarly, a minority of those who remembered being phoned by a party also recalled being canvassed in person. Only 16 per cent of those recalling a Conservative phone call also remembered a Conservative doorstep canvass: 29 per cent of those remembering a Labour phone call, and 50 per cent of those recalling a Liberal Democrat call also reported a doorstep visit from the party. There is not much evidence in the BES data of the 'complementary' use of telephone and doorstep canvasses.

Canvassing and the Local Campaign

Respondents' own memories of canvassing during an election suffer from two potential drawbacks as a source of data on local campaigning, however. First, selective recall is possible. Respondents may recall being canvassed by the party they supported, but not by the other parties. Secondly, doorstep canvassing in particular is probably an underestimate of exposure to the local campaign. Many more voters will have received and read party election literature (most in the form of leaflets distributed via the constituency party), for instance, than will have been canvassed in person: in 1992, 83 per cent of voters said they had seen an election leaflet.[26] We do, however, have a proxy for other aspects of local campaign activity: by law, candidates must report details of their spending on their constituency campaigns, and these data are compiled and published in an official report

[23] Seyd and Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*; Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson, *True Blues*.

[24] That the parties themselves still believe in the importance of face-to-face contact between candidates and voters can be gauged by the 'contract' which Labour took out with its MPs shortly after the party's 1997 election triumph. To qualify for Labour 'key seat' status (entitling the constituency to aid from the regional and national parties), the local Labour MP had to agree to spend one weekday evening and half a day over the weekend in direct contact with voters. In addition, the local party was required to agree to canvass a *minimum* of a hundred households a week outside of election periods (including at least one evening a week on telephone work). In addition, the contract bound the local Labour party to a programme of regular direct mailings and leaflet distribution throughout the parliament, and of membership recruitment.

[25] Denver, Hands and Henig, 'Triumph of Targeting?' pp. 177 ff.

[26] The data are from the 1992 BES cross-section. The 1997 survey did not contain questions on exposure to election leaflets.

after every general election. Most constituency campaign spending goes on printing costs, mainly for leaflets and election addresses. Campaign spending, therefore, provides us with a reasonable measure of other aspects of the local campaign besides canvassing activity.[27] Data on 1997 constituency campaign spending, measured as a percentage of the legal maximum spending allowed in each seat, in the constituencies where each BES respondent lived were therefore merged with the BES data.[28]

Furthermore, parties do not campaign in isolation from other parties. Rather, they are in direct competition with their rivals, not only nationally but also in individual constituencies. To some extent, therefore, each party's local campaign activity should be responsive to the efforts of other parties in the constituency.[29] Where one's rivals campaign hard, there is an extra incentive to campaign harder oneself: strong challenges require strong responses. And where competitors do not make much effort, a local party might be justified in saving its resources.

Did the parties respond to this 'logic of competition' in their local canvassing efforts? BES respondents' experiences of canvassing give some insights. Six 'canvassing' dummy variables were created. Three recorded whether a respondent had been canvassed on the doorstep during the campaign by the Conservatives, Labour or the Liberal Democrats (each variable was coded 1 if the respondent had been canvassed by the relevant party and 0 if he or she had not).[30] A further three dummies recorded whether the respondent had been telephoned by each party. Each of these dummy variables then provided the dependent variable for a logistic regression, in which the independent variables were the remaining canvassing dummies and the parties' local campaign spending in the relevant constituency. The campaign spending variables are used here as proxies for the full range of local campaign activity, over and above canvassing. In addition, we have included a range of controls for the estimated state of party competition at the previous (1992) election in each seat: which party won the seat; which party came second; the percentage vote shares for each of the three main parties; and the marginality of the seat for each party.[31] Our measure of party marginality is the absolute difference in vote share between the party and (where the party did not win) the winning party; or (where the party did win) the party in second place. Other things being equal, we would expect parties to put more local campaigning effort into seats where they are either strong (and hence far ahead) or fighting a marginal that they might easily win or lose.

