

Structural Access to Local News and Civic Engagement

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Abstract

Political observers lament the apparent decline of political news – from shrinking sound bites to the perception that the soft news of today is less informative than the hard news of yesteryear. Independent of concerns about content, many voters structurally have little or no access to information about their local government because they lack a news outlet focused on their community. The resident of one political jurisdiction is often served by news media focused on events and issues important in another political jurisdiction. Scholars have examined the effects of broadcast media market structure on voter knowledge, particularly in the context of Congressional elections and state politics. What are the implications of similar gaps in the availability or attention of news providers on engagement of voters in local politics? We examine this question using survey data collected in the Los Angeles Designated Market Area by the Public Policy Institute of California.

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Democratic governance is partly premised on voter access to information about the problems and opportunities their political community faces, the actions of their elected officials, the policy options available to them, and eventually alternatives – alternative office holders and courses of action. Voters generally have access to information and choose sources to which they will attend, or perhaps opt for ignorance given an unwillingness to consider politics. However, these choices are constrained by environments. We know well that each voter has a limited set of potential discussion partners (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), but voters also face limitations in their news sources. While many tend to think of the contemporary information environment as offering an increasingly diverse, bordering on unlimited number of options for news consumption, the news environment for many voters is uneven in its delivery of information outside of national politics (Graber 2002:327).

Every American lives in a Designated Market Area (Nielsen 2005), or media market. A person who resides, for example, in the Houston (TX) media market should find that his television receives stations broadcasting from the city of Houston. The news departments for these stations will generally report on Houston public affairs – Mayor Bill White and the Houston City Council – perhaps a bit on state government and certainly on national politics. What about a person living in Conroe, TX, 40 miles from Houston on I-45? What will she hear of Mayor Tommy Metcalf on the news? We suspect that she will see Mayor White on television news somewhat frequently, but almost nothing of Mayor Metcalf. It may be mitigating that she happens to have access to the *Conroe Courier* and the *Montgomery County News* newspapers. But what about the residents of cities and towns across this 18-county area with no daily newspaper, no weekly newspaper, and no television news source interested in their local government?

We investigate the availability of local government information through the lens of media market structure in the U.S. Our expectation is that the availability of news focused on local public affairs in an individual's community affects her political participation and civic engagement. Generally, we anticipate that an individual's political participation will be depressed by having no access to news close to his home government. We test this expectation using survey data from the Los Angeles (CA) DMA collected by the Public Policy Institute of California, and the availability of weekly and daily newspapers in communities outside of Los Angeles. We find that while voters are less likely to turnout absent local news, they are actually more likely to engage local officials in order to inform themselves about local politics. We speculate on the reasons for this and discuss future research to investigate the influence of local news on voting.

Local participation and civic engagement

A great deal of scholarship on urban politics assesses explanations of citizens' participation in local government. Studies concerning levels of citizen participation in local government are important because the ability of citizens to remove officials from office through elections provides incentives for leaders to anticipate and respond to the popular demands of citizen groups (Hansen 1975). In short, citizen participation in local government is essential to ensuring democratic control over community officials through elections. Verba and Nie (1972) found that high levels of citizen participation were associated with high levels of agreement on community problems between elected officials and citizens.

Urbanists focus on two main types of citizen participation. The most obvious is citizen turnout in local elections. Studies that examine levels of citizen turnout tend to explain turnout as a function of election structure (Dye and MacManus, 1976; Mladenka 1981; Mudt and Heilig 1982) and government management structure (Greene, 1982). The second type of participation

studied is citizen-initiated contact with local officials. Such participation differs from the act of voting for a local official because, “contactors are instrumental acts directed at narrow, short-range goals” (Greene 1982: 246). Such studies attempt to explain a citizens’ propensity to contact a local official as a function of perceived need (Hirlinger 1992; Sharp 1986), socio-economic status in the community (Hero 1986), or the depth of one’s involvement in other community groups and neighborhood affiliations (Putnam, 1966; Cole, 1975).

