Factors of voting personalization in Spanish elections, 1979-2004

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“The impact of leaders is, it seems, as variable and unpredictable as are human personalities themselves”

(Curtice and Holmberg 2005: 252)
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Factors of personalization

Party leaders’ assessments

Vote
Factors of voting personalization:

- **Individual**
  (e.g. political sophistication, media exposure)

- **Contextual**
  (e.g. institutional design, party system, media emphasis)
Hypotheses

1) **Incumbency**: incumbent presidents have a higher effect on their party’s vote than other leaders

Why?

– information asymmetries
– more reliable (factual) information
Hypotheses

2) **Elegibility**: leaders with real chances to take office are more important to their party’s vote

Why?
- information asymmetries
- almost direct election of president
Hypotheses

3) **Popularity**: leader evaluations matter more when leaders are particularly (un)popular

Why?

– common impression?
– information asymmetries
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Model

Vote = a + b (party evaluation) + c (leader evaluation) + u

Binomial logistic regression (PSOE, PP, IU, UCD, CDS)
First differences

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Data

Post-election surveys:

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Leader effects 1979-2004 (1st diff.)

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$R^2 = 0.5$

Election: Leader evaluation vs. Leader effect
Results

• Incumbents tend to matter more than other parties’ leaders (but 1982 and 1996)
• Leader effects are higher for the two largest parties (“government parties”)
• The more popular a leader, the higher her influence
• A role for polarization?
Thank you

Comments welcome

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