Local electoral effects of opposition candidate visits in dominant party regimes: Evidence from Venezuela

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Abstract

Aiming to stimulate local electoral support, presidential candidates often devote their scarce time to visiting local communities. Comparing outcomes between visited and non-visited communities to assess the effect of visits is likely to yield biased results, as other campaign interventions tend to correlate with visits. This paper studies the local electoral effects of Henrique Capriles Radonsky (HCR)'s visits in 2012 as Presidential Candidate in Venezuela on his presidential bids against Hugo Chávez in 2012 and Nicolás Maduro in 2013. Leveraging the panel structure of electoral outcomes along with unique data on the local priorities for the deployment of campaign efforts, I estimate that HCR visits improved his electoral support by 0.5 percentage points without affecting electoral turnout rates. These effects concentrate for the 2013 election. The effects of visits are contingent to low-priority environments, suggesting that visits operate as a substitute of other campaign interventions. Overall, results suggest that visits affected electoral outcomes by locally enhancing access to information about HCR.

Keywords: Candidate visits, Causal effects, Venezuela.

1 Introduction

A candidate's time is arguably the scarcest resource in any presidential campaign. Candidates often spend that resource visiting places under the assumption that such visits will yield further local support on election day. Identifying the causal effect of visits on local electoral outcomes is challenging, as the decision to visit is likely endogenous to a myriad of factors connected to the candidate's performance. Importantly, campaigns intervene in high-priority locations through means other than -but correlated with- the candidate's visit (Local media presence, advertisement spending, canvassing, etc.). Adequately measuring the local effect of visits should consider both their non-random assignment, and the potential effect of other contemporaneous campaign interventions that are often unobserved to researchers. Observing the local priorities of national campaigns can also help us assess whether candidate visits and other campaign interventions magnify or attenuate each other's effects.

I tackle these questions in the context of the Venezuelan presidential elections of 2012 and 2013. In October 7 of 2012, Henrique Capriles-Radonski (HCR) faced Hugo Chávez, who was running for re-election while undergoing cancer treatment. President Chávez died in March 2013, and a new election was called for mid-April, when HCR faced Nicolás Maduro. Being massively out-funded by Chavismo, HCR's campaign decided to prioritize its assignment of resources and attention towards locations that had shown to have high numbers of swing voters. HCR's campaign identified 284 Parishes (*"parroquias"*) in the country to be of high-priority according to this criteria, and prioritized these "Focal" Parishes (*"Parroquias Focales"*) for campaign resource allocation.

I assess the effect of HCR's campaign visits in 2012 on local electoral outcomes during the 2012 and 2013 elections. Identifying this effect requires controlling for the non-random assignment of visits, as well as for the correlation between visits and other contemporary local interventions. I leverage panel electoral data from Venezuela to calculate difference-in-differences estimates that address the former concern. Moreover, I use unique data on HCR's local campaign priorities- the priority level assigned to each parish in the country- to control for local campaign efforts possibly correlated to his visits.

I find that HCR's visits eroded Chavista vote shares by 0.5 percentage points in the 2012 and 2013 elections. Chiefly, this effect is only about 16% of biased estimated effects from a difference-in-difference specification that does not control for the local priorities of HCR's campaign for the distribution of other campaign interventions. To put this difference in perspective, a back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that visiting all remaining parishes would have had negligible effects on the narrow 2013 presidential election, but biased estimates suggest that such exhaustive visits could have flipped the result.

While relatively small, the negative effect of HCR visits on Chavista support is empirically robust. Importantly, it is absent for placebo visits that have "wide" national coverage, and are less affected local electoral considerations. I validate the identification strategy of the difference-in-differences model by confirming parallel pre-2012 outcome trends between visited and non-visited parishes. I also find that the effects seem to concentrate on the 2013 election. This suggests that visits were not effective in tilting preferences against the highly charismatic Hugo Chávez in 2012, but succeeded in undermining support for the much less popular Nicolás Maduro in 2013. Finally, HCR's visits seem to have negligible effects on electoral turnout, which suggests that the negative effects on Chavista support are driven by the persuasion effects of local information about HCR visits, and not by an effect of visits on the effectiveness of his campaign's GOTV efforts.

