

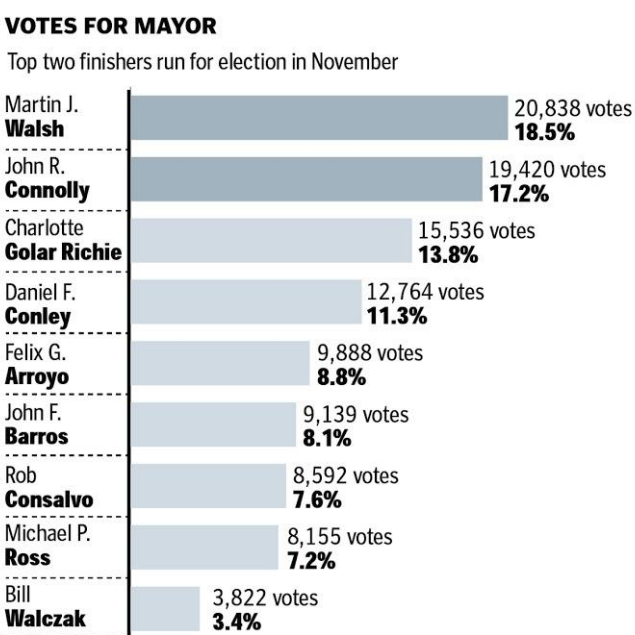
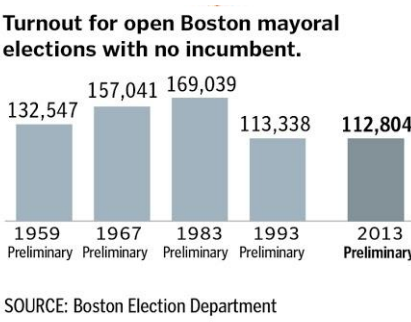
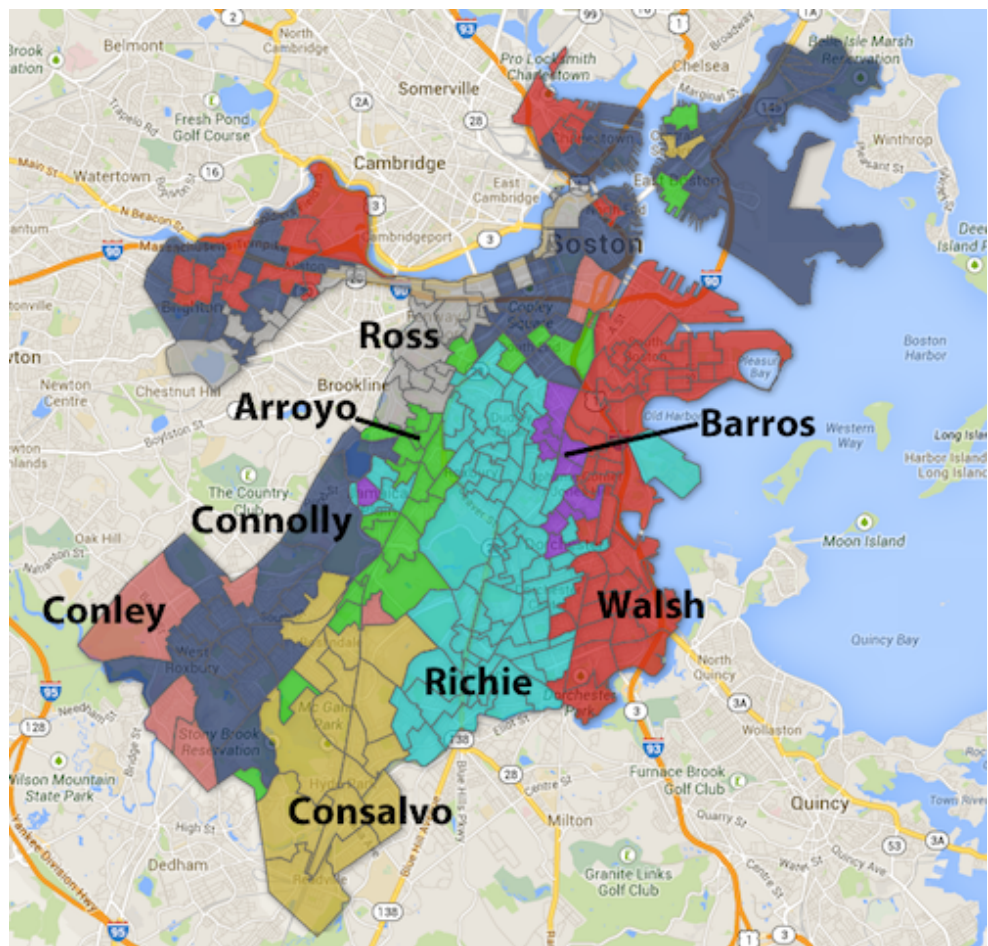
Christopher M. Towner, M.A.
Boston University, Department of Political Science

