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Abstract

Traugott examines the results from the 1988 National Election Study and the 1989 Pilot Study in three specific areas relating to congressional campaigns. First, he discusses measures of contact with congressional candidates. The Pilot Study employed both a "general" contact frame -- which gauged a respondent's total contact with their representative -- and a "constrained" contact frame -- which asked whether the respondent had any candidate contact since January. Traugott finds no significant differences in the responses to the two frames at the time of the initial interviews in the 1988 NES. When the general form of the question was repeated in the 1989 Pilot Study, on the other hand, the respondents indicated consistently higher levels of contact. This difference is, ultimately, not highly significant; Traugott's correlation analysis indicates that more precise measurements of candidate contact do not lead to higher correlations with candidate recognition, either inside or outside the campaign period. Traugott also looks at changes in respondents' recognition and evaluation of candidates to gauge the affect of campaigns on the public's knowledge of candidates. He finds a slight drop in aggregate recognition rates and a large drop in aggregate recall rates from the 1988 NES to the Pilot Study. This decay was greater for challengers than incumbents and greater for House than Senate candidates. Multivariate analysis demonstrates that shifts in recognition and recall at the individual level are best explained by education, political knowledge and media exposure variables. Finally, Traugott examines shifts in thermometer ratings of prominent political figures in the post-election period. He finds that evaluations of Dukakis, Reagan, and Bush all shifted, though these changes were more negative for Dukakis than the Republican candidates. Traugott also finds that these evaluative shifts were driven by partisanship orientation, not media exposure effects.