In order to study whether visits and other campaign interventions work as complements or substitutes in eroding Chavista support, I assess the heterogeneity of the main effects of visits along the priority dimension. I find that while both visits and high priority have independent effects on Chavista support in the absence of each other, visits in high priority parishes benefiting from other interventions are ineffective in further eroding Chavista support. This suggests that visits work as a substitute of other campaign interventions. Finally, I evaluate whether visiting a neighboring Parish affects local electoral outcomes, and find that neighboring visits have similar effects that are not attenuated by a local high priority in Focal parishes.

These results reveal the methodological importance of controlling for other campaign interventions in assessing the local effect of presidential candidate visits. The observational and quasi-experimental literature on the local electoral effects of candidate campaign visits is inconclusive, with studies finding positive, null and even mixed effects[1]. The most notable effort to control for the non-random assignment of visits comes from Heersink and Peterson (2017), who study the effects of Truman's "Whistle-Stop" visits in the 1948 election. The authors fit synthetic counterfactuals for each visited county among the pool of non-visited counties, finding a 3pp effect on Truman's vote share. This study, however, does not control for other Truman campaign interventions that may have correlated with the "Whistle-Stop" strategy. To the extent of my knowledge, the only experimental analysis on the effect of candidate visits comes from Shaw and Gimpel (2012), who randomize the visits of Governor Rick Perry in his 2006 re-election campaign, finding positive public opinion effects that lasted for at least a week. Their study, however, does not assess the effect of random visits on actual electoral results[2].

Chiefly, this literature is missing analyses from developing country settings under dominant party regimes -such as Venezuela in 2012-2013- where non-incumbents might face harsh imbalances in access to resources and media, and where the effectiveness in the deployment of their time and resources is most crucial. These results are consistent with theories connecting candidate visits to electoral outcomes through local information channels. Enhanced local information should work by persuading voters when deciding between competing canditates they are relatively indifferent about[3]. A number of studies in the developing world observe how enhanced local access to information about candidates can affect voting patterns. For example, Platas and Raffler (2021) find that random local screenings of candidate interviews close the knowledge gap between incumbents and challengers, yielding an electoral gain for the opposition. Similarly, experimental evidence

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[1]See Devine (2018); Herr (2002); Hill et al. (2010); Holbrook (2002); Holbrook and McClurg (2005); Jones (1998); Shaw (1999); Wood (2016); Selb and Munzert (2018).

[2]A key caveat for the literature on candidate visits as a whole is that it focuses on the *local* electoral effects of visits, not their *overall* electoral effects. It may be that voters are broadly influenced by candidates that are seen visiting voters in their neighborhoods, even if they are not receiving the visit themselves. Assessing the overall effect of HCR's visits is outside the scope of this paper.

[3]Conversely, enhanced local organization should work by mobilizing supporters that are not sure to turn out to vote.

on debate screenings suggest the importance of local political information for electoral outcomes in the developing world (Bidwell et al., 2020; Bowles and Larreguy, 2020).
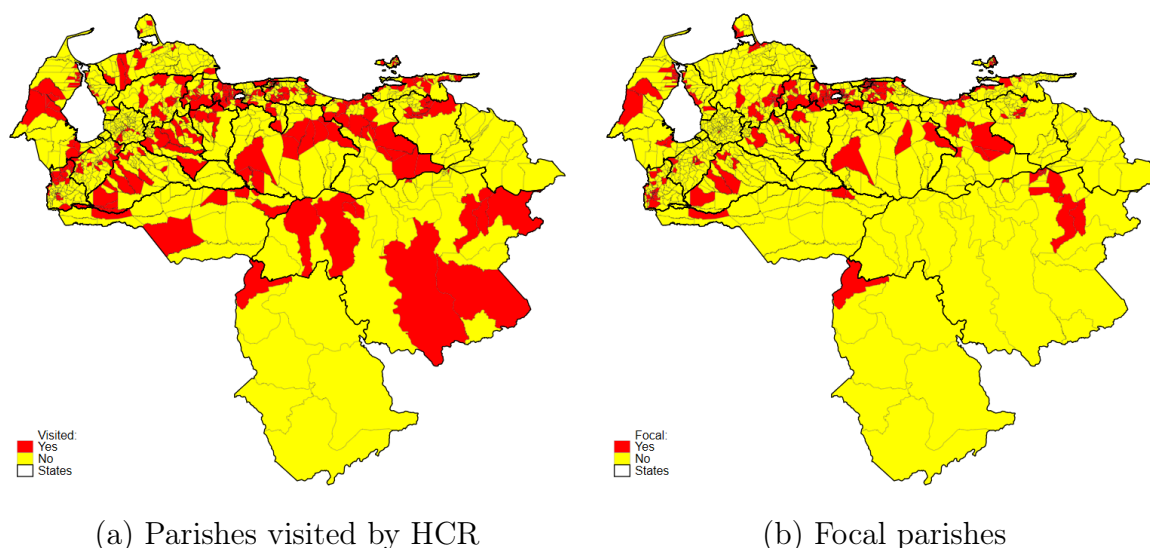
2   HCR's Presidential Campaigns