[27] For an analysis of the relationship between local campaign spending and other measures of local campaign intensity, see C. J. Pattie, P. F. Whiteley, R. J. Johnston and P. Seyd, 'Measuring Local Campaign Effects: Labour Party Constituency Campaigning at the 1987 General Election', *Political Studies*, 42 (1994), 469–79.

[28] Constituency campaign spending in British elections is limited by law. The maximum any party can spend in a constituency is a function of two things: whether the seat is urban or rural; and how many electors live there: R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Great Britain: Twentieth Century Parties Operating under Nineteenth Century Regulations', in A. B. Gunlicks, ed., *Campaign and Party Finance in North America and Western Europe* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 123–54.

[29] Jacobson, 'The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections'; Jacobson, 'The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections: New Evidence'; G. P. Green and J. S. Krasno, 'Salvation for the Spendthrift Incumbent: The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 32 (1988), 884–907; Pattie, Johnston and Fieldhouse, 'Winning the Local Vote'.

[30] In these, and all subsequent analyses, we do not look at canvassing by other parties. Given their national vote shares, and the overall size of the BES, this would have involved very small samples indeed.

[31] Since constituency boundaries changed, sometimes substantially, between the 1992 and 1997 elections, we cannot use the actual 1992 results. Instead, we have estimated the 1992 results for each seat, had that contest been fought in the constituencies used in 1997. For details of the estimation method, see D. J. Rossiter, R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Estimating the Partisan Impact of Redistricting in Great Britain', *British Journal of Political Science*, 27 (1997), 319–31.

The results do reveal some evidence of parties responding to their rivals' campaigns through their canvassing (see Table 2: we concentrate in this and subsequent analyses on the Labour and Conservative campaigns, since relatively few BES respondents reported either being canvassed by the Liberal Democrats or voting for them). So, for instance, the odds that BES respondents who were canvassed on the doorstep by Labour during the 1997 campaign would be doorstep canvassed by the Conservatives were, *ceteris paribus*, 3.7 times greater than the odds for those not canvassed by Labour.[32] Both 'doorstep canvass' equations reveal the same pattern: where respondents were canvassed on the doorstep by one party, they were also likely to be canvassed by another.

Similarly, as we would expect, the more each party spent on its local campaign in a constituency, the greater the chance that respondents living there would report a doorstep canvass by that party. The more Labour spent on its local campaign in a seat, the less likely were residents there to remember being door-stepped by the Conservatives (the relevant coefficient is negative and significant). But the more the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats spent on their local campaigns, the more likely respondents there were to recall being canvassed by Labour.

However, exposure to the telephone canvass did not have as much impact on chances of being canvassed on the doorstep. None of the telephone canvass variables were significant in the Conservative doorstep canvass equations, perhaps reflecting the Conservatives' membership difficulties discussed above. But respondents who were telephone canvassed by Labour were more likely to be 'door-stepped' by the party than were respondents the party had not telephoned. It could be that telephone canvasses were employed to identify targets for later doorstep campaigns: or information from doorstep campaigns could have been used to identify targets for later phone calls. But the causal order is not clear. We do not know which occurred first: the telephone or the doorstep canvass. That said, exposure to one party's telephone canvass did not have much impact on chances of exposure to another party's doorstep canvass. Only in the case of the Labour doorstep canvass equation was telephone canvassing by another party related to recall of doorstep activity: those (few) respondents who remembered being phoned by the Liberal Democrats were more likely than were those who did not recall it to also remember being door-stepped by Labour.

To some extent, this may reflect the relative visibility of doorstep as opposed to telephone canvassing. While the former takes place in full view, the latter is experienced within the home. Parties are likely to have better intelligence of their rivals' doorstep campaigns than of their telephone campaigns, and so be better placed to respond to the former than to the latter.