One explanation for citizen participation in local government is structural. Institutional arrangements affect the cost/benefit analysis a citizen performs when deciding whether to vote in local elections or contact an elected official. Alford and Scoble (1965) find that “politicized” mayor-council forms of government versus “businesslike” council-manager forms of government produce select benefits for members of a community that vary from member to member. Further examining the common finding that “politicized” structures better served communities with diverse social and economic citizen concerns, Dye and MacManus (1976) found mixed results when controlling for region and socio-economic factors.

Further studies aimed at assessing the impact of election structure on citizen participation in local government have focused on differences between ward and at-large election systems through the lens of gender, race (Mudt and Heilig 1982, Welch 1990), or the incorporation of business interests (Davidson and Korbel 1981, Schumaker and Getter 1983) in local politics. In general such studies tend to find that there are no major differences in voting patterns across city populations in at-large versus ward election systems. The most common finding in the literature is that at-large election systems tend to disadvantage minority groups in their ability to get members of their group elected to city government and their ability to form winning coalitions to push for policy changes (Mladenka 1981).

Others suggest that levels of citizen participation in local government are a function of one's social networking within the community and a perceived sense of need. The cultivation of social networks within a community increases political participation because citizens who are engaged in their communities are actively engaging in political discourse that leads to the formation of communal decisions and deep connections to one's community (Putnam 1966). In this vein, Oliver (2000) shows relationships among population size, decreased interest in politics and civic engagement, including voting and contacting. He speculates that this is due to urban social estrangement: "As city size increases, people are less likely to know their neighbors and less likely to have social contacts that are geographically proximate" (Oliver 2000:370-371).

Several scholars also contend that citizens with clear perceived needs that they feel government can or should address will have high levels of political efficacy and will contact local officials more regularly (Hirlinger 1992). Sharp (1986) found a strong positive correlation between level of contact between citizens and officials and individual perceived need within the community, however this is highly dependent on an individual's socio-economic status. In their "need-awareness model" Jones et. al. (in Hirlinger 1992) found a parabolic relationship between social well-being and rate of citizen contact where, "political awareness is positively associated with social well-being and need is inversely related with social well-being, individuals in the middle of the socioeconomic spectrum have more propensity to contact [local officials]" (554).

Finally, rates of citizen participation in local government can be studied through the lens of community power studies which generally explain participation as a combination of various socio-economic factors. Hero (1986) argues that levels of citizen-initiated contact with local government officials are a function of the individual's socioeconomic status. He found that individuals with high socioeconomic status will be most likely to perceive needs and contact

officials, whereas individuals of low socioeconomic status will be least likely to perceive needs and/or contact officials.

Media markets and sub-national politics

We introduce variation in information environment as a potential influence on local political participation. Designated Market Areas (DMAs) are subnational units identified by Nielsen Media Research, Inc., as part of the process of rating the viewership of television programs. DMAs geographically describe clusters of people who share the same broadcast television stations for their information and entertainment. Given that when they look for news, Americans modally choose mass electronic media, these markets are of particular importance. They describe a critical element of each voter's information environment – which television signals an individual can most easily receive. Each DMA is comprised of several counties whose residents attend to the same television stations. The 210 DMAs Nielsen designates are inclusive of all counties in the continental U.S. and are mutually exclusive.¹

Students of political geography have taken greatest interest in the incongruity between media markets and other critical political subdivisions. Media markets are primarily determined by the location of cities across the U.S. Consequently, they have little formal correspondence to most other politically important subnational units. DMAs boundaries cross state lines and fragment Congressional districts. Many are familiar with living in a broadcast

¹ Generally speaking, each U.S. county is in a single media market. In the few counties that are split across more than one media market, Nielsen designates a geographic boundary between the segments of the county placed in one market and the part of the county grouped with another market.

area composed of several Congressional districts. For example, the Houston media market, made up of 19 counties, now contains portions of 12 Congressional districts. However, Congressional districts can also extend well beyond a single market. The 45th Congressional district of California contains portions of two media markets: the Los Angeles and Palm Springs DMAs.