Henrique Capriles-Radonski (HCR) won the opposition primaries in February 12, 2012, rallying the opposition against President Hugo Chávez. Chávez, a charismatic politician that had already won 3 presidential elections, ran for re-election despite battling cancer. High oil prices and access to foreign capital markets allowed the government to pursue a voracious public spending strategy during the campaign. Knowing of Chavez's popularity and the heavy resource imbalance between the campaigns, HCR decided not to pursue an aggressive political change strategy, but aimed at persuading swing voters by emphasizing on how he would further similar policy goals as Chávez with a more efficient and transparent administration.

In terms of his campaign narrative, this strategy meant not antagonizing Chavez's personal figure, or being critical about him running despite his illness. From a mobilization standpoint, this meant identifying and persuading swing voters. The campaign analyzed the variability in electoral outcomes at the parish level in previous elections, and determined a number of likely swing voters per parish. Given the campaign's estimates of the number of swing voters needed to win the election, HCR's campaign determined the top 284 parishes to be Focal Parishes (*"Parroquias Focales"*). These parishes became the central focus of the campaign, and received the bulk of the resources and attention.

Knowing that mobility was his relative strength given Chávez's health limitations, HCR toured the country aggressively during his campaign. Between early March and late September of 2012, HCR made a total of 366 visits to different parishes throughout the country. 288 of these visits were "local visits", which came with town-hall like activities, such as knocking on doors, playing sports matches with local kids, walking through neighborhoods, and making appearances in local media outlets. 78 of the visits were "wide-reach visits", which accounted for broader platform speeches and appearances in

large religious events which pursued a broader electoral purposes and communications reach beyond the location. Figure 1 identifies the Parishes visited by HCR during his 2012 presidential run (Panel A) and the parishes identified as Focal by his campaign (Panel B).

Figure 1: HCR visits and focal parishes

(a) Parishes visited by HCR

(b) Focal parishes

Notes: Map shows the different parishes in the country that were visited by HCR during his 2012 presidential campaign (Panel A), and the parishes identified as Focal by his campaign.

Hugo Chávez won the 2012 Presidential Election by a 10pp margin. However, just two months after the elections, Chávez declared that he was to receive additional cancer treatment, and advocated for then Vice-President Nicolás Maduro as Chavismo's presumptive presidential candidate for a future election if he was unable to return to office. Chávez died on March 5 of 2013, and new elections were held on April 14 that year. HCR rallied the opposition again, competing against Maduro while the country continued to mourn Chavez's passing. The campaign's political message against Maduro was now much more aggressive than it had been against Chávez, but given scheduling limitations in a very short presidential campaign, HCR's time was now geared towards wide-reach appearances. Nicolás Maduro won the 2013 elections by 1.5pp. Maduro was sworn in immediately, and has presided over the country since.

With the onset of Venezuela's economic collapse, the opposition won the legislative elections of 2015. Claiming that Maduro was not allowing for free and fair elections to

be held, the opposition decided to boycott the 2018 presidential elections. This boycott triggered a constitutional crisis that remains to this day.

3 Data

This paper builds on the following data sources:

- HCR campaign visits: Indicators for whether HCR visited a given parish during the 2012 campaign. Visits were classified as either "local" or "wide" according to the purpose of the visit. This data was collected from the HCR presidential campaign.

- "Focal" priority level: HCR's campaign identified 284 Parishes to be of high Focal priority according to internal estimates of the swing voter population. This data was collected from the HCR presidential campaign.

- Panel of electoral outcomes: Information on the Chavista vote share and on the Turnout rate for each parish in all presidential and parliamentary elections between 1998 and 2018[4]. The source of this data is Venezuela's National Electoral Council.

- Socio-economic covariates: Parish-specific information on population, population density, poverty rate and the urban share of the population. The source of this information is the 2011 Population Census collected by Venezuela's National Statistics Institute.