Once we control for the effects of other parties' campaigns, however, the pre-election state of party competition has little impact on the likelihood of being canvassed in person. Very few of the 'electoral context' variables are significant in the doorstep canvass equations. For Labour, this in part reflects targeting of resources in marginal seats at the 1997 campaign: campaign spending already captures some of the marginality effect. The only significant relationship here is with Conservative marginality in the Conservative doorstep canvass equation. The negative sign indicates that, other things being equal, the closer the contest in a seat for the Conservatives, the more likely were voters living there to recall being door-stepped by the party in 1997.

[32] Since the equations are logistic regressions, the coefficients are natural log odds ratios. Each coefficient can be expressed as an odds ratio by taking its natural antilogarithm.

TABLE 2 *Canvassing as a Response to Other Aspects of the Local Campaign, 1997: Logistic Regressions*

	Doorstep canvass by		Telephone canvass by	
Party	Con.	Lab.	Con.	Lab.
Doorstep canvass				
Con doorstep canvass		1.22**	0.31	0.19
Lab doorstep canvass	1.23**		−0.06	0.61*
LD doorstep canvass	1.19**	1.38**	−0.77	0.07
Phone canvass				
Con phone canvass	0.36	−0.27		1.30**
Lab phone canvass	0.24	0.59*	1.48**	
LD phone canvass	−1.00	1.26*	3.04**	1.83*
Constituency campaign spending				
Con % spend 1997	0.02**	0.01*	0.02	0.01
Lab % spend 1997	−0.01**	0.01**	−0.01	−0.00
LD % spend 1997	0.00	0.01*	−0.02	−0.01
Party winning constituency, 1992 (comparison = Conservative)				
Labour	1.24	0.92	−1.60	−2.64*
Liberal Democrat	0.55	−0.91	1.33	−1.23
Nationalist	0.33	0.17	−1.85	−0.05

Party second constituency, 1992 (comparison = Conservative)				
Labour	1.39*	0.60	− 0.47	− 0.85
Liberal Democrat	1.20	− 0.80	0.13	− 1.19
Nationalist	1.28	− 0.77	− 1.26	1.92
Conservative % vote 1992	0.05	− 0.01	− 0.03	0.02
Labour % vote 1992	0.03	− 0.01	0.01	0.05
Lib. Dem. % vote 1992	0.03	− 0.02	− 0.03	0.03
% marginality, 1992, by party				
Conservative	− 0.02**		− 0.05**	
Labour		− 0.00		− 0.08**
Lib. Dem.				
Constant	− 4.75	− 1.51	0.24	− 3.33
Initial − 2 log likelihood	1,894.07	2,172.46	591.61	938.06
Model improvement	212.26	292.18	499.35	213.02
Significance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
% Correctly classified	90.1	88.0	98.0	96.4
N	2,859	2,859	2,859	'2,859

*Sig. at $p = 0.05$.
**Sig. at $p = 0.01$.
Source: 1997 BES cross-section.

Similar patterns, *mutatis mutandis*, emerge from the models predicting exposure to each party's telephone canvass. Other things being equal, being phoned by one party raised the chances of being phoned by other parties too. But while exposure to Labour's telephone canvass was related to exposure to its doorstep canvass, it was not related to doorstep canvassing by other parties.

One major difference between the doorstep and telephone canvass equations, however, is in the relationships with campaign spending. None of the six campaign spending coefficients in the telephone canvass equations were significant. There is not much evidence here of voters' experiences of the telephone canvass during the election itself tallying with their exposure to other aspects of the local campaign.

A second difference can be found in the relationships between telephone canvassing and constituency party competition. Respondents living in seats Labour would have won in 1992 were less likely to recall being phoned by the party in 1992 than were respondents living in Conservative seats. Furthermore, the more marginal a seat would have been for Labour in 1992, the more likely were respondents living there to remember a Labour phone call in 1997. Both observations reflect Labour's decision to focus in 1997 on key marginals where it was second. The Conservatives, too, focused their phone canvass in their most marginal seats.