The bulk of research in American politics investigating the effects of DMA divisions has focused on legislative politics, Congressional districts in particular. Campbell, Alford, and Henry (1984) investigate the influence of the congruity of DMA boundaries and Congressional district lines on voter knowledge of Congressional candidates. They find that when district populations more closely correspond to DMAs, residents are more likely to recall the names of Congressional candidates. Along with Niemi, Powell, and Bicknell (1986), they extend the political implications of this finding to suggest that Congressional incumbents derive an additional advantage for reelection from the mismatch of media markers and Congressional districts.

The fragmenting nature of media markets affects other politics in other ways. Residents of states that are broken into a number of media markets which also serve neighboring states, are less likely to have seen either their incumbent U.S. Senator on television or her challenger (Stewart and Reynolds 1990). Individuals residing in counties served by media markets that primarily cover states other than their own (e.g., residents of New Jersey), have lower levels of interest in state government and are less likely to associate government performance with their evaluation of their state's government than residents of a DMA that conforms to their own state (Johnson 2005). Candidates contesting for office in districts that closely correspond to media market boundaries find television a more useful communication medium and allocate more of their resources on broadcast advertising (Hogan 1997; van Heerde, Johnson, and Bowler N.d.).

Other scholars have linked aspects of media market arrangements with turnout. In his recent work on Congressional district-DMA congruity, Engstrom (2005) finds that people more easily recall candidate names when their congressional district boundaries more closely correspond to their DMA. He finds that they are also more likely to participate in Congressional elections, given their easier access to information about politics. Althaus and Trautman (2004) attribute this primarily to the size of media markets and the lower levels of attention broadcasters pay to Congressional and lower level contests in large, urban media markets.

Because DMAs center on larger urban areas, the content of local news in each media market is likely to skew toward the news of that larger, dominant urban area, and away from the concerns of smaller cities and towns that receive these television signals too. What little political reporting people outside of the center city see will focus on political geographies far from their own – the politics of the center city, state, and nation. We are interested in what happens outside of the center city, in the parts of the media market underserved by information about their own local politics. In these smaller communities, we can see the effects of other variations in the information environment and other sources of news. We anticipate that people who are likely to be underserved with news about their local government will generally be less likely to participate in local public affairs.

The residents of communities outside of the center city in a media market should have access to just the smallest amount of television news about their own community – the occasional tragedy, scandal, or car chase – but virtually no broadcast coverage of their own city government. Outside of the center city, we anticipate that the availability of alternative sources of news will be an important correlate of political participation. Here, we are particularly interested in newspapers. When people have little information about government, they are less

likely to participate (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Outside of the media market's center city, we expect individuals who live in cities and towns served by local newspapers to be more involved in politics than individuals in communities with no local news. We test this expectation using survey data collected in the second largest media market in the U.S.

Data and methods

Research setting

The Los Angeles media market is large geographically and in population. Comprised of parts of 7 counties (all of Inyo, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Ventura, and parts of Kern and Riverside), the DMA is home to more than 5 percent of the television homes in the U.S. At the center of the media market is Los Angeles, with a population of about 4 million. The city of Los Angeles is considerably less dense than many other major metropolitan cities. What further distinguishes Los Angeles city politics from other major metropolitan cities is its lack of political machine and partisan politics in Los Angeles city political history (Hahn, Klingman and Pachon 1976; Carney 1964). The key to being elected to office in Los Angeles often hinges upon a candidates' ability to "deracialize" their campaign in order to garner support from residents of ethnicities different than that of the candidate (Austin and Middleton 2004, Sonenshein 1986). The city is surrounded by an equally diverse and famously suburban southern California. The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) describes Los Angeles County as the most populous in the nation (10.1 million residents) with 47 percent Latino, 30 percent Anglo, 12 percent Asian, and 9 percent black residents (Baldassare 2005:i). Figure 1 shows PPIC's map of Los Angeles County, which includes a few city names for points of reference.

[Figure 1 about here]

Survey data and respondent selection

In March 2005, PPIC conducted a random-digit dial telephone survey among 2,003 adult residents of Los Angeles County. The purpose of the survey was to help “guide the decisions of local, state, and federal policymakers and the actions of public, nonprofit, and public-private partnerships” (Baldassare 2005:i). It includes a wide variety of assessments of community issues affecting local and regional politics, as well as evaluations of local, county, and Los Angeles city officials, and a battery of political participation items. Our dependent variables for the analyses that follow are self-reported voting and initiating contact with elected officials. These survey questions are provided in an appendix listing the survey items we use in this analysis.