- Chávez campaign visits: Indicators for whether Hugo Chávez visited a given parish during the 2012 campaign. These reduced number of visits by Chávez had a higher profile than the average HCR visit, were relatively scripted, and were much less physically taxing and spontaneous. This data was collected from the HCR presidential campaign.

- Governor's party identity: Indicator for whether the governor of a given state at the time of the 2012 and 2013 elections was a member of the opposition or not. Given

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[4]Presidential elections of 1998, 2000, 2006, 2012, 2013 and 2018. Legislative elections of 2010 and 2015. Missing information on the 2005 Legislative elections, which were boycotted by the opposition.

that governors movilize important resources independently, it is possible that the effectiveness of HCR's visits interacts with the presence of a governor ally. This data was prepared by the author.

Table 5 in the appendix provides summary statistics for all these variables.

4   Empirical Strategy

I study the effects on both the local Chavista vote share and the local voter turnout. Visits could affect local voter outcomes by persuading swing or rival voters to vote for HCR, or by stimulating the electoral turnout of supporters. Observing an effect on voting outcomes that is not accompanied by an effect on turnout would be evidence of visits playing a persuasive role on voters' decisions through an information channel.

There are three main threats to identification of the causal effects of candidate visits. First, visits are not assigned randomly. I address this concern leveraging on the panel structure of the electoral data. Using a difference-in-differences approach, I capture the change in relative outcomes in the HCR elections of 2012 and 2013 as the measure of the causal effect of his 2012 visits. This method relies on the identifying assumption of parallel trends. I assess its plausibility providing election specific estimates to evaluate whether outcomes differences between visited and non-visited Parishes were relatively constant before the 2012 presidential election.

Second, other HCR campaign interventions may correlate spatially with visits. Even if the above approach addresses the non-randomness of visits along the baseline characteristics of parishes, it does not capture the fact that other relevant and unobserved contemporaneous campaign interventions may confound the estimates. I address this concern by controlling for the available measure of local priority assigned to different parishes. Specifically, I control for whether the HCR campaign classified a parish as having a Focal priority.

Controlling for the priority in the deployment of other campaign resources allows for the identification of the causal effects of visits under the assumption that any correlation

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between visits and other unobserved interventions is driven by the local degree of priority assigned by the campaign. I add a battery of additional controls so as to make this assumption most credible. Chiefly, I control for baseline sociodemographic and political characteristics of each parish, along with State-Election fixed effects. Table 1 provides some baseline correlations between the local HCR visits and the local covariates considered in the analysis after controlling for state-fixed characteristics. We observe that parishes with a Focal degree of priority are about 30pp more likely to receive a visit by HCR, and this correlation is greater for "local" visits driven by local electoral objectives than for "wide-reach" visits determined by factors beyond local considerations.

Table 1: HCR visits - Correlation with main covariates

VARIABLES	(1) Visited	(2) Visited (Local)	(3) Visited (Wide)
Focal	0.300***	0.235***	0.138***
	(0.0451)	(0.0448)	(0.0342)
Chavista vote share (2010)	-0.0871	-0.185	0.0326
	(0.133)	(0.126)	(0.0834)
Poverty rate (2011, Log)	0.0563	0.0781**	0.0102
	(0.0382)	(0.0361)	(0.0237)
Population density (2011, Log)	-0.0263**	-0.00888	-0.0172**
	(0.0121)	(0.0117)	(0.00816)
Share Urban (2011)	0.308***	0.233***	0.0723***
	(0.0408)	(0.0388)	(0.0223)
Observations	1,131	1,131	1,131
R-squared	0.225	0.192	0.071
State Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: Table shows the correlation between HCR visits and other parish-level covariates. The regression performed is $V_p = \beta_0 + \sum_v \beta_v V_m + \phi_s + \epsilon_m$. The outcomes are whether a parish received a visit (Column 1), a "local" visit (Column 2) and a "wide" visit (Column 3) during the 2012 presidential campaign. The main covariates V are the Chavista vote share in the 2010 parliamentary election; the log population density, the log poverty rate and the share of the population that is urban. All regressions control for state fixed-effects ϕ_s. Observations are weighted by the log of the local population. Robust standard errors are provided in parentheses.

Considering all these elements in my empirical strategy, any potential confounder should be relevant to the outcomes specifically in the HCR elections, and should have

within-State variation that is not fully captured by the local covariates. I claim that the joint use of a difference-in-differences approach with controls for the local campaing priority and for local sociodemographic variables allows for the identification of the causal effects of visits. To further assess whether the effects are driven by activities aimed at stimulating local support, I compare estimates for places receiving "local" visits" to places receiving "wide" visits, expecting effects to concentrate on the former.