Even so, the general story is straightforward: parties put in extra local campaign efforts where they saw their rivals also competing hard. There is some evidence here for reactive local campaigning.

Canvassing and Party Support

The key foci of canvassing, whether face to face on the doorstep or by telephone, are to identify and mobilize party supporters; and identify and persuade potential, but still undecided, voters. An effective canvass should, therefore, boost a party's overall vote in a constituency, and should increase the chances that the individual canvassed elector will turn out and vote for the party. But how effective is canvassing in reality? Furthermore, which is the more effective in mobilizing support: the doorstep or the telephone canvass? A series of logistic regression analyses were conducted to find out (see Table 3). In each equation, the dependent variable was a binary measure of voting. The independent variables were the six canvassing dummies discussed above (three for doorstep canvassing, three for telephone), as well as percentage constituency campaign spending for each party. In addition, we have added control variables to capture a range of other socio-economic factors commonly associated with party choice in the electoral literature. We control for: respondents' social class; education; age; and their evaluations of the state of the economy, whether in terms of their domestic finances, their regional economy, or the national economy.[33] Crudely, more middle-class and older voters traditionally vote for parties of the right, while younger and more working-class voters support parties of the left. Those with university degrees provide a partial exception, increasingly voting for the centre left in recent elections. And a now voluminous literature on economic voting shows that those who feel the economy is performing well at whatever scale are likely to vote for the incumbent government (in 1997 this was the Conservatives), while those who feel the economy is performing badly are more likely to vote for the main opposition party (Labour

[33] We have run these analyses with a range of different control variables, and with no controls whatever. Our basic conclusions remain unaffected.

in 1997).[34] We will not dwell on the results for the control variables. Suffice it to say that their coefficients are in line with other analyses of the 1997 British general election.

The first two models in Table 3 look at the chances of voting for Labour and the Conservatives, compared to voting for another party, or not voting at all. In each, the binary dependent variables were coded 1 if a respondent voted for a party in 1997, and 0 if he or she either voted for another party or abstained.[35] Five general features stand out. First, Conservative canvassing had no discernible effect on voting for either party in 1997. None of the Conservative canvass dummies was significant.

Secondly, however, Labour's doorstep campaigns did have an impact on voting for that party. The odds that those who were door-stepped by the Labour party would also vote for it were 1.6 greater than the odds for those who were not.

Thirdly, doorstep canvassing by the Liberal Democrats was associated with a reduced likelihood of voting for Labour. The odds that respondents who were door-stepped by the Liberal Democrats would vote Labour were 1.7 times smaller than for respondents who were not canvassed in person by the third party.

The fourth feature of these equations is the most interesting for the purposes of the current paper, however. For the opposition Labour party, at least, doorstep canvassing was effective. But telephone canvassing was not statistically related to the propensity to vote for any party. None of the telephone canvass dummies were significant. That said, some of the coefficients were in the expected directions (for instance, the Conservative phone canvass was positively associated with chances of voting Conservative, as was the Labour canvass with chances of voting Labour). It is possible that the telephone canvass did have some limited effect, therefore, but if so, it was too small to be picked up here.

Finally, general local campaigning, as measured by party spending, was related, in sensible ways, to vote choice. The more a party spent in a constituency (as a percentage of the legal maximum), the more likely were voters living there to vote for that party. And there is some evidence here that a strong campaign by a party can also lower the chances of voting for its rivals. The more the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats spent in a seat, for instance, the less likely it was that voters living there would vote Labour. And the more Labour spent in a seat, the less likely were local residents to vote Conservative. Doorstep canvassing is an important aspect of local campaigns, therefore, but it cannot, by itself, account for local campaign effects in their entirety. Other aspects of local campaigns (such as leafleting, displaying posters and so on) all seem to contribute to a party's success. Not only are local campaigns about identifying and mobilizing supporters: they are also about raising a party's visibility and spreading knowledge of its message. While canvassing is the primary means of achieving the former, spending on leaflets, posters and election addresses also contributes to the latter.