We restrict our analysis to registered voters residing in cities outside of Los Angeles – residents of the 83 communities outside of the center city but within the county (and thus inside the Los Angeles DMA). The survey included the question “What city or community do you live in?” Respondent answers were field coded into 128 different categories, including cities outside of Los Angeles, like Pomona, as well as neighborhoods in L.A., such as Hollywood. Respondents to the survey resided in 31 different area or neighborhoods contained in the city of Los Angeles, 41 cities in Los Angeles County with fewer than 50,000 residents, and 42 cities in the county greater than 50,000 in population.² These represented communities are listed in Table 1. The voter registration question is also provided in the appendix. Focusing on self-reported registered voters in cities outside of Los Angeles, our analysis focuses on 813 of the total 2,003 survey respondents.

² Respondents were allowed to name four communities (“Beach cities,” Lake Hughes, Pearblossom, and Westchester) for which we were not able to find size data.

[Table 1 about here]

Our expectations are that respondents living in communities with newspapers should be more likely to participate in politics than respondents living in communities without newspapers. We identify communities with daily and weekly newspapers using the *Editor & Publisher International Year Book* (2005). The communities with daily (D) and weekly (W) newspapers are marked on Table 1 as well. Of these 83 communities, 32 are served by weekly newspapers and 9 have dailies.

In addition to newspaper availability, we are interested in a variety of alternative explanations for political participation. We have specifically identified several contextually based alternatives already. We include indicators for cities that directly elect mayors (League of California Cities 2005b) and this with district-based city council elections (League of California Cities 2005a). We also show the models below with and without controls for city size (U.S. Department of Commerce 2002). This is primarily because of our inability to locate size information for a handful of places represented in the data. Because the number of cases shifts from 813 to 795, we show analyses with and without the size indicator, which is coded following Oliver (2000) and explained in the appendix.

The models also include a number of individual-level explanations. We include socio-economic indicators for education, income, age, home ownership, racial identification, gender, and length of residence. We also include psychological involvement indicators – interest in politics and strength of party identification (Oliver 2000, Timpone 1998). The coding for each of these indicators is also explained in the appendix. Finally, and consistent with the literature we review, we also include in the model a respondent's perception of big problems in her area. This is measured using the scores from an unrotated factor analysis of responses to six questions about potential problems – traffic, crime, housing availability, job opportunities, air

pollution, and affordable health care. The questions are included in the appendix and the factor loadings are reported in Table 2.

[Table 2 about here]

Findings

Voting

As we expected, access to a newspaper affects political participation. Table 3 shows ordered logit models for our self-reported voting frequency variable, where respondents who said they “never” vote are code 0 and respondents who said they “always” vote are coded 3. Our primary interest was in the newspaper variables. In the first column, we exclude the city size variable and include this in column 2 of Table 3. As we expected, respondents living outside of Los Angeles who have access to a daily newspaper are more likely to vote than respondents living in communities without daily newspapers. Weekly newspapers did not have a similar relationship with turnout. Beyond the daily newspaper variable, a number of other conventional explanations of urban voting appear to be borne out in this data. Wealthier respondents, those with longer term residential stability, political interest, and strong partisan identifications were more likely to vote than respondents with less affluence, more mobility, less interest, and weaker partisanship.

[Table 3 about here]

The substantive effect of access to a daily newspaper is interpreted in Figure 2. The majority of respondents reported voting, given that we restrict the analysis to respondents who are registered to vote. Setting the other variables in the model to their mean, we predict that respondents who live in communities without daily newspapers will say they always vote with a .63 probability. Changing the value of the daily newspaper variable, we see a .08 change in

the probability of reporting sustained political participation, to .71. The change in predicted probability of always voting is significant at the $p < .1$ level, computed using Clarify (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2002).