The difference-in-differences model estimated is the following:

$$R_{e,p} = \beta * HCR_e * V_p + \gamma * HCR_e * F_p + \sum_x \theta^x HCR_e * X_p^x + \phi_p + \phi_{s,e} + \epsilon_{e,p} \qquad (1)$$

Where $R_{e,p}$ stands for the result (either Chavista share or turnout share) in election e for parish p. HCR_e stands for an indicator of the HCR elections of 2012 and 2013. V_p marks whether parish p was visited by HCR in 2012. F_p marks whether parish p was prioritized as focal by the HCR campaign. X_p^x marks the value covariate x in parish p. These include the Chavista vote share in the 2010 election, population density, poverty rate and the urban population share. ϕ_p and $\phi_{s,e}$ stand for Parish and State-Election fixed effects, and $\epsilon_{e,p}$ marks an error term. β is the coefficient of interest which captures the effect of being visited by HCR in 2012 on the respective outcomes in the 2012 and 2013 elections. Standard errors are clustered at the parish level and observations are weighted by the log of the total population in each parish.

I then validate the parallel trends assumption and evaluate heterogeneity between the 2012 and 2013 elections by estimating the following event-study specification:

$$R_{e,p} = \sum_{e \neq 2010} \left[\beta^e E^e * V_p + \gamma^e * E^e * F_p + \sum_x \theta^x * E^e X_p^x \right] + \phi_{s,e} + \phi_p + \epsilon_{e,p} \qquad (2)$$

Where E^e is an indicator for election e. The base election for interaction terms is the 2010 Legislative election, which is the last national contest before the HCR campaigns. Excluding the 2010 election allows coefficients to capture the relationship of the association between HCR visits and outcomes as compared to their association in 2010. The β^e coefficients are our estimates of interest, and they are expected to be negative for the HCR elections of 2012 and

2013, and are expected to be about 0 for both earlier and later elections. Again, standard errors are clustered at the parish level.

5   Results

5.1   Effects of candidate visits

Table 2 provides difference-in-differences estimates for the effect of being visited by HCR in the 2012 presidential campaign on the local Chavista vote share (Panel A) and on the electoral Turnout rate (Panel B). Column 1 incorporates State-Election and Parish fixed effects, but does not control for the priority that the campaign assigned for the deployment of all other campaign interventions. In this specification, we find that being visited by HCR in 2012 reduces the Chavista vote share by 3pp and raises the turnout rate by 1pp. Column 2 now controls for whether a Parish was assigned a Focal priority or not. The estimated effect of visits on Chavista support is now slashed to under a third of its previous value, while the effect on electoral turnout becomes indistinguishable from 0 for this and all later specifications. Incorporating additional sociodemographic controls in Column 3 further halves the negative effect of visits on Chavista support to about 0.5pp. While this effect is just about 16% of the estimated impact captured in Column 1, it remains statistically significant at the 10% confidence level. Columns 4 and 5 evaluate these effects for the subsets of "local" and "wide-reaching" types of visits respectively, showing that effects seem to concentrate for visits with localized reach.

These results seem to address many of the questions and empirical concerns discussed above. First, the change in the estimated effects between Column 1 and Columns 2 and 3 reveals the importance of controlling for local campaign priorities and potential confounders in assessing the effects of presidential candidate visits. Indeed, these empirical considerations attenuate the estimated effects of visits by over 80%. The importance of these differences can be framed with a back-of-the-envelope calculation: If the effect of visiting a Parish on Chavista support was that of Column 1 in Panel A, HCR could have flipped the narrow 2013 presidential election by visiting all remaining Parishes. This would have not nearly been the case under the effects estimated in Columns 2 and 3.

Furthermore, we notice that after incorporating these controls, we observe no effects on electoral turnout rates, and that effects on Chavista support concentrate for "local" visits. This

suggests that the effects of HCR visits most likely operated through the persuasion of voters through local information channels, rather than through potential effects on HCR's local GOTV efforts.

Finally, Figure 2 provides election specific estimates of HCR visits for both the local Chavista vote share (Panel A) and electoral turnout (Panel B). Both Panels show evidence consistent with parallel pre-2012 trends. Most importantly, Panel A shows that the effects of HCR 2012 visits were not observable for the 2012 election but for the 2013 election. This suggests that campaign visits may not have been effective to persuade voters against a charismatic, "larger-than-life" rival like Hugo Chávez, but can work against a less popular incumbent like Nicolás Maduro.