Canvassing and Party Choice

The above analyses simply study each party's vote in isolation. Voting is not simply a decision over whether or not to support one party, however. Where three or more parties contest an election, decisions must be made between parties too. A voter might decide to

[34] R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'It's the Economy, Stupid – But Which Economy? Geographical Scales, Retrospective Economic Evaluations, and Voting at the 1997 British General Election', *Regional Studies*, 35 (2001), 309–19.

[35] A very large part of the canvassing effort is designed to identify supporters in order to ensure they turn out to vote on election day.

TABLE 3 *The Impact of Canvassing on 1997 Vote: Logistic Regressions*

	Con.	Lab.	Con. vs. Lab.
Doorstep canvass			
Con doorstep canvass	0.09	− 0.16	0.17
Lab doorstep canvass	− 0.21	0.49**	− 0.38*
LD doorstep canvass	− 0.09	− 0.54*	0.39
Phone canvass			
Con phone canvass	0.14	0.04	− 0.03
Lab phone canvass	0.06	0.17	− 0.15
LD phone canvass	0.00	− 0.60	0.28
Constituency campaign spending			
Con % spend 1997	0.02**	− 0.01**	0.02**
Lab % spend 1997	− 0.01*	0.01**	− 0.01**
LD % spend 1997	− 0.01*	− 0.01**	0.00
Respondent's Heath–Goldthorpe class (comparison = salariat)			
Routine non-manual	− 0.14	0.14	− 0.24
Petty bourgeoisie	0.14	− 0.17	0.16
Supervisors	− 0.84**	0.42*	− 0.91**
Working class	− 0.73**	0.56**	− 0.86**
Respondent's educational qualifications (comparison = post-school qualifications)			
School qualifications	0.39**	0.01	0.31
No qualifications	0.19	0.34*	− 0.03
Respondent's age	0.02**	− 0.02**	0.02**

National economy retrospective (comparison = 'got a lot better')			
Little better	−0.97**	0.80**	−0.98**
Stayed same	−1.72**	1.43**	−1.87**
Little worse	−2.27**	1.51**	−2.35**
Lot worse	−2.55**	1.95**	−2.76**
Household financial situation retrospective (comparison = 'got a lot better')			
Little better	0.32	0.05	0.06
Stayed same	0.19	0.22	−0.10
Little worse	−0.36	0.55*	−0.71*
Lot worse	−0.47	0.43	−0.92*
Regional prosperity retrospective (comparison = 'a lot more prosperous')			
Little more prosperous	−0.31	0.08	−0.16
Stayed same	−0.29	0.14	−0.20
Little less prosperous	−0.85**	0.47	−0.75*
Lot less prosperous	−1.13**	0.68*	−1.19**
Constant	−2.98	0.69	−2.65
Initial −2 log likelihood	2,390.24	2,773.56	2,038.05
Model improvement	412.26	423.54	480.64
Significance	0.00	0.00	0.00
% Correctly classified	75.7	68.0	75.6
N	2,001	2,001	1,549

*Sig. at $p = 0.05$.
**Sig. at $p = 0.01$.
Source: 1997 BES cross-section.

vote against the Conservatives, for instance. But who should he or she vote *for*: Labour or the Liberal Democrats? The other equation in Table 3 looks at choices between pairs of parties, therefore, contrasting those who voted Conservative in 1997 (coded 1) against those who voted Labour. The same basic conclusions emerge as before, however, *a fortiori*. Labour doorstep canvassing was effective, while telephone canvassing by any party, and doorstep canvassing by the Conservatives were not (or had an effect too small to show up in these data). Exposure to Labour's doorstep canvass was associated with voters being less likely to vote Conservative than to vote Labour. Telephone canvassing, by contrast, had no impact on choice between Conservative and Labour. Once again, however, we should note that the numbers remembering a phone call are small, so some caution is in order here. Telephone campaigning may have had an impact – but it was not sufficiently large to pick up here, even though the impact of the doorstep canvass is clear from these data.