[Figure 2 about here]

Contacting officials

The analysis of self-reported contacting officials provides a counterintuitive, but plausible finding. As with voting and daily newspaper access, there is a relationship between contacting officials and daily newspaper access. However, access to daily newspaper decreases the probability of a respondent initiating contact with an official. In addition to the daily newspaper effect, education and income are weakly related to initiating contact with officials; Latino and Asian-American respondents are significantly less likely to contact officials; and respondents with more interest, stronger party identification, and a concern about local problems are more likely to contact officials.

[Table 4 about here]

Holding the other variables in the model to their mean values, respondents with no access to a local daily newspaper would contact an official with a probability of .29. Given access to local daily news, that probability decreases to .23, a change that is also significant at the $p < .1$ level. The relationship between daily newspaper access and contacting officials makes sense, if we consider the different reasons a person might contact an official. We might have expected people to contact officials in order to express their views or make a claim. It is equally plausible that people contact officials to learn about issues, policy alternatives, and official actions. Given this finding, it is possible that in suburban California, registered voters denied regular information about local politics resort to gathering this information themselves. As

with the voting analysis, this relationship is the same with and without the inclusion of the city size measure.

Discussion

We find relationships between the availability of daily local newspapers and political participation in suburban southern California, outside of the city of Los Angeles but within the Los Angeles media market. Here, television news focuses on L.A. city politics, national politics, and goings on in Sacramento if at all. Regular news about local government in Los Angeles County for voters living outside of the central city would most likely come from a daily newspaper. Survey respondents with access to a daily newspaper are more likely to vote than those without daily print news access, but less likely to contact an official.

This preliminary project raises additional questions and faces a number of limitations. First, we recognize that the dependent variables used in these analyses do not specify local participation. It would be useful to replicate this with questions about voting in municipal elections and contacting city officials. In this vein, it would be useful to have access to more items about types of contacts with city officials – voters could contact officials to gather information and offset the lack of information in the local news; they could also contact officials to express concerns or propose ideas; or they could contact officials for reporting mundane problems.

A second issue this research raises involves the content of news reporting. We have made a set of assumptions about local coverage of politics on television and in print journalism. It would be useful to engage a content analysis of local news media – broadcast and print – in order to determine whether it is the case that local print news really does focus on local

government more than central-city television reporting. Similarly, we might usefully consider the availability and content of local radio news.

Finally, we also are missing information about the efforts local governments undertake to keep their constituents informed about city politics in areas of DMAs underserved by news media. A potential effect of the structure media markets is that local governments outside of the central city must undertake greater efforts to inform their voters about politics. The successes and failures of these informational efforts could affect the participation and engagement of local voters as well.

Appendix: Survey questions and other items included in models

Registered voters: “Some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote?” Yes (1), No/Don’t Know/Refused (0).

Voting: “How often would you say you vote—always, nearly always, part of the time, seldom, or never?” Never (0), Seldom (1), Part of the time (2), Nearly always (3), Always (4), refusals set to missing.

Contacting officials: “In the past 12 months, have you initiated any contacts with an elected official or their staff—either in person or by phone, letter or email? (Please don’t count any contacts you have made as a regular part of your job).” Yes (1), No/Don’t Know/Refused (0).

Daily newspaper: Daily newspapers are catalogued by the *Editor & Publisher International Year Book* (2005). Respondents in communities served by a daily newspaper (1), those without (0).

Weekly newspaper: Weekly newspapers are also catalogued by *Editor & Publisher* (2005). Respondents in communities served by a weekly newspaper (1), those without (0).

City council members elected in districts: Cities with districted elections (1), at-large elections (0), according to the League of California Cities (2005a).

Elected mayors: Cities with elected mayors (1), other cities (0), according to the League of California Cities (2005b).

City size: Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2002), cities were coded following Oliver (2000); 0-2,499 (1), 2,500-4,999 (2), 5,000-9,999 (3), 10,000-24,999 (4), 25,000-49,999 (5), 50,000-99,999 (6), 100,000-249,999 (7), 250,000-499,999 (8), 500,000-999,999 (9), 1,000,000 or more (10).

Education: “What was the last grade of school that you completed?” Some high school or less (1), High school graduate/GED (2), Some college/trade school (3), College graduate (4), Post graduate (5), refusals set to missing.