Figure 2: Election specific effects of visits

(a) Effects on Chavista vote share

(b) Effects on Turnout rate
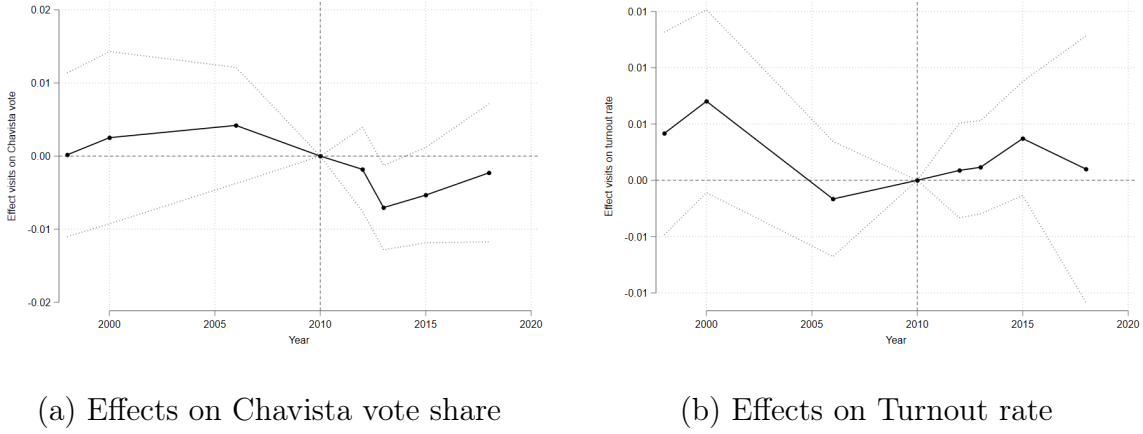
Notes: Figures provide election specific estimates of the effects of HCR visits during the 2012 presidential election, considering the 2010 parliamentary election as baseline category. The Parish outcomes are the Chavista vote share (Panel A) and the Turnout rate (Panel B) in a given election. Observations are weighted by the log of the local population. Standard errors are clustered at the Parish level.

5.2   Visits and Focal priorities: Complements or substitutes?

In order to assess whether HCR visits operated as either complements or substitutes of other campaign interventions, I will perform the following revised difference-in-differences specification:

$$
\begin{aligned}
Ch_{e,p} =& \beta * HCR_e * V_p + \gamma * HCR_e * F_p + \rho * HCR_e * V_p * F_p + \\
& \sum_x \theta^x * HCR_e * X_p^x + \phi_p + \phi_{s,e} + \epsilon_{e,p}
\end{aligned}
\tag{3}
$$

Table 2: The effect of HCR's visits during the 2012 presidential election.

Panel A

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Chavista vote share				
HCR election × Visited	-0.0284***	-0.00827**	-0.00455*		
	(0.00355)	(0.00350)	(0.00255)		
HCR election × Focal		-0.0653***	-0.00405	-0.00427	-0.00531*
		(0.00355)	(0.00328)	(0.00325)	(0.00319)
HCR election × Visited (Local)				-0.00486*	
				(0.00266)	
HCR election × Visited (Wide)					-0.000801
					(0.00346)
Observations	9,037	9,037	9,030	9,030	9,030
R-squared	0.794	0.800	0.810	0.810	0.810
Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-Election FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parish FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Panel B

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Turnout rate				
HCR election × Visited	0.00944***	0.00135	-0.00135		
	(0.00189)	(0.00183)	(0.00172)		
HCR election × Focal		0.0259***	0.00144	0.00154	0.000723
		(0.00180)	(0.00273)	(0.00270)	(0.00274)
HCR election × Visited (Local)				-0.00214	
				(0.00184)	
HCR election × Visited (Wide)					0.00229
					(0.00244)
Observations	8,616	8,616	8,616	8,616	8,616
R-squared	0.790	0.791	0.793	0.793	0.793
Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-Election FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parish FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors clustered at the Parish level
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: Treatment is whether a Parish was visited by HCR during his 2012 campaign, interacted by a marker for the 2012 and 2013 presidential elections in which he was the opposition candidate. The Parish outcomes are the Chavista vote share (Panel A) and the Turnout rate (Panel B) in a given election. Observations are weighted by the log of the local population. Standard errors are clustered at the parish level.