Campaign spending provides the most intriguing aspect of the equations reported in Table 3, however. Even when we control for whether individuals were canvassed, the more each party spent in a constituency, the more likely were voters living there to vote for it. And the more Labour spent, the greater was the likelihood that voters living there would vote against their rivals. The effects are generally strong (at $p = 0.01$ or better) and correctly signed. As noted above, much constituency campaign spending is on leaflets and posters. To some extent, therefore, this is complementary to the canvass, and can have an independent effect. Our results show that canvassing contributes to the local campaign effect, but it cannot account for all of it. In the United States, Huckfeldt and Sprague have suggested that a variety of non-verbal forms of political communication, including posters, fliers and so on, can have an impact.[36] The results here, while not fully conclusive, provide evidence to support that conclusion in British elections too.

Canvassing, Conversion and Mobilization

Two key functions of any electoral campaign are to win over new converts who did not vote for the party at previous elections, and to mobilise support among those who did not previously vote. To what extent did the local campaign in 1997 achieve these goals? We estimate the impact by repeating the vote equations in Table 3, but restricting our analysis to those who did not vote for each party in 1992 and to those who abstained in 1992 (see Table 4: here we are no longer analysing the full BES group but concentrating instead on sub-groups defined by their recalled 1992 vote). We once again control for other influences on the vote.

The first two equations in the table look at the impact of canvassing on voter conversion between 1992 and 1997. In each equation, the dependent variable is based on all those who said they did not vote for a party in 1992: the contrast is between those who voted for the party in 1997 (coded 1) and those who did not vote for it then (coded 0). This gives us a measure of a party's ability to win over converts. So, for instance, the first equation analyses those who did not vote Conservative in 1992: who from this group switched to the Conservatives in 1997, and who voted for another party then? The second equation repeats the analysis for Labour voting in 1997 among those who did not vote Labour in 1992.

There is some evidence here of local campaign effects, albeit rather less so than when we looked at total vote in Table 3. Only the Liberal Democrat doorstep canvass was

[36] Huckfeldt and Sprague, *Citizens, Politics and Social Communication*; R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Campaigning and Advertising: An Evaluation of the Components of Constituency Activism at Recent British General Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1998), 677–85.

associated with reported vote changes; those canvassed by the party had a reduced chance of switching to Labour. These results are as we would expect. However, as before, Conservative doorstep canvassing was ineffectual. Neither of the Conservative doorstep canvass dummies was significant. More surprisingly, nor were the dummies for Labour's doorstep canvass. Once we control for other influences on voting, Labour's doorstep canvass did not have an impact on the party's ability to win new recruits (implying that the results in the previous section show that Labour's doorstep canvassing was mainly effective at retaining the support of those who voted for the party at the previous election – which is, after all, one of the primary functions of canvassing).

The doorstep canvass was not the only aspect of the local campaign to have an impact on voter conversion, as revealed by the significant coefficients for campaign spending. The more Labour spent, the less likely were those who had not voted Conservative in 1992 to switch to the Conservatives in 1997. And the more the Liberal Democrats spent on their local campaigns, the less likely were those who had not voted Labour in 1992 to switch to that party in 1997.

But, with one exception, the telephone canvass had no independent impact upon the equations. In most instances, telephone canvassing did not have a measurable impact on conversion rates. The exception is rather perverse. Respondents who had not voted Conservative in 1992, but who remembered being phoned by the Liberal Democrats in 1997 were actually more likely to vote Conservative in the latter contest than were those whom the Liberal Democrats did not phone. We would, of course, expect the opposite – contact by the Liberal Democrats should 'inoculate' 1992 non-Conservatives against switching to the Tories five years later. That said, only a very few respondents were either phoned by the Liberal Democrats or switched to the Conservatives in 1997.