Abstract

Although the topics of voting behavior and campaign strategy have vast amounts of political science literature, there is not much evidence that campaigns embrace theories of why people vote and how to get them to vote – especially at the local government level. This paper analyzes the urban voting behavior theory Kaufmann develops in *The Urban Voter*, Group Interest Theory, and combines with generally accepted methods of campaign strategy that produce the best outcomes. Applying this synthesis to the 2013 Boston mayoral election, the Group Interest framework does not seem to fully explain an open seat election in a rapidly changing Boston population. However, this framework does prove successful for the campaign strategies utilized in the preliminary election. Using archival research, personal interviews, and polling results, there is limited support for using the Group Interest framework and best campaign practices in being successful in an urban election.

Methodology

Using interviews conducted between February and March of 2014 as well as newspaper and magazine articles from various sources between January 2013 and December 2013, the level of intergroup conflict and types of campaign strategies were evaluated for the top nine of the twelve candidates. Likewise, results were analyzed using polling conducted by various firms throughout the preliminary election.



Literature/Theory

Voter Behavior

Karen Kaufmann, *The Urban Voter* -

Group Interest Theory: Using institutional features, external settings, and campaign-specific factors to determine the level of intergroup conflict present in an urban election, voters will make choices based on group identities when intergroup conflict is high and revert to traditional partisan identities when intergroup conflict is low.

Campaign Strategy

Timothy Krebs, “The Determinants of Candidates’ Vote Share and the Advantages of Incumbency in City Council Elections”

Best Practice Campaign Strategies: The best tools for getting votes in local, urban elections are: face-to-face voter contact demonstrated by canvassing; newspaper endorsements and media attention; incumbency advantage; and expenditures

Hypotheses

H1: Successful campaigns will be those who acknowledge and adapt to the political context indicated by the level of intergroup conflict determined by Group Interest Theory.

H2: Successful campaigns will be those who apply best practice campaign strategies to groups that Group Interest Theory predicts will be most likely to vote for them.