Where $Ch_{e,p}$ captures the Chavista vote share in election e for Parish p. In this instance, β is the estimated effect of a visit in non-Focal parishes, γ is the estimated effect of being a Focal parish that was not visited, and ρ captures the change in the effect of visits whenever they occur in a Focal parish. If visits are a complement of other campaign resources, their effect should be stronger in Focal parishes. We would observe this with a negative estimate for ρ. To the contrary, If visits are a substitute for other campaign interventions, we should expect their effect to be smaller (or even null) in focal parishes, which would be observed if the estimated value for ρ is positive.

Table 3 provides estimates evaluating whether HCR visits operate as complements or substitutes of other campaign interventions. Column 1 reasserts the result of Column 3, Panel A from Table 2 as reference. Column 2 aggregate the interaction term between visited and focal parishes. While we confirm that both visits and other interventions reduce support for Chavismo in the absence of each other, the interaction term has a positive and significant effect with a similar absolute magnitude to the negative effect of visits. This is consistent with the view that visits work as a substitute of other campaign interventions, and that their effects are negligible in the presence of these other interventions. Columns 3-5 incorporate controls for whether a Parish was visited by Hugo Chávez in 2012, whether a Parish was in a State with an Opposition governor, and their interaction with HCR visits. These variables have no independent effects, and their inclusion does not affect the conclusion that HCR visits seem to work as substitutes for other campaign interventions.

5.3   The effects of neighboring visits

Candidate visits may affect electoral outcomes beyond the visited localities if information about the visit flows to neighboring areas. To assess this hypothesis in our setting, we now evaluate whether HCR visits to a neighboring Parish[5] affect local Chavista support. Furthermore, we want to evaluate whether visiting a neighboring parish acts as a complement or as a substitute of other local resources. To assess these questions, we are going to perform the following difference-in-differences regression specification:

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[5]Neighboring Parishes are defined as Parishes within the same Municipality.

Table 3: The effect of HCR's visits during the 2012 presidential election.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
			Chavista vote share		
HCR × Visited	-0.00455*	-0.00908**	-0.00952**	-0.00819**	-0.00868**
	(0.00255)	(0.00366)	(0.00379)	(0.00392)	(0.00405)
HCR × Focal	-0.00405	-0.00953**	-0.00920**	-0.00722*	-0.00692
	(0.00328)	(0.00408)	(0.00428)	(0.00415)	(0.00434)
HCR × Visited × Focal		0.0109**	0.00997*	0.0101**	0.00910*
		(0.00501)	(0.00538)	(0.00500)	(0.00536)
HCR × Visited by Chávez			0.00140		0.00198
			(0.00352)		(0.00350)
HCR × Visited × Visited (Chávez)			0.00402		0.00418
			(0.00521)		(0.00519)
HCR × Visited × Oppo. Governor				-0.000569	-0.000347
				(0.00490)	(0.00489)
Observations	9,030	9,030	9,030	8,870	8,870
R-squared	0.810	0.810	0.810	0.810	0.810
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-Election FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parish FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors clustered at the Parish level
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: Treatment is whether a Parish was visited by HCR during his 2012 campaign, interacted by a marker for the 2012 and 2013 presidential elections in which he was the opposition candidate. The Parish outcomes are the Chavista vote share (Panel A) and the Turnout rate (Panel B) in a given election. Observations are weighted by the log of the local population. Standard errors are clustered at the Parish level.

$$Ch_{e,p} = \beta^o * HCR_e * V_p + \gamma * HCR_e * F_p + \rho^o * HCR_e * V_p * F_p +$$
$$\beta^n * HCR_e * N_p + \rho^n * HCR_e * N_p * F_p + \qquad\qquad (4)$$
$$\sum_x \theta^x * HCR_e * X_p^x + \phi_p + \phi_{s,e} + \epsilon_{e,p}$$

Where N_p identifies whether a Parish neighboring Parish p was visited. Importantly, while coefficients β^o and ρ^o identify the effects of HCR own visits to Parish p, β^n and ρ^n stand for the effects of visits to Parishes neighboring Parish p. Table 4 provides estimates for this specification. Column 1 reasserts the results from Column 2 in Table 3 as reference. Column 2 shows the effects of neighboring visits without controlling for own visits. Finally, Column 3 includes both own and neighboring visits. Columns 2 and 3 show that neighboring visits have comparable effects to own visits on local Chavista support. Furthermore, these results suggest that the effects of neighboring visits are as drastically attenuated in Focal parishes, suggesting that they are not a substitute for other campaign interventions.