How about mobilization from abstention? The last two equations in Table 4 concentrate on the small group of respondents who said they abstained in 1992, but who then voted in 1997. Each equation contrasts 1992 abstainers voting for a party in 1997 (coded 1) against 1992 abstainers voting for other parties (coded 0). There is little evidence here for canvass effects. Only two of the canvass dummies reach statistical significance, and the relationships appear perverse. Among 1992 abstainers who voted in 1997, those who remembered being phoned by Labour and those who were door-stepped by the Liberal Democrats were actually more likely to vote Conservative than to vote for any other party! These analyses are based on a very small group, however: we are giving the various campaign measures a very tough test indeed here.

CONCLUSIONS

The results discussed above provide further evidence in support of the 'new orthodoxy' on local campaign effects. People who remembered being canvassed on the doorstep by Labour campaigners were more likely to vote for that party than were people who were not canvassed. A primary goal of good canvassing, of course, is to identify supporters and try to ensure they vote. To the extent that Labour voting was higher among those door-stepped by the party than among those not door-stepped, it would seem the canvassing goal was achieved.

Nor was the local campaign reducible simply to the doorstep canvass: even when this was taken into account, the wider campaign, as measured by party spending, played a part. This spending picks up a diverse range of activities, including leafleting, producing campaign newsletters, printing and displaying posters, and so on, all of which have the

TABLE 4 *Canvassing, Conversion and Mobilization: Logistic Regressions*

	Not voting Con., in '92 but doing so in '97	Not voting Lab. in '92 but doing so in '97	Abstainers in 1992	
			Voting Con. '97	Voting Lab. '97
Doorstep canvass				
Con doorstep canvass	0.14	0.22	− 0.61	1.08
Lab doorstep canvass	− 0.63	0.42	− 1.64	0.14
LD doorstep canvass	0.32	− 0.76*	1.66*	− 1.38
Phone canvass				
Con phone canvass	− 0.53	− 0.09	− 5.77	− 1.06
Lab phone canvass	0.76	− 0.74	3.07*	− 1.38
LD phone canvass	2.00*	− 0.04	1.42	− 2.55
Constituency campaign spending				
Con % spend 1997	0.01	− 0.01	0.01	− 0.01
Lab % spend 1997	− 0.01*	0.01	− 0.02	0.01
LD % spend 1997	0.00	− 0.01*	0.02	− 0.01
Respondent's Heath–Goldthorpe class (comparison = salariat)				
Routine non-manual	− 0.44	0.15	− 0.01	0.35
Petty bourgeoisie	0.17	− 0.03	− 2.36	− 0.04
Supervisors	− 0.62	0.13	0.34	− 0.43
Working class	− 0.44	0.35	− 0.90	1.06
Respondent's educational qualifications (comparison = post-school qualifications)				
School qualifications	0.51	0.20	0.67	− 0.37
No qualifications	0.89	0.52*	1.82	− 0.89
Respondent's age	− 0.04**	− 0.03**	− 0.06*	− 0.00