H1: Results

Voter Behavior

Institutional features →Slight intergroup conflict

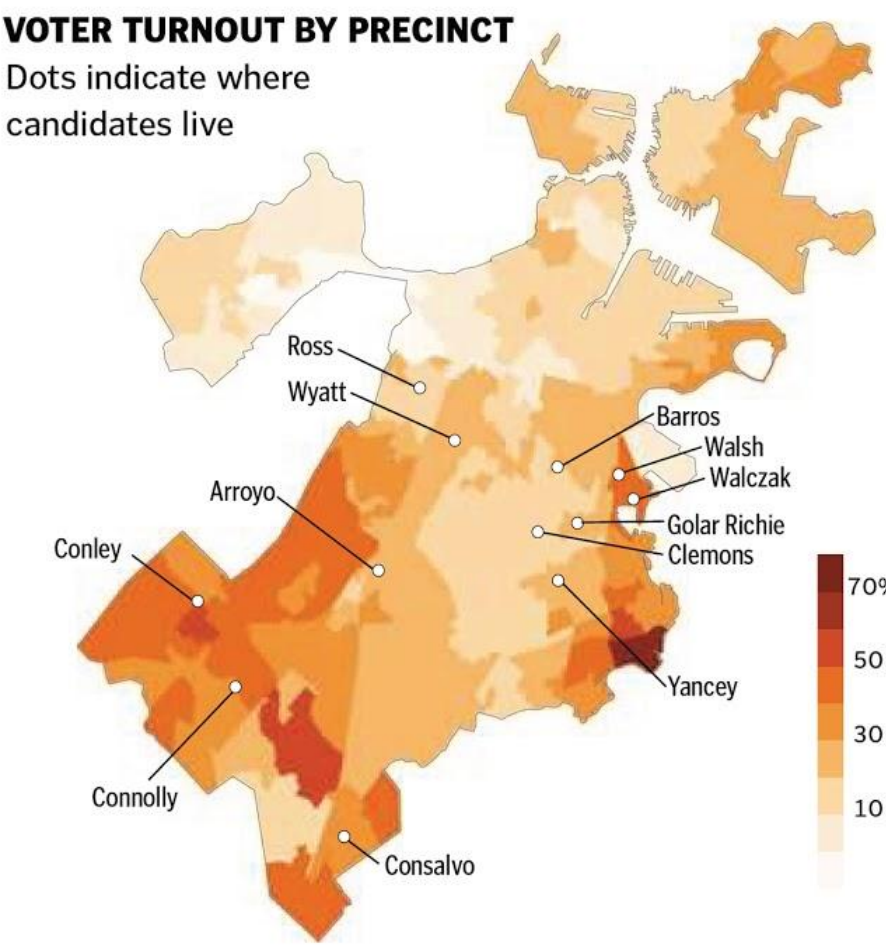
External Setting →Higher intergroup conflict

Campaign-specific factors →Slightly higher intergroup conflict

Total Intergroup Conflict Level = Intermediate

Voter Turnout in the Preliminary Election by Precinct

VOTER TURNOUT BY PRECINCT
Dots indicate where candidates live



Ward – Precinct	Neighborhood	2013 Preliminary Turnout	2012 Presidential Turnout
21-02	Kenmore Square	2%	43%
04-10	Longwood Medical	7%	54%
21-03	Allston	7%	64%
21-04	Allston	8%	49%
21-08	Allston	8%	56%
16-12	Dorchester	70%	81%
20-12	West Roxbury	62%	84%
16-09	Dorchester	61%	76%
18-12	Hyde Park	60%	73%
20-14	West Roxbury	60%	81%

H2: Results

Campaign Strategies:

Face-to-Face Voter Contact: Split between mobilization/persuasion
Walsh = mobilization; Connolly = persuasion

Newspaper Endorsements: *Globe* – Barros & Connolly; *Herald* – Connolly & Conley

Incumbency advantage: No obvious incumbents; “high quality candidates”

Expenditures: Led by Conley, then Connolly, Ross, Walsh

Conclusions

Boston is not nearly as racially divisive as Group Interest Theory may lead us to believe. In this preliminary election, the voters mostly decided based on the issues and appeal of individual candidates rather than the groups that the candidates and the voters identify with. Likewise, Boston is a very diverse city with a lot of ethnic diversity in addition to that racial diversity, making the strength of a group not as powerful on racial lines but on the ethnic lines that the groups originally belonged to. While Walsh and Connolly employed the best use of campaign strategies and prevailed, the voter behavior aspect of this election was not at the same level we see with typical urban voting theory.



Preliminary Election Winners Marty Walsh and John Connolly.



Candidates for Mayor (from left to right): Top – Felix Arroyo, John Barros, Bill Walczak, Dan Conley, Mike Ross, John Connolly
Bottom - Charlotte Golar Richie, Rob Consalvo, Marty Walsh, Charles Clemons, Charles Yancey, David James Wyatt

Former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino.

Contact

Christopher M. Towner
Email: ctowner@bu.edu
Phone: (847) 293-7989

References

Boston Magazine, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, *CommonWealth Magazine*, Suffolk University Political Research Center, University of New Hampshire, and Mass. Numbers blog for the excellent charts and graphs of voter turnout.