Income: “Which of the following categories best describes your total annual household income before taxes, from all sources?” Under \$20,000 (1), \$20,000 to under \$40,000 (2), \$40,000 to under \$60,000 (3), \$60,000 to under \$80,000 (4), \$80,000 to under \$100,000 (5), \$100,000 to under \$200,000 (6), \$200,000 or more (7), refusals set to missing.

Age: “Could you please tell me if you are between the ages of...” [READ LIST] 18 to 24 (1), 25 to 34 (2), 35 to 44 (3), 45 to 54 (4), 55 to 64 (5), 65 or older (6), refusals set to missing.

Home ownership: “Do you own or rent your current residence?” Own (1), Rent/Don’t Know/Refused (0)

Race/ethnicity (African American, Asian American, Latino): “How would you describe your race and ethnicity?” (mention #1) Asian (1), Black or African American (2), Hispanic or Latino (3), Caucasian or White And Non-Hispanic (4); recoded into dichotomous indicators for Asian-American, African-American, and Latino respondents.

Female: Interviewers were asked to record gender by observation; Female (1), Male (0)

Length of Residence: “And how long have you lived at your current address?” RECORD NUMBER OF YEARS (code 0-97, if under 1 year, 0)

Survey questions, continued

Interest in Politics: “On another topic, generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics—a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or none?” None (0), Only a little (1), Fair amount (2), Great deal (3).

Strength of partisanship: Independents and other non-partisans (0), respondents feeling closer to Democratic/Republican party (1), Not strong Democrat/Republican (2), Strong Democrat/Republican (3); computed from responses to branching party identification questions.

Concerns about local problems: “How about traffic congestion on freeways and major roads? Would you say it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not a problem in your part of L.A. County?” Big problem (3), somewhat of a problem (2), Not a problem (3), Don’t know and refused set to missing. The same response set was used with the following items: “How about crime?,” “How about the availability of housing that you can afford?,” “How about the lack of opportunities for well-paying jobs?,” “How about air pollution?,” “How about the availability of health care that you can afford?”

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Table 1. Cities & communities represented in March 2005 PPIC Los Angeles County Survey

Los Angeles neighborhoods

Bel Air	North Hollywood	Sylmar
Boyle Heights	NW San Fernando Valley	Tujunga
Brentwood	Pacific Palisades	Van Nuys
Canoga Park	Pacoima	Venice/Mar Vista
Central L.A.	Playa del Rey	West L.A.
Crenshaw	San Pedro	West Wilshire
Encino	Sherman Oaks	Wilmington
Harbor City	Silver Lake	Wilshire
Hollywood	South Central	Woodland Hills/ Mid-San Fernando Valley
Los Angeles	Studio City	
North Hills	Sunland	

Places under 50,000

Acton	Hawaiian Gardens	Maywood
Altadena	La Canada (W)	Monrovia
Artesia	La Crescenta	Palos Verdes (W)
Azusa (W)	La Mirada	San Dimas (W)
Beverly Hills (W)	La Puente (W)	San Fernando City
Calabasas	La Verne (W)	San Gabriel (D)
Claremont (W)	Ladera	San Marino (W)
Commerce	Lake Los Angeles	Santa Fe Springs
Covina (W)	Lawndale	Sierra Madre
Cudahy	Littlerock	South Pasadena (W)
Culver City	Lomita	Temple City
Duarte	Malibu (W)	Walnut (W)
El Segundo (W)	Manhattan Beach	West Hollywood (W)
Glendora (W)	Marina del Rey (W)	

Places over 50,000

Alhambra	Glendale (D)	Palmdale (D, W)
Arcadia	Hacienda Heights/ Rowland Heights (W)	Paramount (W)
Baldwin Park	Hawthorne	Pasadena (D, W)
Bell/Bell Garden	Huntington Park	Pico Rivera
Bellflower	Inglewood	Pomona
Burbank (W)	La Habra (W)	Rosemead
Carson	Lakewood	Santa Clarita (D) (includes Canyon Country)
Cerritos	Lancaster (W)	Santa Monica
Compton	Long Beach (D, W)	South Gate
Diamond Bar (W)	Lynwood	Torrance (D, W)
Downey	Montebello (W)	West Covina (D, W)
East L.A. (W)	Monterey Park (W)	Whittier (D)
El Monte	Norwalk	
Gardena (W)		