Table 4: The effect of HCR's visits during the 2012 presidential election.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
		Chavista vote share	
HCR × Visited	-0.00908**		-0.0100***
	(0.00366)		(0.00367)
HCR × Focal	-0.00953**	-0.00858**	-0.0129***
	(0.00408)	(0.00386)	(0.00479)
HCR × Visited × Focal	0.0109**		0.0110**
	(0.00501)		(0.00506)
HCR × Visited (Neighbor)		-0.00817***	-0.00883***
		(0.00312)	(0.00310)
HCR × Visited (Neighbor) × Focal		0.00386	0.00467
		(0.00472)	(0.00473)
Observations	9,030	9,030	9,030
R-squared	0.810	0.810	0.810
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-Election FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parish FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors clustered at the Parish level
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: Treatment is whether a Parish or a neighboring Parish was visited by HCR during his 2012 campaign, interacted by a marker for the 2012 and 2013 presidential elections in which he was the opposition candidate. The Parish outcomes are the Chavista vote share in a given election. Observations are weighted by the log of the local population. Standard errors are clustered at the Parish level.

6 Conclusion

This paper finds that HCR visits reduced Chavista electoral support by 0.5pp during his 2012 and 2013 presidential runs. These effects concentrate for the 2013 election. Visits did not affect local electoral turnout rates. Effects on Chavista support are much smaller than those that would be estimated without considering the local priorities of the HCR campaign in deploying other campaign interventions. Importantly, visits seem to operate as substitutes of other campaign efforts, as their effects concentrate in low-priority Parishes. Taken all together, these results are consistent with theories connecting candidate visits to local electoral outcomes through enhanced local information about candidates in contested elections.

This paper contributes to the literature on candidate visits by expanding its geographic and substantive scope, and by highlighting and implementing a methodological innovation. To my knowledge, there is no study on the effect of presidential candidate visits on local electoral outcomes in a developing country under a dominant party regime. Furthermore, controlling for local priority levels reveals the importance of considering other campaign interventions in assessing the local effects of candidate visits. Given the absence of such considerations in the literature, this study invites the use of information on campaigns' geographic strategies and deployment of resources in assessing the effects of a particular kind of local campaign intervention.

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Table 5: Summary Statistics

VARIABLES	(1) N	(2) Mean	(3) S.D.	(4) Min	(5) Max
Visited	1,132	0.290	0.454	0	1
Visited (Local)	1,132	0.240	0.428	0	1
Visited (Wide)	1,132	0.0729	0.260	0	1
Focal Parish	1,132	0.295	0.456	0	1
Visited (Chavez)	1,132	0.223	0.416	0	1
Urban population share	1,132	0.624	0.401	0	1
Poverty rate	1,132	0.315	0.162	0.0251	0.965
Total population	1,132	28,165	42,514	61	372,616
Population density	1,132	0.000997	0.00341	5.86e-08	0.0435
Opposition governor	1,112	0.330	0.470	0	1
Chavista vote share 1998	1,116	0.528	0.118	0.132	0.818
Turnout rate 1998	1,120	0.595	0.0849	0	0.794
Chavista vote share 2000	1,132	0.618	0.121	0.115	0.937
Turnout rate 2000	1,131	0.571	0.0845	0.0979	0.928
Chavista vote share 2006	1,131	0.680	0.135	0.110	0.998
Turnout rate 2006	1,132	0.716	0.0626	0	0.943
Chavista vote share 2010	1,131	0.570	0.144	0.0650	0.993
Turnout rate 2010	1,131	0.638	0.0742	0.245	0.927
Chavista vote share 2012	1,132	0.614	0.132	0.0760	0.950
Turnout rate 2012	1,132	0.787	0.0556	0.399	0.895
Chavista vote share 2013	1,132	0.575	0.137	0.0752	0.952
Turnout rate 2013	1,132	0.773	0.0608	0.364	0.888
Chavista vote share 2015	1,131	0.483	0.139	0.0520	0.994
Turnout rate 2015	1,131	0.710	0.0759	0.336	0.841
Chavista vote share 2018	1,132	0.669	0.104	0.206	1
Turnout rate 2018	1,091	0.524	0.149	0.0623	0.985

Notes: Table provides summary statistics for the different variables used in this study.