National economy retrospective (comparison = 'got a lot better')				
Little better	− 1.36*	0.44	1.02	− 1.12
Stayed same	− 2.35**	0.84*	− 0.24	− 0.45
Little worse	− 3.23**	0.55	− 2.33	− 0.77
Lot worse	− 3.62**	1.41**	− 7.85	− 0.32
Household financial situation retrospective (comparison = 'got a lot better')				
Little better	− 0.34	− 0.36	− 1.78	0.11
Stayed same	− 0.40	− 0.35	− 1.02	0.07
Little worse	− 0.08	0.21	− 0.53	1.15
Lot worse	− 0.53	0.02	− 1.38	0.21
Regional prosperity retrospective (comparison = 'a lot more prosperous')				
Little more prosperous	1.15	− 0.08	− 1.68	0.35
Stayed same	1.12	0.01	− 1.01	0.54
Little less prosperous	0.96	0.38	− 0.01	− 0.24
Lot less prosperous	− 0.05	0.77	− 1.12	1.01
Constant	− 2.75	0.30	− 2.49	− 2.88
Initial − 2 log likelihood	462.70	1,311.02	162.81	217.48
Model improvement	88.12	153.39	53.98	38.89
Significance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08
% Correctly classified	94.9	76.6	86.8	73.7
N	1,149	1,175	158	158

*Sig. at $p = 0.05$.
**Sig. at $p = 0.01$.
Source: 1997 BES cross-section.

potential to reach large numbers of voters, over and above those seen via canvassing activity. Constituency spending also covers the costs of local constituency meetings, though the latter are now generally in decline (*pace* well-attended meetings in 'unusual' constituencies such as those held in Tatton in 1997, where the sitting MP was the subject of sleaze allegations, and was challenged by a high-profile independent candidate).

The Conservative campaign stands out as an exception, however. In almost all the equations we report above, canvassing and campaign spending by the party in 1997 had little or no impact, or was counterproductive.[37] The 1997 contest was, of course, a particularly difficult one for the Conservatives. The party had been battered by crises and scandals throughout its previous five years in government, was deeply unpopular and was widely expected to lose. The swing against the Conservative government in 1997 was strong throughout the country. There was little, it seems, that local candidates could do to withstand the tide. Furthermore, Conservative voters tend to be relatively well mobilized in any case. They are more likely to see voting as a civic duty than are supporters of most other parties, more likely to turn out in elections no matter what, and so on. To that extent, too, the Conservatives are likely to fight an uphill struggle to increase their vote through local campaigning. Most of their supporters would vote for them anyway and there are likely to be only a relatively few Conservative supporters who had not considered voting before being contacted by the party.

But the most striking finding here is the disparity between doorstep and telephone canvassing. The latter was a relatively novel aspect of the 1997 campaign and was much hyped in the media. Furthermore, it seemed to offer an escape route for parties troubled by declining grassroots organizations. Why worry about the fall in the number of active constituency members when regional and national telephone banks could take on the job of contacting and mobilizing voters? But the results of our analyses suggest that it would be premature – and even counterproductive – for parties to write off their local activists. While traditional face-to-face canvassing paid electoral dividends, at least for Labour, telephone canvassing had little impact. In part this was due to the small numbers contacted, and greater coverage by telephone in future elections might have greater impacts. But to date, telephone campaigning has had little measurable effect on British voting. Face-to-face campaigning, by contrast, still works. This echoes Gerber and Green's North American findings concerning the greater efficacy of personal contact.[38]

Exactly why this should be is not yet clear. Perhaps the 'personal touch' of face-to-face canvassing is more likely to mobilise supporters than is a relatively impersonal phone call. Commercial telephone sales 'cold calling' for products such as window double glazing is already widespread and is often resented by recipients as intrusive: perhaps party telephone canvassing has the same, negative, impact, and so fails to mobilize. Where phone calls are made from outside the constituency, it is possible that they are not followed up as effectively as they could be. And some telephone campaigning took place before the election, even (in some cases) not identifying the party sponsoring the canvass clearly: respondents may have been unclear as to whether they had been called by a party. Whatever the exact mechanism, however, the conclusion is clear. Even as we enter the twenty-first century, parties that allow their grassroots activist organizations to wither do so at their peril.

[37] This echoes Denver and Hands's consistent finding that Conservative campaigns have little impact: e.g. Denver and Hands, *Modern Constituency Electioneering*, pp. 280 ff.

[38] Gerber and Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout'; Gerber and Green, 'Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout?'