Other places

“Beach cities”	Pearblossom
Lake Hughes	Westchester

Table 2. Factor loadings, principal components analysis of local problems

Traffic	0.244
Crime	0.482
Housing	0.495
Job opportunities	0.506
Air pollution	0.474
Health care	0.510

Note: N=2,003. Unrotated factor analysis. Factor 1 eigenvalue=1.276, Factor 2=.079

Table 3. Voting frequency with/without newspapers

	β (robust s.e.)	β (robust s.e.)
Daily newspaper	0.363* (0.160)	0.355* (0.181)
Weekly newspaper	-0.155 (0.171)	-0.160 (0.175)
City council members elected in districts	0.061 (0.267)	0.062 (0.269)
Elected Mayor	0.086 (0.205)	0.084 (0.217)
City size	—	0.001 (0.075)
Education	-0.075 (0.073)	-0.072 (0.075)
Income	0.189*** (0.056)	0.194*** (0.057)
Age	0.077 (0.074)	0.074 (0.075)
Home ownership	0.257 (0.211)	0.245 (0.216)
African American	0.229 (0.300)	0.232 (0.302)
Latino	0.096 (0.251)	0.094 (0.259)
Asian American	-0.158 (0.369)	-0.063 (0.387)
Female	0.344* (0.157)	0.346* (0.161)
Length of Residence	0.009 (0.008)	0.009 (0.008)
Interest in Politics	0.702*** (0.103)	0.691*** (0.103)
Strength of partisanship	0.199* (0.098)	0.216* (0.098)
Concerns about local problems	-0.078 (0.109)	-0.084 (0.110)
	N=813	N=795
	Pseudo-R ² =.081	pseudo-R ² =.081
	χ^2_{16} d.f.=124.29***	χ^2_{16} d.f.=120.61***

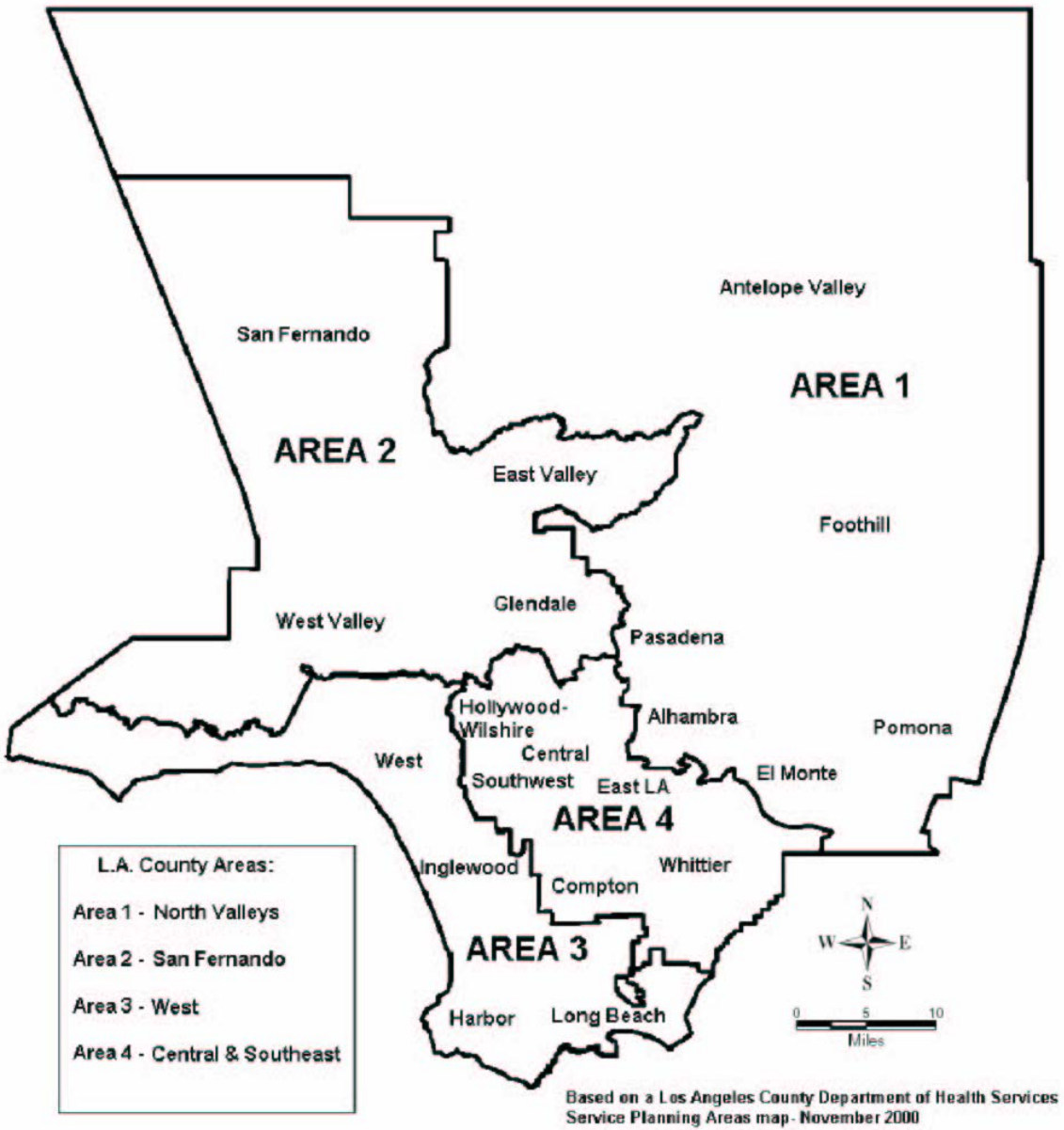
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05. The dependent variable for this ordered logit model is self-reported voting: “How often would you say you vote – always, nearly always, part of the time, seldom, or never? 0=Never, 1=Seldom, 2=Part of the time, 3=Nearly always, 4=Always.” Standard errors computed clustering respondents by city/community of residence. Cutpoint estimates not shown

Table 4. Contacting officials with/without newspapers

	β (robust s.e.)	β (robust s.e.)
Daily newspaper	-0.278 [†] (0.153)	-0.325 [†] (0.175)
Weekly newspaper	0.121 (0.159)	0.070 (0.156)
City council members elected in districts	-0.198 (0.261)	-0.199 (0.269)
Elected Mayor	0.069 (0.175)	0.043 (0.185)
City size	—	0.007 (0.068)
Education	0.129 (0.093)	0.128 (0.095)
Income	0.089 (0.058)	0.080 (0.057)
Age	0.046 (0.065)	0.036 (0.065)
Home ownership	0.238 (0.235)	0.256 (0.234)
African American	-0.129 (0.204)	-0.186 (0.198)
Latino	-0.824 ^{***} (0.236)	-0.905 ^{***} (0.230)
Asian American	-1.121 [*] (0.442)	-1.129 [*] (0.454)
Female	0.186 (0.154)	0.178 (0.158)
Length of Residence	0.006 (0.007)	0.006 (0.007)
Interest in Politics	0.492 ^{***} (0.103)	0.505 ^{***} (0.104)
Strength of partisanship	0.196 [†] (0.110)	0.179 [†] (0.108)
Concerns about local problems	0.312 ^{**} (0.117)	0.322 ^{**} (0.117)
Constant	-3.224 ^{***} (0.432)	-3.081 ^{***} (0.559)
	N=813	N=795
	Pseudo-R ² =.098	pseudo-R ² =.101
	$\chi^2_{16 \text{ d.f.}}=112.17^{***}$	$\chi^2_{16 \text{ d.f.}}=109.49^{***}$

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.10. The dependent variable for this logit model is self-reported initiating contact with elected officials, where 0=no contacting, 1=contacting officials. Standard errors computed clustering respondents by city/community of residence.

Figure 1. Los Angeles County



Source: Baldassare (2005:ii)

Figure 2. Changes in self-reported voting, with and without newspapers

